His Automobile or Theirs? COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY

FOR SEPTEMBER

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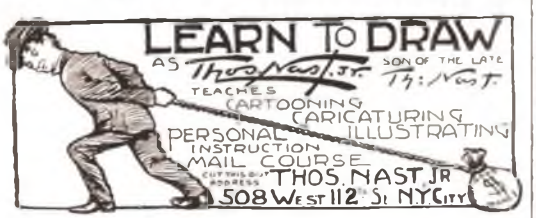

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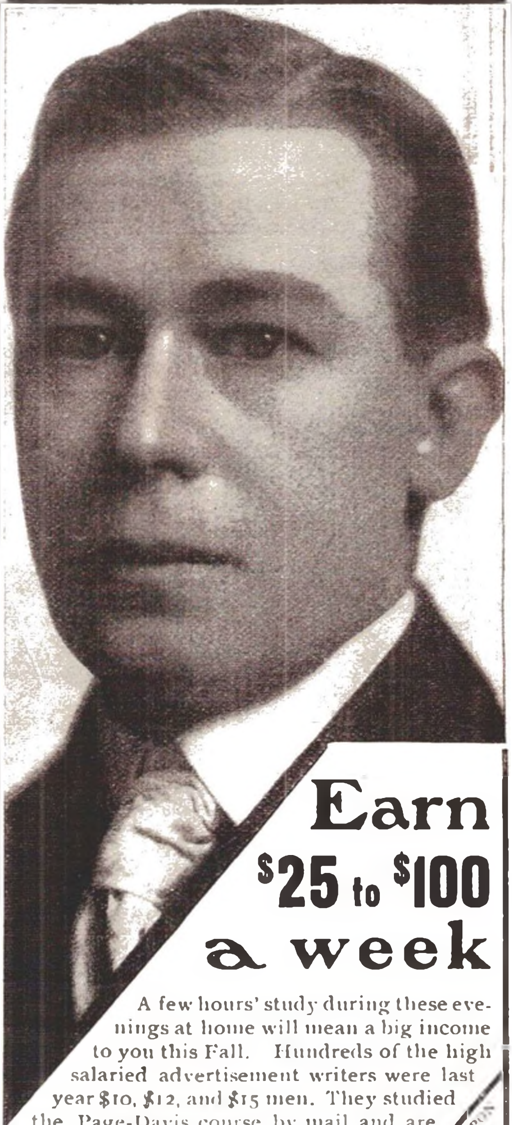

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LII. SEPTEMBER, 1906. No. 2

HIS AUTOMOBILE OR THEIRS?

BY ELIZABETH YORK MILLER.

It is only in fiction that the motor-car of to-day invariably breaks down. Here is a truly refreshing automobile novelette, full of incident and interest, and in which the author has not been obliged to resort to that musty device to bolster up the plot.

(***Complete in This Issue.***)

CHAPTER I.

THE FORTUNES OF WAR.

THE automobile was more truly Dennison's than anybody else's, although—— But to go 'way back to the remotest beginning.

There were any number of reasons why a nice girl of twenty or thereabout would want to know Willie Davis, who was also nice and twenty or thereabout. But Elsa Hitchcock, realizing the lure that lay in a fascinating young man, acknowledged none of them.

She had observed Willie out of the tail of her eye at many a social gathering, and to herself she was obliged to admit that he was dangerously attractive. To Willie's chum, Bert Henning, she confided the pleasing fact that she hated and despised Willie, which cheerful and not too flattering intelligence was promptly conveyed to the latter.

It was discouraging, to say the least. Not being much versed in the ways of women, Willie Davis would have let his dream of love end right there, but Providence had ordained otherwise.

The Women's New England Club had their famous fair right in the nick of time. Elsa's mother being one of the heavyweights in the association, they put Elsa in charge of the automobile raffle, and when she ran over in her mind the list of eligibles who would stand for having their pockets picked in a worthy cause, she suddenly experienced a change of heart with regard to Willie.

It served as an excuse, anyway, and Bert Henning was ordered to bring around his insistent friend, which he reluctantly did, and from that moment all was over for the obliging third party.

The car itself was a beauty—one of those big, stunning, red affairs with glass all around to keep out the dust, and a little fence on the top to keep in your luggage. It was quite complete, with wonderful gas lamps and a musical horn.

If you knew anything about automobiles, it made your mouth water to look at it, and if you didn't know anything, you immediately wanted to. Willie was of the latter variety.

For a long time he had been contemplating the purchase of an automobile, but the real desirability of owning a car had never struck him until now. The first night of the fair he bought a hundred chances, the second night two hundred, and the third—fortunately the last—night, three hundred.

Then he rashly promised to make Elsa a present of the winning ticket, *should he hold it!* For in three nights he had made extraordinary progress with the lady in question, and his love-affair was doing nicely—better by far than his wildest imaginings ever hoped for.

He didn't expect that he would hold the ticket, and neither did Elsa Hitchcock, or she would have been even nicer to him, but when the number of the winning card was called out, "Number 2405 wins the automobile," it took them just twenty minutes to shuffle through his

pack of tickets and discover the duplicate.

Much to the lady's disgust, Willie did not hand over the ticket as he had promised, but kept it himself, which proves that he was wise as well as ardent.

Taking into consideration the fact that Elsa was an enthusiastic automobilist, Willie hastily decided that with an automobile he was of vastly more consequence to Miss Hitchcock than if the car was unreservedly hers.

Besides, he quite intended to put it at her disposal, always keeping the right to himself to be her chauffeur.

And you better believe that Willie was of the stuff of which good chauffeurs are made. Raw material, to be sure, but better have it raw and have it right.

He had never handled an automobile in his life, but he believed in himself, which is half the battle in everything.

He took one lesson on the car and then, to show his cleverness, ran it all the way to New Haven alone, somewhat faster than the law allows. It was an interesting ride, but one must hurry over details.

They arrested him in New Rochelle, where every motorist gets fined at least once during his career, and near Larchmont he ran down a chicken and a dog. At Rye, the policeman stopped him with a warning.

From there on, realizing the universal pig-headedness of the law, he consented to slow down whenever he saw a uniform in the distance, and by way of getting even, employed the hopelessly juvenile and ineffectual method of making faces at every cop who noticed him.

He rolled into New Haven on schedule time with quite an accumulation of experience. Tired and dusty, but gloriously happy, and fairly reeking of automobile exhilaration, he ran the car into the first handy garage, and stood by proudly while the repair man critically sized up him and the machine.

"How long have you had this car?" asked the man, unscrewing the lid of the oil-tank as he spoke.

His face wore the patronizing, unpleasant expression of one who knows and knows that he knows.

"Not long," answered Willie, noncommittal as a veteran. "What's the matter? Anything wrong with her?"

"Well, there ought to be, if there isn't. Your oil-tank is empty. You've been running without oil. I don't see how you got here at all. Have any trouble on the road?"

"Not any of *that* kind of trouble," answered Willie easily. "Fix her up, cap; I want to be off early in the morning."

The automobile man shook his head doubtfully.

"I never knew a car to run before. Why, the bearing would heat up—you'd get a hot-box."

"Is—that—so?" said Willie, in mock admiration for so much wisdom.

"Yes, it *is so!* Are you sure she ran?"

"Well, I should say I was sure. How'd I get here, otherwise?"

"That's right. Here, Jimmie, hand me a gallon of that medium oil. Have you any particular kind of oil you use, sir?"

"No, I haven't," answered Willie, compelled to be truthful. "I use any kind I can get. To be perfectly frank, I didn't know——"

He stopped, at a loss how exactly to express himself, and the repair man finished the sentence for him.

"You didn't know that the car ran with oil?"

"That's it! I'm almost certain the man said he put in gasoline."

The mirth in the garage seemed so insolent and ill-timed to Willie, just then, that he turned sharply on his heel and left them, with a stern admonition to have the car ready for him in the morning.

Willie Davis' duties at college unfortunately kept him occupied most of that week and he found no opportunity to run down to New York and display his new toy to Elsa. The interval was happily bridged by letters, telephone calls, sundry boxes of candy and flowers to the lady, and a pair of swell gold monograms, W. D. gracefully interlaced, to the gentleman to be used in decorating his car.

Willie was so pleased at this evidence of Elsa's interest in him, that he could scarcely contain himself. Life seemed beautiful; there was almost nothing wanting.

Things were bowling along in this smooth fashion when Bert Henning, who is as near an approach to a villain as we can raise, had an unhappy inspiration.

He suggested to Willie that it would be pleasant to invite a dozen people to go to the races. Bert himself chose the party, which included Elsa Hitchcock and her mother, but it was a foregone conclusion that Willie would pay.

They set the event for Saturday, which is a popular day.

Now, such a scheme takes money, and as Willie Davis had never learned how to entertain with a light hand, he needed plenty of it. His allowance would keep five average families from want the year 'round, but he always managed to have it spent when the day arrived for a fresh instalment.

The raffle-tickets had cost him a good round sum, and he had gone in heavily for leather toggery and such like. Although he was painfully short of funds, he didn't worry very much, for his father was always prompt and the check was then a day overdue.

He waited with trusting confidence until Friday and was on hand every time the postman's whistle sounded. Then he suddenly realized the usefulness of a rainy-day fund—something he had hitherto decried as valueless.

He had reckoned without taking into account the San Francisco earthquake, which happened at a most inopportune time for him.

How could he be supposed to know that Davis *mère* and *père,* on their trip around the world, would elect to leave Japan two weeks ahead of the time they previously set, and arrive at the Golden Gate Johnny-on-the-spot with the earthquake?

Nothing more serious happened to them than the loss of their baggage, but for a week they had something of more importance to consider than the allowance of a spendthrift son.

But it was rather hard on Willie, who for the first time in his young life was face to face with an issue.

He took stock of his possessions, but his only assets which had a monetary value were his watch, cuff-links and the automobile. The watch and cuff-links were out of the question, for the person who could take twelve individuals to the races on the proceeds of them would have to be a deal more economical than was Willie Davis.

There was nothing for it, absurd as it seemed, but to "pawn" the automobile.

Willie took it to a place where they dealt in second-hand cars and disposed of it—gold monograms and all! But he solemnly promised himself to buy it back the moment his allowance showed up, which could not in the nature of things be more than a day longer, at the most.

However, he didn't feel quite right about it. It was with a heavy heart, indeed, that he turned away from the Automobile Exchange, where his car had gone into temporary retirement. An indefinable sense of impending disaster surrounded him and he could not shake it off.

"Your luck's gone!" he repeated dolefully to himself.

But it was something to know that it was Saturady. A whole day intervened in which the check could be hastening to him and no one could possibly break into the exchange and make off with his auto.

There was only this one little afternoon, and surely no one would be so foolish as to buy an automobile in such a short time, without giving it a trial.

He was reasonably safe—there was even more than a fighting chance—and the two thousand dollars in his pocket comforted him a little. When he met his party at the Astor for lunch, his spirits revived, and he began, insensibly, to forget the unpleasant incident which had clouded the morning.

Elsa Hitchcock had never looked more charming. There were others there, but Willie saw no one but Elsa and her pretty, fluffy gold hair under its modish hat trimmed with pink roses.

To Willie, the rest of the party were like so many shadows. Mrs. Hitchcock kindly took the conversational part of the entertaining off his hands and left the two together.

She, be it understood, had always favored Willie Davis, and there had been a time not so very far distant when Bert Henning and his considerably lesser income had given her worry.

Mrs. Hitchcock was at peace with the world. The skies were blue, the lunch was good and the ride out to Belmont Park was great fun.

Yes, distinctly, the maternal eye was an approving one, and Elsa was sure she heard her mother humming:

"When love is young, in springtime,
And boys are youthful, too."

After all, there always has to be a fly in the ointment. There was one in this, but you haven't come to it yet.

Willie was not in the habit of betting on the races, but this day he turned to it as to a desperate chance. There was every reason in the world why he should not have won, for he knew no more about horses than you or I.

It was luck, again. Any one with a superstitious turn of mind would account for it in that way.

He sneaked out and put up a bet on the first race—and won.

He doubled on the second race, and happened to choose a long shot—and he won, there.

Amazed at his luck and delighted with such an easy way of getting even with himself, he kept on and on, and he won every time. (Reads like a fairy tale, but it isn't.)

Fate had it in for Willie Davis in quite another way. (Oh, be patient, be patient, and you shall see!)

Ignorant of the cruel blow she was going to deal him, he began to swagger and congratulate himself on always falling buttered side up, and he forgot to knock on wood. That is, he didn't forget, exactly, but he was too drunk with conceit to stoop to such concession.

He had won the automobile, he had fairly accomplished winning Elsa—he meant to clinch that on the way home—and he had won this fat wad of bills that was bursting his pockets, some six thousand and sixty-five dollars in all!

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE BREWING.

ALL of this had happened in one little week.

It seems a lot, doesn't it? But a week can be crowded fuller of events even than that.

The intoxication of his achievements went to Willie's head, but he managed to keep the news of his gorgeous winnings to himself, for he didn't want Mrs. Hitchcock to think him such a plunger—it might hurt his chances with Elsa—and he didn't want to give Bert Henning an opportunity for further borrowing.

From apparently hating Willie to apparently loving him had been a short step for Elsa. He was clearly the cleverest thing in boys she had ever seen, and when on the way home he got her off by himself and frankly asked her to marry him, right there in the cross-seat of the L, with the others all looking, even though they were too far off for listening, she unhesitatingly accepted him.

"I've loved you always," he said earnestly. "The first time I saw you, you were a little girl in dancing-school and you snubbed me. Do you remember?"

Elsa remembered perfectly. It seemed that she, also, had always loved Willie.

She said, "I've always been crazy about you, but you know, you always had so many girls, were always so popular, that I couldn't bear to think of just being *one* of them! Bert said you were the most fickle thing!"

"He did, did he? Well, I'll fix him for that. Why, he told me the same thing about you."

To Willie, there didn't seem a thing wanting at the close of this perfect day, and yet he couldn't seem to shake himself clear of a depression.

He couldn't define it. It just hung in the air ready to descend upon him at a moment's notice, and, sad to tell, it was his lady-love who finally brought it down.

"Willie, dearest," she said reproachfully, "why haven't you taken me for a ride in your motor-car? You know how crazy I am about it."

Willie's joy suddenly changed to gloom. Here was he with over six thousand dollars in his pockets, and there was the car in that wretched exchange.

Oh, it was impossible, ridiculous! They couldn't have sold the car in these few hours. It was as good as his, anyway.

He answered with a semblance of cheer:

"That's so, you haven't been out in it, have you? And I said it was to be your car, too. Well, it *is* your car, and I'll take a day off Monday when I bring your ring. We'll celebrate."

Elsa clasped her hands together and cried, "How lovely, how *perfectly lovely!*" so loud that everybody heard her and wanted to know what it was.

Willie was possessed by the idea to get to the Exchange as fast as his legs or a car could carry him, and almost resented the fact that Mrs. Hitchcock, bent on furthering his happiness, insisted on taking him home to dinner with them. He made a dozen excuses, but they all availed him nothing.

Even the use of the telephone was denied him, since it hung in the library and some one was certain to overhear his conversation.

The evening was given to talking it over under the benign and unobtrusive chaperonage of Mama Hitchcock. She dozed over a novel in an adjoining room with her back turned obligingly upon the lovers, and Willie almost forgot his anxiety about the car.

There were lots of things to discuss, among them the special brand of ring that Elsa preferred, and it was eleven o'clock before Willie found himself on the street bound for the station.

Eleven o'clock on a Saturday night is Broadway's fittest time, and Willie turned into that blessed thoroughfare with chin held high and hopes held higher. The whole world was rosy-hued.

At Forty-Fourth Street he got mixed up with a theater crowd and moved slowly with it as far as Forty-Second Street, where he turned across town toward the Grand Central.

Of a sudden, like a lightning's flash, he was conscious of two suburbanites behind him, also hurrying for a train. They were earnestly discussing something, and the particular sentence which hit his ear, was this:

"The monograms are simply gorgeous —and such a remarkable coincidence, Warren. It was *that* decided me."

The words were harmless enough and they might have meant almost anything, but Willie Davis felt himself suddenly grow cold. He slowed his pace that he might hear still more.

The lady continued; "The beautiful thing is so complete. If we had looked from now until doomsday, I'm convinced we couldn't have been better suited. It is almost new, too. Why, the marks of the wrapping are still on the tires."

Willie Davis, no longer lingering in uncertainty, turned sharply about and gazed furiously into the eyes of the couple behind him.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Dennison, thus interrupted in their intimate chat by a rude stranger, returned the stare with interest, until Willie was suddenly conscious of a growing belligerency in the expression of Mr. Dennison. He walked on in a perfect tumult of excitement.

Oh, it couldn't be, it simply couldn't be! He was a donkey to consider it for a moment.

His wasn't the only automobile on the market. He wasn't the only person who had monograms on his car. For all he knew, they might be discussing a baby carriage.

All the same he kept within hearing distance. He determined to see this thing through if it cost him his train, but it happened that the Dennisons were going in the same direction.

Presently there was some more conversation, still on the lady's part.

"I'm so happy! Think how we've saved and saved for that motor-car, and then expected to get only a cheap one. Why, this car must be worth twice as much as you paid for it."

"It is. I'm convinced that there isn't a better bargain in New York. You could have knocked me down with a feather when he told me the price."

"I suppose it's home by now, isn't it, Warren? I think it was fine for him to send it right up for us. Warren, what ails that young man ahead of us—have you noticed him?"

"Yes, I have noticed him, and if he turns around again I'll fix his face so that it won't move so easily."

Willie took the hint and shot ahead.

His worst fears were realized. This precious pair had bought his car. *His car!* No, Elsa's car! And how could he ever explain to her?

It was gone forever, and he felt that the shame of confession was more than he could bear. She might at a pinch forgive him for sacrificing the car, but he was surely a brute for letting the monograms go with it, and she would see that instantly.

This man with the same initials as his —*ugh!*

Cold type fails at this point. It simply cannot set down the primitive emotions experienced by Willie Davis.

He was in that ecstatic state of crazy misery when a man gains relief only by jumping up and down, pulling out whole bunches of his hair, and slamming anything that comes within handy reach.

He would have felt in a measure repaid could he have taken the Dennisons and knocked their silly heads together.

She thought he was flirting with her, it seemed—well, let her think. Homely thing! It must be a novelty to her to come even that near to attracting masculine attention.

When he reached the station he found that his train was ready and he plunged through the gates with a drunken lunge, his hat knocked down ferociously over his eyes, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, and quite unconcerned as regarded the comments of bystanders.

What did he care for them—or for anybody?

He hurled himself into the first handy seat and lay back in it with a long-drawn sigh of misery, feeling keenly that the end of the world was near, when to his infinite disgust the Dennisons paddled in and took the seat directly in front of him.

He felt that he could not bear their proximity and was on the point of hunting himself another place to sit when the lady turned and spied him.

She gave a hysterical little scream, and grasped her husband's arm, whispering in her agitation loud enough to attract the attention of the whole car: "Warren, there is that dreadful young man again. I tell you, he's following us!"

Mr. Dennison rose wrathfully. The time had evidently arrived for action, but Willie Davis only laughed aloud in his misery. Even with the world crumbling under his feet, he could see some humor in the situation.

"May I ask," demanded Mr. Dennison hotly, "if there is anything that I can do for you? If there isn't, I would be obliged if you will explain why you have been so persistently following us?"

"*I* following *you?*" was on the tip of Willie's tongue, and he would have said it in his best insulting manner, when he suddenly recollected that here, perhaps, was a chance in a hundred, so he accepted his rôle with becoming meekness.

"I hope you'll pardon me," he began, swallowing his pride hard, "but you purchased a motor-car to-day—a big red car with gold monograms, W. D., on the sides—am I not right?"

Mr. Dennison nodded shortly.

"Well, sir, what's that to you?"

"Just this," answered Willie, warming to his subject. "The gentleman who originally owned the car wants it back again. He has commissioned me to buy it."

"Impudence!" murmured Mrs. Dennison, looking anxiously at her spouse for corroboration.

"Tell him," said Mr. Dennison, "that I don't care to consider his offer."

"But you haven't heard it yet!" pleaded Willie. "He'll give you four thousand dollars for it."

"Well, what the devil did he sell it for? Why, I only pa——"

Mrs. Dennison clapped her fingers over her husband's lips.

"I see," she said sweetly, "but we couldn't dream of parting with it—for so small a sum as that. This car suits us and of course we couldn't duplicate it for that, with all the attachments and things."

Willie thought he saw, too, and rose bravely to meet the situation.

"I'll give you five thousand," he said.

Mr. Dennison was undoubtedly trembling on the verge of acceptance, but he thought he discerned a nigger in the woodpile.

"If money isn't any object to him, why doesn't he buy himself a new car?"

A lie trembled on Willie's tongue but something verging on the truth seemed easier, so he said, "He'll get into the worst kind of trouble if he doesn't get this particular car."

The Dennisons looked puzzled, but the masculine Dennison could distinctly

see the colored gentleman now, and he laughed sarcastically.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I suppose there isn't the least doubt about his getting that car on a straight deal in the first place, is there?"

"It was straight enough," said Willie, ignoring the sarcasm. "He won it at a raffle. I'll give you six thousand for it."

"If it's a joke, you're carrying it too far, young man. I'll keep the car until I learn more about this affair."

He settled back in his seat and held a whispered conference with his wife.

Willie was too discouraged to pursue the argument. He felt, to use an inelegant expression, that if Mr. Dennison addressed another word to him, he would rise up and smite him in the face. The state of Willie's mind at that precise moment was inelegant.

At Mount Vernon the Dennisons got up to leave the train.

Mrs. Dennison looked behind her apprehensively to note if Willie was still tracking them. He smiled at her derisively, drawing down the corners of his mouth in a vulgar, rude manner, gaining some small relief to his surcharged feelings from the act.

He felt that he was in the worst kind of trouble.

The desire to put off the evil day when he must confess his unloverlike act, took possession of him. Anything was better than immediate discovery, and if he could gain a little time, perhaps something would happen to help him out of this scrape.

The check might arrive, the miserable Warren Somebodies who lived in Mount Vernon might relent and accept the whole, or a part of it.

Oh, something must happen! When things were blackest they always changed. They had to.

Willie wasn't consciously a coward—not in the least. Although he didn't know it, he was beginning the lifelong bondage of the man who serves a petticoat.

There is no fear on earth for a man like the fear inspired by the woman who loves him and will disapprove of something he has done. He is never so big but that he will shrink from incurring her displeasure.

On Monday Willie ordered the engagement ring from Tiffany's by telephone—a very unloverlike proceeding—and despatched it to Elsa with a note that was pitiful as well as contrite.

In it he said that his aunt in Philadelphia was ill unto death and required his immediate presence. The automobile ride they had planned was off until further notice; he would see her just the moment he got back to town, etc.

All the desires of his heart urged him to Elsa's side, urged him against this foolish deceit which in the end would more than likely come to naught, but a dogged determination to possess the car drove him on. He could only see one side of the question.

He must have the car. Elsa must never know how lightly he had disposed of her gift of the monograms. And there was only one way to get the car back.

Perhaps, if he told the Dennisons the true story of how he came to lose the automobile, and threw himself on their mercy, they would let him have it.

With this in mind, he started for the Exchange to ascertain their name and address, for the sooner he saw them the better.

In the clear light of the morning, things took on a slightly brighter tone. He was rested, and he began to feel sure of himself and have confidence in his persuasive abilities.

He swung briskly up the avenue in the direction of the Automobile Exchange, and for the present we are through with Willie Davis.

CHAPTER III.

THE TOUR BEGINS.

DENNISON, fussing about in the sweet little gray stucco garage he had built, tooted the musical horn on his new acquisition, just to make sure that everything was all right, and a second later a boy walked up the front steps of the Dennison domicile and handed in a special delivery letter.

It bore the postmark of an obscure town in Pennsylvania, and when Mrs. Dennison received it she fluttered out to the garage to convey it to her lord and master.

It was commonplace-looking enough. The envelope was shabby, the address written in an old-fashioned business hand, and Mrs. Dennison, while mildly curious, was in no way excited over it.

They all got mail, even special deliveries, and Mr. Dennison was no rare exception to the rule. So she climbed up into the automobile to try the feel of the cushions, and was about to test the horn herself when she caught a glimpse of her husband's face.

He was leaning weakly against the automobile for support, and his face was white. The letter had dropped to the ground.

Like most women, Mrs. Dennison prided herself upon her intuitive powers, and she immediately surmised that he had been trading in stocks again, and had guessed wrong.

"Warren Dennison, what's the matter with you—what was in that letter?" she demanded.

A smile crept around the corners of Dennison's mouth.

"Read it. Read it by all means," he said. "I'm too full for utterance."

He picked up the letter and climbed into the car beside her while she read. And this was the letter:

DEAR NEPHEW WARREN:

This is to inform you that your Uncle John died last week, after a short and painless illness. You and I are the next of kin and, as he left no will, his estate is divided between us. He was heavily interested in coal mines in this section, and as nearly as I can figure it, on a conservative estimate, your share of the estate is worth a quarter of a million dollars

It would be well for you to come on and we can settle the estate together. I have been clerking for John for the past twenty years and I know the details of his business.

Trusting that this finds you and yours well, I am,

Respectfully,
HENRY WOOD.

"Who is Henry Wood?" asked Mrs. Dennison when she had quite recovered her breath.

"My mother's brother. Uncle John was rich—we never knew how rich, as he was a sort of miser—but I didn't expect to come in for anything."

He looked down at the letter again. "I guess this is straight enough."

He leaned back against the leather seat and drew a long, ecstatic breath, and Mrs. Dennison furtively pinched herself.

It was almost too good to be true. For a few seconds they sat in silence, then she said:

"Yesterday we bought a second-hand automobile that we have been saving to get for two years."

"And I gave up getting a spring suit because it cost so much to have the garage built," continued Mr. Dennison.

He blithely tooted the horn again and kicked his heels against the steering gear by way of showing how pleased he was.

"And I fixed over my last year's hat for the same reason," chanted his wife.

"It's what the story books call the 'reward of virtue.'"

"Let me see that letter again," said Mrs. Dennison. "I want to make sure that 'April Fool' isn't somewhere in it."

"No, it's right enough, I tell you, and I'm going to start for Coalville to-morrow—would go to-night, but I'll have to make some arrangements at the office and get some money from the bank. You're going, too."

Mrs. Dennison gave him a rapturous hug, which he returned with interest, and then they clambered out of the automobile and started for the house.

"Oh, I forgot," exclaimed Mrs. Dennison. "Sandy is coming up to-day to teach you how to run the car! I suppose you'll be so busy you won't care to bother with it, now."

The car had suddenly dropped in interest, but Dennison revived it by slapping his hands together and exclaiming, "I have it, I have it," in such a loud voice that Mrs. Dennison put her hands to her ears and said. "Well, I should think you had, whatever it is. Has Sandy got anything to do with it?"

Sandy, be it understood, was Mrs. Dennison's brother.

"I should say he has! We couldn't do it without him. I'm going to hire Sandy to be our chauffeur and we'll make the trip to Coalville in our car. It's just the right distance for a tour."

"But, Warren——"

"But nothing," interrupted Warren rudely. "We're going, and that settles it. I know all that you want to say. The car might break down, I know nothing

about running it, etc. That's what we'll have Sandy for. He brags about his knowledge of automobiles—now let him prove what he knows.

"Besides, I don't expect the car to break down. Most people do. That's why they get into all kinds of trouble. Give a thing a bad name and it'll live up to it every time. Too many people give their automobiles a black eye. I'm going to start white with mine, anyway, and call it good until it gives me reason to believe otherwise."

"But do you think that Sandy could be persuaded——"

"Sandy, my dear, would mortgage his soul for an excuse to take a holiday. Oh, I know him. Besides, think of all the local color he'd get out of the trip."

"I guess you're right, dear," said Mrs. Dennison meekly, "and I'd better begin to pack our things right away."

Sandy Van Buren appeared promptly in good time for dinner, and when the plan was laid before him he accepted with the alacrity which his brother-in-law had predicted.

He spent the whole afternoon going over the car, doing those mysterious, time-consuming, inexplicable things which every good chauffeur considers necessary.

For all his proficiency, Sandy was only a chauffeur by relaxation.

By profession he was a bachelor and magazine writer, but he was still young and there was hope for him in both instances. Indeed, there was a girl out in Jersey who interested him mightily. Sandy hadn't been to see her for months, and the reason was a peculiar one.

She was rich and he was poor. So, although he loved her, he kept away.

The girl didn't object to a poor man in the least, for she loved Sandy, and frankly avowed it, but strange to say, in these degenerate days, when the man isn't usually so particular, this man considered it the greatest misfortune in the world that he had fallen in love with a girl who had money.

It was true he quite expected to write the novel some day that would bring him fame and fortune at one gulp, but the novel as yet was represented by a chaotic heap of manuscript, and Sandy worked overtime producing pot-boilers.

With the celerity of one who has served an apprenticeship on the newspapers, Sandy accumulated a motley assortment of road maps, and had their course fairly well plotted out, so that after an early lunch on the following day, the big, red car with its three passengers chugged slowly out of the Dennisons' front yard. Toward Sixth Street they went, down the precipitous hill toward Pelham Manor, and into the Shore Road for New York.

The world seemed very fair to the Dennisons and their young brother, but especially to the Dennisons, for reasons set forth in the momentous letter.

It's pretty nice when you've worked hard most of your life and dug for a few luxuries, to find yourself suddenly the proud and happy possessor of a fortune, and the Dennisons hadn't had it long enough to realize its disadvantages—if any there be. They were at the most blissful turn of the wheel.

All thought of poor Willie Davis and his mad desire to get back his automobile was gone from their minds. It was as though he had never been, had never intruded his anxiety upon them.

But while they were bowling merrily over the crest of Sixth Street Hill, a depot hack turned into Homestead Avenue, where the Dennisons lived, and drew up in front of their house. A perspiring, excited young man alighted and pulled the bell, inquiring of the maid who answered the summons if either Mr. or Mrs. Dennison were at home.

No, they were not. Couldn't say when they would be, either. They had gone for an indefinite trip in their automobile.

At that poor Willie wilted.

But even at the eleventh hour he would not admit defeat, and that was Willie's best point. He stuck to it—he stuck to everything, and he usually won out.

Accordingly, he produced his little note-book and demanded some address that Mr. Dennison must have left. The maid was undecided, but Willie wasn't, and so she finally gave him the Coalville address, where Mr. Dennison directed his mail should be forwarded.

So back to New York went Willie, bought himself a satchel and a few clothes, and started for Coalville the same afternoon in pursuit of the Denni-

sons, taking by oddest chance the same train that the belated bridegroom missed, but of course you don't know about him yet.

On the way to Coalville, Willie did a clever thing. He stopped overnight in Philadelphia and wrote Elsa a long, sweet letter, touching lightly on the illness of his aunt, and promising to be back in New York with her in a week at the most.

They say that everybody resembles some animal.

Willie Davis was certainly developing the characteristics of a bulldog. A little devil was humming in his brain, "Get back your car, get back your car if you have to *steal it!*"

There was an idea for you. Steal it!

No, no, Willie would never do such a wicked thing as that unless driven to it. Not unless everything else failed, but he had to have it. Oh, there were a-plenty of reasons why.

He just had to have it.

Of course anybody with sense would have said that he could have bought another automobile just like the one he had lost—anybody who didn't know Willie.

And he *might* succeed in getting monograms that would deceive his fiancée, but the chances were against that. Willie had been told that women have sharp eyes, and he couldn't remember the details of those monograms. He'd be sure to blunder on them.

However you looked at it the situation was hateful.

There was the chance, too, that Elsa might take offense at his absence, despite the "sick aunt" story, which he had to admit was thin, and break their engagement. He was certainly a lukewarm lover, and any girl with spirit would surely resent his seeming indifference.

Elsa had plenty of spirit. There was no doubt about that.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BELATED BRIDEGROOM.

LEAVING Willie to the disentangling of his own twisted skein, we will follow the fortunes of the present owners of the automobile.

Sandy guided the car through New York without encountering any unusual incident. At the ferry where they crossed into Jersey, they met with the treatment generally accorded automobilists, and were made to wait some three-quarters of an hour before the gentleman in charge saw fit to allow them aboard.

This induced some profanity on the part of Mr. Dennison, but Sandy was used to it, and said nothing.

The home of the girl Sandy loved was on an almost direct route to Lakewood, where he had decreed they were to spend the night, and it is almost superfluous to state that he had directed their course in such a manner that it would enable him at last to observe how the hedges were growing that bounded her father's property.

He didn't expect to see the girl. Sandy had put such a happy occasion definitely in the background, until he could go to her with what he considered decent prospects, but his heart was hungry, and just to see where she walked and drove would comfort him a little.

He didn't take his relatives into his confidence, for Sandy was a reticent chap, and beyond the fact that there was some girl whom Quixotic reasons kept him from marrying, even Mrs. Dennison knew nothing.

They were well into Jersey, bowling over those smooth, delightful roads which make the State so attractive to automobilists, despite the miserable laws and restrictions imposed upon the gasoline-propelled population, when the first adventure happened.

It was still a good ten miles from the place where Sandy's girl lived that they saw a limp-looking young man toiling along the road ahead of them, dragging a heavy suit-case.

There was a settled discouragement in the droop of his shoulders, a dogged determination in his steady plod, and the dust from passing vehicles had sifted thickly over his black coat. His shoes were powdered white with it.

He carried his hat in his hand, for the afternoon was hot, and the perspiration had made its way in muddy channels down his face.

All told, he was the picture of despair as he stood forlornly to one side of the road to let them pass, mopping his dusty

face with a handkerchief, his anxious eyes devouring the car greedily.

Sandy, whose heart felt for all suffering mankind, observed him as they passed, and brought the car to a stop a few yards farther on. He turned to his brother-in-law.

"Did you see that poor devil back there?" he asked. "Let's give him a lift. It's too hot to walk a day like this."

"Sure," assented Mr. Dennison good-naturedly.

"By all means," agreed his wife. "You were a good boy to think of it."

Sandy leaned out of the car and looked back.

"Hey, you," he called. "Want to ride?"

The sight of the automobile had caused the young man to subside by the road-side, and tears were frankly adding to the disorder of his countenance, but at Sandy's cordial invitation he brightened and took heart again.

His face was fairly transfigured with joy and he started on a brisk trot after the car, renewed hope prodding each flagging muscle, the suit-case banging against his legs and threatening to upset him at every step.

Without a word he threw his bag into the car and climbed up hastily, as though he feared that even this opportunity might pass him.

When he was fairly seated and the danger of losing the ride averted, he turned his interesting, disheveled face with its little blond mustache to the occupants of the car, and, divesting it of some of the dust, proceeded to give an account of himself, his voice shaken with emotion as he tried to explain.

"I'm so grateful to you," he said. "I really believe you're the hand of Providence! You see, I am—I was—that is, I will be married this afternoon. The ceremony ought to come off in half an hour. If I hadn't been so rattled and nervous about it, I wouldn't have made the stupid blunders I did. You see——"

He paused, as though uncertain just how to continue, and Mrs. Dennison leaned forward to encourage him, tender sympathy written all over her face.

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "Whatever could have happened to you?"

The bridegroom, emboldened by her words, went on.

"I missed my train at Dunton, every blessed soul had gone to the circus. I couldn't get a hack or anything, so I started to walk. It was the only thing I could do. I hoped to get a team on the road somewhere, but if it hadn't been for you——"

He stopped suddenly, seized with a great fear.

"But perhaps you're not going my way. Are you?"

"Indeed, we will make it a point to go your way," said Mrs. Dennison earnestly. "You simply *can't* miss your wedding. Think how nervous the poor bride is just this moment."

The bridegroom groaned aloud.

"I hadn't thought of that before," he said, "but it's awful, simply awful!"

"How far do you go?" inquired Sandy.

"Oh, it's ten miles."

Mrs. Dennison leaned over and grasped her brother's arm.

"Sandy, can we make ten miles in half an hour—is it possible?"

Sandy grinned.

"*Can* we? Just watch us."

He put up the spark, turned on more gas, and the ground fairly flew beneath them. The car rocked, leaped, bounded, followed by a huge dust cloud that caused passing vehicles to bless them in unorthodox fashion.

"Oh, thank you!" gasped the young man, too amazed at his good luck to say more.

"Tell us where to take you," said Mr. Dennison.

"It's a country house—The Towers—just this side of Lakewood. This road passes it, and the name of the people is Knowles. Perhaps you've heard of them?"

Sandy's hand suddenly slipped on the steering gear, and the car went lurching madly from the road, the wheels on one side in the grassy ditch, the sudden swerve causing them narrowly to miss a stone wall—in fact, they did graze it.

At the speed they were going, the force of the jar sent them all tumbling to one side of the car. In a fraction of a second they were back again, speeding faster than ever, if such a thing were possible.

Sandy sat as though cut from granite, but Mrs. Dennison pounced upon him wrathfully.

"What's the matter with you, Sandy?" she exclaimed. "Do you want to kill us?"

The other two were too astounded and out of breath to give utterance to their sentiments.

"Stone in the road," answered Sandy savagely. "Didn't want to hit it and bust a tire."

Then he turned to his breathless guest and remarked with more bitterness than the occasion seemed to require: "So it's Miss Knowles you're going to marry?"

The blond man looked stupidly bewildered at the change of tone on the part of one of his hosts.

"Why, yes," he stuttered. "Yes, I—I—do you know her?"

"I know her all right, or thought I did," answered Sandy grimly. "So it's to her wedding—Betty's wedding that I'm taking the bridegroom? Perhaps she'll be grateful enough to invite me to the ceremony."

His sarcasm was pronounced but hardly pretty. Moreover, its import was wholly lost on his audience.

The little man looked still more bewildered.

"One of us has made a mistake," he ventured timidly. "Perhaps it is I. Her name isn't 'Betty.' The lady I'm going to marry is 'Caroline.' She has a sister Elizabeth—perhaps you refer to her."

"Why didn't you say so at first, man?" exclaimed Sandy, relief bursting from every pore. "Don't ever take it for granted again that your 'Miss Knowles' is the only one in the family. It's dangerous."

The bridegroom was a stickler for the conventionalities, however, and he preferred to argue the point.

"As a matter of fact," he insisted, "she is 'Miss Knowles.' The other is 'Miss Elizabeth.'"

"In half an hour," said Mrs. Dennison, smiling sweetly, "Miss Elizabeth will be the only Miss Knowles."

"I hope so," he assented, sighing happily, "and of course you must all come to the wedding. Without you there wouldn't have been any at all this afternoon."

Sandy didn't need any urging, and he sent the car along at the rate of forty-five miles an hour, which is some going, I can tell you.

They drew up at the kitchen door of The Towers with five minutes to spare. The car just barely rolled in and stopped of its own accord.

It came to a halt as easily as a well-trained horse before the very door, with the power still on. A dozen reasons why flashed through Sandy's brain, but strange to say, the right one came first.

He jumped out, unscrewed the spout of the gasoline tank, and plunged in his measuring stick. It came out as dry as a bone.

Not a drop of gasoline remained!

Hardened motorists will smile at the telling, for it isn't in front of the door of the girl you love that you are usually left without gasoline.

As I said, they had five minutes to spare, and the bridegroom fairly fell out of the car in his anxiety to be ready on time.

Of course there were explanations, tears of rapture, and a good deal too much was made of Sandy, the hero of the occasion.

The bride and her maids were waiting in a perfect agony of suspense, but unless you have been a bride and similarly situated, you will find it hard to appreciate the exact state of her feelings.

Or the feelings of Papa and Mama Knowles; or the feelings of Betty, who, in her excitement, kissed Sandy by mistake.

In spite of their protests that they were not dressed for a wedding, they were obliged to stay, and Sandy's cup of joy was full when Betty made him sit beside her at the bride's own table, while he told them all over again just how it happened.

"And that it was *you*, Sandy!" she whispered shyly, her cheeks flushed pink, her great brown eyes looking into Sandy's so sweetly that it almost broke his heart not to take her into his arms right there. "That it was you, whom I haven't seen for ever and ever so long!"

"Did you miss me, Betty?" he asked. "I mean, do you think of me sometimes?"

"Oh, Sandy, Sandy," she whispered.

"You are such a perverse person. If you don't get over it soon—well, I warn you. I've no mind to stay an old maid. To-day it's Caroline, and the next time it will be Betty."

"Betty, you wouldn't—no, I'm sure you wouldn't."

"Then why don't you——"

"No, no, Betty dear, I'm not going to propose to you yet. I've got to wait a bit longer. I'm almost finished the book, and then——"

"Well, don't wait too long, Sandy," she said with a sigh.

After the wedding supper the bride and groom went off in Mr. Knowles' big touring-car, followed by the conventional shower of rice and old shoes. The guests had departed and Sandy reluctantly tore himself away from Betty and sought out the automobile house to stock his car with the necessary gasoline before they should be on their journey again.

Now that he was so near to Betty, even though he had hitherto determined not to see her, it was hard to leave her. Sandy was human, and it was more than flesh and blood could bear to see Betty and not to want to keep on seeing her, especially when one loved her as he did.

It was with a hopeful and appreciative eye, therefore, that he noted the gathering clouds which were piling up in the west, and observed an occasional streak of lightning and rumble of thunder.

He had finished filling the gasoline tank when Mr. Knowles appeared on the threshold.

Now, Sandy had not always been *persona grata* with the elder Knowles. They did not altogether fancy a penniless young man for Betty, but distinctly his stock was on the rise, for Mr. Knowles observed genially: "Cast your eyes up to the heavens, Van Buren; there's a storm coming. You people can't go on to-night."

Sandy mentally blessed the elements, but he noted the storm as though for the first time, and dropped his work.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, "that's so! Hadn't noticed it before. It would be jolly fine to get caught in it now, wouldn't it?"

"I should say not. Betty is very keen on your staying."

"In that case," said Sandy, yielding graciously to pressure, "if my sister is willing, there is nothing to do but stay."

The Dennisons agreed cheerfully to the change in their program, and the luggage was transferred from the automobile to the spacious guest chambers at The Towers.

As Sandy dressed for the evening, he thanked his lucky stars for the happy miracle that had befallen him.

He whistled popular airs through the whole course of a conscientious toilet, and all the while a daring, gorgeous plan was forming in his mind.

When he was quite ready, every hair nicely slicked down, and the set of his necktie satisfying, he tapped at his sister's door. She bade him enter, and he plumped down on the edge of the bed with a masculine disregard for tidiness.

"Sis," he said abruptly, "what do you think of Betty Knowles?"

Mrs. Dennison was in the act of putting up her back hair, and her mouth was full of hairpins—which is as true as it is unlovely—but she managed to say thickly: "Sandy, do you mean that she is the 'girl'?"

"The very same," answered Sandy.

His sister removed the hairpins deliberately, and looked her brother over as though to discover some trace of insanity in his make-up.

"Do you dare to tell me, Sandy Van Buren, that you won't propose to that girl just because she has some money of her own?"

"That's about the size of it."

"You're six kinds of an idiot if you want my opinion. Why, she's simply fine! You better hurry, or somebody else will snatch her up."

"I know it," said Sandy gloomily. "There are two I know of who want her mighty bad—and heaven knows how many I don't know of."

He paused, and Mrs. Dennison returned to the doing up of her hair with a disagreeable laugh.

"Be a fool if you want to. It's none of my business. You're old enough to attend to your own affairs, and while I am naturally interested in you, I don't engage to be your guardian."

"Say, you *are* hard on a fellow."

"Well, nobody acts so silly in these

days. You need a wife with money, for you'll never be able to make any for yourself."

"Look here, sis, you're carrying it too far. I'd like to know why not? I won't marry her until I do, anyway."

"Oh, well, you might as well give it up right now."

A sharp retort was on the tip of Sandy's tongue, but he checked it with an effort.

"Well, if you're so keen on it, will you help a fellow out then?" he asked.

"Of course I will, Sandy, you old crank! And I truly didn't mean to be so cross. What do you want me to do?"

"It's just this: I'm crazy about Betty and I know she likes me pretty well. Some day, if she'll have me, I mean to marry her, but I can't ask her yet. All the same, I'm just aching for a glimpse of her. Would it be very wrong, do you think, to ask her to go with us on our trip?"

A match-making gleam came into Mrs. Dennison's eyes, proclaiming her kinship with the whole tribe of womankind.

"Sandy," she exclaimed, "you're as good as married already, if you do such a thing as that. I'll ask her—indeed, I'll be only too glad to ask her, and perhaps before we get home, you can be persuaded to propose."

"No," said Sandy virtuously, "I wouldn't take such an advantage of a girl. It would be downright rude, and besides, she might refuse me. Think how uncomfortable that would be for all of us."

"There's no danger of her refusing you, Sandy, and while you may be unwilling to take advantage of her, just be careful of yourself, dear, for I know women. She might take advantage of *you.*"

CHAPTER V.

DISCONCERTING NEWS.

When the Dennison party rolled out of The Towers' estate the next morning, Betty on the seat beside the chauffeur, Sandy felt that his cup of happiness was almost full.

As they were speeding along the road which would land them ultimately at Coalville, Willie Davis, at his hotel in Philadelphia, roused himself from slumber rather late and languidly proceeded with his toilet, as befitted a young man who had five hours to pass before train time and nothing to do meanwhile.

He had despatched his letter to Elsa the night before, but suddenly a great longing to hear her voice took possession of him, and simultaneously his eye fell upon the shining telephone on the desk in his room.

It looked so inviting and sanitary, with its freshly inserted paraffin mouthpiece, that he determined to try the experiment of calling her up.

He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock and there was a chance of his not finding her in, but he thought he could safely take the risk, since this was the morning that her music master came, and Elsa was very methodical in her habits.

He sat down in front of the desk and took up the receiver, meditating meanwhile upon the lies he would have to tell, and deprecating the necessity.

"Give me 320F Madison, New York City," he demanded.

The nerve-racking five minutes passed while he waited for the connection to be established, the bell tinkled and he took up the receiver again.

"Hello! Is this 320F Madison? Is Miss Hitchcock at home?—Miss Elsa Hitchcock — E-l-s-a Hitchcock! — Yes, please.

"Hello! Is this you, Elsa?—Can't you guess?—Yes. Say, dear, I felt awful going off and leaving you so suddenly!—I say, *I felt awful going off and leaving you so suddenly!*—She's better, very much better..

"I'm staying at the Bellevue-Stratford—I can't tell, perhaps a week more. but I'll get back as soon as—what's that?—you're coming on to Philadelphia?—What for?—I didn't know you had a cousin here—Of course, I'm glad; tickled to death——" (He gritted his teeth.) "What made you think I wasn't?—Oh, these long-distance wires make your voice sound rotten.—The automobile?—Why, I'd let you have the use of it in a minute, only I brought it here with me.—Yes, I came over in it—fine roads—Why, yes, we can go back in it, and you can run it all the way, if you

want to—Send your letters here.—That'll be all right, but let me know when you're coming. — Good-by! — I said, *good-by, dear!*"

Willie hung up the receiver with a long-drawn sigh, leaned back in his chair and thrust both hands into his pockets, a little trick he had when deeply annoyed or troubled.

He caught a glimpse of his face in the glass and it was so grotesque and rueful that his saving sense of humor prompted him to laugh.

"What makes me take everything so dashed serious?" he groaned. "Any other person would be simply bubbling over with joy at the prospect of seeing his fiancée unexpectedly. I couldn't think of a nicer plan myself if I thought a month—or of one that involved so many neat complications."

He got up and kicked the chairs about viciously.

"Let's see," he commented, "I've got a week, perhaps. I've g t to accomplish everything in that time, and something tells me there's going to be trouble. I just know that old miser won't give up my automobile! I feel it in my bones."

Now, a strange thing is this, Willie Davis did have an aunt who resided in Philadelphia. In fact, he had used her to give color to his tale. While he was in the city he thought it would be a wise plan to inquire after her health.

If, by any chance, he did find her ill, it would whiten his lie considerably, and help to bolster up his self-respect, which of late had been somewhat on the wane.

Accordingly, he sought out the old-fashioned house where she had lived all her life. The invalid mother to whom she had devoted her best years had recently died, and Ellen Davis was living out her peaceful, aimless existence alone.

She was a splendid type of spinster—a type that has gone completely out of fashion—and she would have been horrified had any one dared refer to her as a bachelor girl.

There were rumors afloat in the family that years ago Ellen had had a love affair. Some were of the opinion that the man died; some thought they had quarreled, but only one knew the truth, and that was Ellen herself.

She refused to marry him because she thought her mother needed her, and she had been secretly sorry ever since. He was a poor boy and he took her refusal in quite another spirit, since the Davises had money. He left Philadelphia abruptly and she had never seen or heard from him since.

Willie was always a favorite with his aunt. She was the type of woman who adores boys. He returned her affection with interest, and marveled at her determined spinsterhood, for to Willie, his Aunt Ellen, with her smooth brown hair softly parted and drawn into a neat coil on the top of her head, her dainty little hands and feet, her trim figure in its garb of freshly laundered muslin, was infinitely attractive.

She dressed plainly in the fashion of her girlhood and had precise, if antiquated notions on the subject of style.

Willie had always liked the smell of the cool dark house set back primly from the street, protected by its trim privet hedge. There were rose jars in the parlors with their tops always open, and the bedrooms smelt of lavender flowers.

Ellen Davis lived quite alone, except for Hannah, her faithful maid-of-all-work, who was more friend and counselor than menial.

Willie felt a thrill of pleasure as he ascended the white, carefully scrubbed, marble steps. The brass door-plate and bell shone as they always did; the windows were open and the spotless muslin curtains beat gently back and forth in the breeze.

He could almost fancy his aunt at her writing-desk, where she sat every morning, regularly as clock-work, going over her accounts and attending to her correspondence. It was from her little desk that his weekly letter emanated, and a pang of remorse struck him when he thought how neglectful he was sometimes of response.

He pulled the bell and waited patiently on the door-step until Hannah should have had time to change her gingham apron for a white one and pin on her head the bow of ribbon that answered for a cap, and he guessed to a certainty the precise moment that the door would open.

"Hello, Hannah," he said, "you got

your bow on crooked that time—you ought to look in the glass."

Hannah put up an anxious hand to straighten the bow, and looked in blank amazement at the intruder.

"Lor' bless us, if it ain't Mr. Willie!" she exclaimed at last. "Come right in."

She held open the door and Willie stepped into the narrow, old-fashioned hall.

"Well, I am surprised!" ejaculated Hannah, too overcome to give utterance to any other sentiment. "I thought you was to college?"

"I was," said Willie, "but business called me to Philadelphia. And, Hannah, I've got some big news for you—I'm engaged to be married!"

"What!" said Hannah, bewilderment spreading over her plump countenance. "Not *you,* Mr. Willie?"

"Sure. Who else? Where's Aunt Ellen?—I want to tell her about it."

Hannah's face was a study in emotions.

"I don't understand at all," she said, "but step into the parlor, Mr. Willie, an' set down."

She carefully dusted a chair for him with her apron.

"Your aunt's to the dressmaker's," she continued impressively, "an' she won't be home till after lunch. Her clothes is being made in a terrible hurry, but *the* dress is finished and I know she would want that you should see it."

"Do you mean to tell me, Hannah, that my Aunt Ellen is at the dressmaker's?" asked Willie, incredulous and astonished. "Hannah, you're foolish! I remember her telling me that she ordered everything by measure and never went near a dressmaker."

"Well, that's what she *did,* but this is different. Come up-stairs and I'll show you."

He followed her to the spare-room and she threw up a window-shade, revealing a disorder which, even seeing, he could scarcely credit.

All about the room were boxes and parcels in tissue-paper wrappings, and on the bed lay a mysterious package enveloped in the same material. Hannah reverently lifted the coverings from this and disclosed a wonderful French gown of biscuit-colored silk, elaborately trimmed with lace and a touch of pale blue.

"Her white things is in there," said Hannah, indicating the chiffonier, "but I don't know that she would want that I should show you those."

"No, don't," said Willie, hastily backing out of the room.

"Hannah," he said solemnly. "I am quite prepared, and you needn't spare me—is my aunt going crazy?"

Hannah's rising indignation choked her for a moment.

"Well, I should say not," she snorted. "Not unless you be going crazy, too. Miss Ellen's going to be married—and quite time, I say."

Willie could no more imagine his aunt married than he could imagine her decked out in the modish apparel he had just seen, but it must be true.

He regained the hall, Hannah following him, full of the importance of the news she had just communicated.

"I know she'd want you to wait, so's she could tell you herself, but I did think you knew already. I'm almost sure she wrote it in her last letter."

Willie recollected that he had left New Haven the day before her letter would arrive. "It must have come after I came away," he said. "No, I can't wait; I'm leaving town this afternoon. But do tell me, when is the wedding and whom is she going to marry? I thought——"

"Oh, it's a long story. It's the same man she was engaged to before. He never married, and now he's rich an' he wrote to her, takin' a chance on her bein' single. She answered, an' he's comin' on next week.

"She ain't seen him yet, but she's seen his picture—he don't look so old, neither, not as you might suppose. She's dretful afraid he won't find her the same, but I tell her that's all nonsense. He knows she ain't young, and what's more, he don't want no young girl—he wants Miss Ellen.

"You'd ought to see her now. She's been havin' the hair-dresser fix her hair and she wears it waved. An' she tried that massage till she looks like new. It's wonderful what they can do to you nowadays."

Hannah furtively examined her own face in the glass, as she spoke, as though considering its possibilities.

Willie picked up his hat and stick.

"Well, I must be going," he said. "I can't wait. It's one o'clock now, and I have my ticket to get and my hotel bill to settle. Give her my love and I'll stop in to see her on my way back. When did you say she is to be married?"

"Next week—a week from Thursday. He's coming on just as soon as he gets some business settled."

"I *would* like to see her," said Willie as he gained the sidewalk.

He took out his watch and looked at it.

"No, it's impossible," he muttered. "That train for Coalville is the only one out to-day and I can't risk losing it."

"Coalville!" exclaimed Hannah, "why, that's where——"

But Willie had slammed the gate and was already out of earshot.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AND A MOTOR-CAR.

MEANWHILE, the Dennisons were proceeding merrily on their way.

They did not make the détour into Philadelphia, but struck across country by the main State Road of Pennsylvania, which you can easily discover by the aid of a road map.

Betty was in a teasing mood and, as she sat with Sandy, nearly succeeded in making his life as miserable as it was happy.

It was bitter-sweet to be with Betty. Her brown hair was always blowing across his face and distracting his attention, when he needed the whole of it for the road, and she would insist in laying her hand over his on the steering gear to help him guide the machine.

Worse than that even, they were whirling so fast that when she talked with him she found it necessary to put her mouth very close to his ear.

Not that Sandy minded, or that he didn't like it—only he found his resolution growing steadily weaker in the face of temptation. He wanted Betty. He wanted to ask her to marry him right then and there.

But most insistent of all was the desire to kiss her. Sandy felt that somehow a kiss from Betty would open the gates of heaven for him, and with that thought all unconsciously he caught himself humming a fragment of Guilbert's song:

I will give you the keys of Heaven—
* * * * * *
Madam, will you walk,
Madam, will you talk,
Madam, will you walk and talk with me.

"Delighted," said Betty, "if that's an invitation, but I'd rather run the automobile—do you mind?"

"Not in the least," said Sandy. "Do you know how?"

"Well," she answered guardedly, "papa once let me steer ours for about a mile. He took care of the levers though. But I'm crazy to learn. I know you'd be a fine teacher, Sandy."

Sandy stopped the car and they exchanged seats. Mrs. Dennison became interested. The idea of running the car had not occurred to her before, but it seemed a good one and she promised herself a try at it when Betty should have tired.

Betty grasped the wheel determinedly and placed her toes gingerly on the pedals Sandy indicated. The car moved forward slowly. He showed her how to throw out the clutch and they shot ahead on the higher speed.

The automobile wavered uncertainly, as though undecided which side of the road to choose.

"What makes it wobble?" asked Betty anxiously. "The wheel isn't a bit steady."

"Oh, yes, it is," answered Sandy, laughing. "Your eye is crooked and you're holding the wheel too tight. Just hold it loosely—pretend you're riding a bicycle—and keep your eye on the road."

In a little while her nerves grew steadier and when they had gone a couple of miles she had mastered the steering so well that the car kept on its proper side of the road. By that time, in the natural evolution of the chauffeur, she became possessed of a desire to scorch.

So she slyly turned on more gas, notch by notch, until they were going at quite a lively clip.

Sandy kept his eyes trained steadily on the road.

They were on the outskirts of a small village and about a quarter of a mile ahead were a couple of vehicles.

"You'd better slow down," said Sandy, cautiously. "Shall I take it now?"

"No, indeed," said Betty; "I'm going finely. I do believe you're jealous, Sandy."

"Well, blow the horn and slow down. We're going faster than you realize."

"All right. I'll slow down—a little."

One of the wagons responded to her signal with well-trained celerity, but the other kept on doggedly in the middle of the road, and for half a second a panic struck Betty. She wished that she had given the car over to Sandy to handle.

She put her hand on the ratchet to turn down the gas, and by mistake, she turned up the spark instead, which sent them on at even faster speed.

"Oh, what have I done?" she gasped.

Sandy hastily rectified her mistake, but they were almost upon the team by that time. To avoid crashing into it, they would have to run the car into a grassy embankment, which meant certain disaster for the automobile and its passengers.

To make matters worse, if possible, the driver of the wagon, apparently in a state of blissful unconsciousness, turned his sleepy horse into a cross-road, presenting his team broadside to the automobile. There was no possible way to pass, for this unexpected maneuver effectually blocked what little room there was; the car was going too fast to be brought to a complete stop, although Sandy had turned off every bit of power and put on the brakes.

So Betty had her choice of hitting either the wagon or the horse. There wasn't any time in which to choose, either; but she aimed for the wagon as the lesser of two evils, and then shut her eyes.

Even Sandy, whose dignity as a chauffeur suffered considerably, had to admit that there was a funny side to that accident.

The wagon skidded sideways with a suddenness that must have caused some surprise to its driver, and the freight, which consisted largely of eggs, was distributed liberally over the surrounding landscape.

After committing its brilliant *coup d'état,* the automobile obligingly stopped and waited like a naughty child to see what would come of it.

The thin, tired-looking horse spread his feet apart and stood his ground manfully, as though being hit by an automobile was an every-day occurrence with him.

There was a dead silence for a moment, then, simultaneously, Sandy jumped out to examine the car, and the driver of the wagon came down out of his conveyance, and they had it out right there in the middle of the road.

The butter-and-eggs man was a little, dried-up, chin-whiskered fellow, and had evidently had dealings with motor-cars before.

"Why don't you look whar' you're goin'?" he shouted fiercely. "You autymobile fellers think you own the hull road. I'll larn ye! Them eggs is wuth fifty cents a dozen, an' you've busted twenty dozen on me—an' that butter'll cost ye forty-five cents a pound."

"The whole road," said Sandy, getting red in the face with anger. "What do you mean? *You* took the whole road yourself. You deserved to get hit. Didn't you hear that horn?"

"Of course I heered it. I s'pose you think everybody's got to jump when you toot. Wal', I take my time, an' when they run into me, they got to pay."

He struck a defiant attitude.

"There was twenty dozen eggs at——"

Mrs. Dennison could contain herself no longer.

"You awful man," she exclaimed hotly, "eggs fifty cents a dozen at this time of year! I know better—I'm only paying thirty, and thirty-two for butter."

"I don't care what you pay when you're home, ma'am," continued the farmer with a grin, "but right here you'll pay my price. Besides that, the damage to my wagon an' horse an' to my own feelin's——"

"Your wagon isn't damaged at all, and neither is your horse," interposed Mr. Dennison quietly.

"What do you know about it?" said the farmer haughtily, quite realizing the

advantage of his position. "There's easy twenty-five dollars' wuth of damage done to my team. Ain't there, Joe?"

He appealed to the driver of the other wagon, who had come up by this time, and stood by to see the fun. Joe shifted the quid of tobacco he was chewing to the other side of his mouth, spat, examined the sky carefully as though for rain, but refused to further commit himself.

The butter-and-eggs man continued his own defense.

"Easy twenty-five dollars — and twenty dollars for the truck you've spoiled—give me fifty dollars—cash, no check—an' we'll call it square. An' I guess it'll larn you to be more careful whar' you're goin'."

"I'm learning a whole lot," said Sandy, "but some of it I knew before. How about our radiators? Your wagon broke them and it will cost about twenty-five dollars to get them repaired. I guess ten dollars will even it off, my friend." He held out a bill. "Will you accept it?"

"Not on your life! I guess you folks don't know who you're dealin' with!"

"I guess we do by this time," said Sandy. "All right. I'm sorry we can't agree on it."

He stuffed the bill back into his pocket, jumped into the car, and in a moment more they were out of sight around the corner, nothing but a cloud of dust and the impromptu omelets in the middle of the road, left to tell the tale.

The thing that pleased Sandy most was that the butter-and-eggs man had to jump back lively as they passed to avoid getting his toes pinched.

Betty was greatly distressed at her share in the accident and could not be persuaded to try running the car again. In fact, they were all a trifle subdued by it, and were glad when Sandy suggested putting up at the nearest town in order to repair the radiators, which were leaking badly.

They stayed overnight at Bethlehem, and early next morning were off again.

The country, which had hitherto been flat farming-land, began to take on a hilly aspect. There were low, undulating steeps covered by forests, and trout streams bubbled by the wayside.

The towns were smaller and farther apart.

In the afternoon they pulled into Garland, which was the smallest town they had ever seen. There was no station because there was no railroad, and no hotel or store—just three houses, and in one of these lived the postmaster, who received and distributed mail three times a week, whenever the mail-boy saw fit to ride over the crest of the hill.

An automobile was so unusual a spectacle that the entire population, some twenty souls in all, turned out to greet them. The postmaster agreed to put them up overnight.

He was a lean, talkative Dutchman, and together with his wife succeeded in making them very comfortable.

Mrs. Dennison and Betty both expressed great pleasure in the beauty of their surroundings. They bathed and changed their attire while the men were going over the mechanism of the car to see that everything was well with it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

JUST as Sandy and his brother-in-law had finished their task and joined the ladies on the porch, Mrs. Schultz appeared with a tray laden with cold buttermilk, and fresh, sugary crullers.

Everything combined to set them at peace with the world. The gentle swish of the clear stream which flowed almost at their very feet, the cool mountain breezes, not to mention the crullers and buttermilk—all were delightful.

"I'm just enjoying myself every minute," said Betty impulsively, turning to Mrs. Dennison. "Every minute! You see, we have been so busy getting ready for the wedding. The whole house has been in a ferment for a month, and I feel as though lifted out of a whirlpool and set down in this lovely nook to rest. I can hardly realize it."

"If you ask me, I can hardly realize it, either," said Sandy fervently. "It's the heaven of my hopes. Let's drink to the success of our trip!"

He took a long draft that exhausted his glass and proceeded to refill it from the convenient pitcher.

Their host was leaning amiably against the porch-rail.

"I surely vas glat to haf some company," he said. "Me und my vife—ve gets lonesome oud here by ourselfs."

"You're cut off from the world, all right," remarked Sandy, between mouthfuls.

"No, ve ain't—not quite!" he returned with proper pride. "Ve half a telephone! It's der only one dis side of Johannesport—vich is a goot forty miles from here."

"That's the town we make for next," said Sandy, consulting his map. "The roads are pretty bad, too, I understand. The worst on the whole trip. All hills with steep precipices. It's a good thing, Warren, that you've got the car you have. An automobile with medium power would never get over those roads. I wouldn't take that trip by night if you gave me a thousand dollars."

"I should say not," said Mrs. Dennison anxiously. "Do you think it is safe even in the daytime?"

"Oh, yes."

"You ought to see more of dis country," observed Mr. Schultz. "It's fine! Dere's a vater-fall yust beyont Hook Mountain yonder—you ought to go py it."

"How far?" asked Sandy.

"Oh, mebbe t'irty miles; mebbe not so much, und de roads is pooty goot going."

Sandy looked at his watch.

"It's only four o'clock," he said, "and Mrs. Schultz won't have supper before seven. There's plenty of time this afternoon, if you care to go."

"Not me," said Mrs. Dennison, yawning. "I've a nice little nap coming to me. Go ahead if you want to, but don't make me go with you."

"Nor me," said her husband. "I'm stiff from so much riding."

"What a lazy bunch!" exclaimed Sandy in disgust. "You'll never strike this part of the country again in the course of a natural lifetime—we're going home by a different route—and for the sake of a nap you give up seeing one of nature's grandest spectacles. I'm going if I have to go alone."

"You won't have to go alone," said Betty, "for I'll go."

"Betty, you're a trump! I'll bring up the car and we'll start right off."

Mrs. Schultz bustled into the house, and by the time Sandy had the car ready she had prepared a package of lunch.

"You'll get hungry in de mountains," she explained, "I find it alvays makes me an appedite."

"She expects us to eat all the time," laughed Betty, as they rolled out of the yard.

"That's all right," said Sandy, with true masculine appreciation of things to eat, "I've found that a bite comes in handy, and you never know when you're going to need it, either."

It was very cozy, just the two of them, and Sandy drove slowly so that they could appreciate the beautiful scenery.

The touch of Betty's dress against his shoulder thrilled them both, and all unconsciously they fell into a tender silence, each busy with thoughts of the other.

"I love her, I love her!" Sandy's heart was singing. "And in just another minute I'll kiss her—such a kiss as I've wanted from the first moment we met."

And Betty was saying: "Sandy, Sandy, are you made of stone—how can you resist me?"

They were still a good ten miles from the famous waterfall, and it is safe to predict that Sandy would soon have thrown his prejudices to the four winds and proposed to Betty then and there, when around a bend in the road they came unexpectedly upon a clearing in the midst of which stood a rough log-house with a narrow porch in front and a shack, or lean-to, in the rear.

Smoke was pouring from the rusted piece of pipe that served for a chimney, and pigs and chickens rooted and scratched noisily in the front yard. A few vegetables grew in irregular patches, protected from the live-stock by a ram-shackle paling.

There were clothes hanging on the fence to dry, but no human being was visible. Sandy brought the car to a standstill while they observed this lonesome habitation.

"It's the first house we've seen," he said. "Wonder if anybody's at home? I'd like to find out if we're on the right road. Hallo, there!"

A woman appeared in the doorway.

She was young and might have been rather pretty but for the fact that her face was swollen and disfigured from crying. She wore a thin calico wrapper that clung to her like a vine, and her hair was twisted into an unbecoming knot at the back of her head.

"Is this the road to the falls?" Sandy asked.

She nodded dully.

"You turns by the bridge. It'll be five miles yet—where you turns."

Sandy thanked her and put his hand on the clutch to start the car, but Betty stopped him.

"Something's the matter with her. Did you notice? She's been crying."

"Husband beat her, most likely," said Sandy carelessly.

"Well, I'm going to find out. Just wait a minute."

Betty jumped from the car and ran lightly toward the porch.

"Are you in trouble?" she asked gently. "Is there anything we can do?"

The woman brushed the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand.

"My man—he's gone by Johannesport," she said, choking back a sob. "He's gone for two, three days, maybe—und maybe 'fore he gets home——" she motioned toward the house, and Betty stepped up on the porch, anxious to discover the cause of her distress.

"What is it?" she asked. "Are you afraid something will happen to him?"

"No, no! He's all right. It's my baby—my baby's sick! The doctor—he is by Johannesport, too—I guess my little baby, he die!"

She broke off in a wail and flew into the house.

Betty followed hurriedly.

The one room was in perfect order, contrasting strangely with the disorder outside. On the bed lay the baby, moving restlessly from side to side, the muscles of his face twitching ominously.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Betty in an awed whisper, bending over the bed.

"I guess he has der lung fever. Mis' Johnson's baby, he died by der lung fever last week—we was to de funeral. I guess my baby die, too—vat you think?"

"Pneumonia!" gasped Betty to herself. "How dreadful!"

She turned to the woman.

"Don't you know better than to expose your baby to such a thing?"

"It vasn't catching!" exclaimed the woman, hysterically.

"But it is catching—you see for yourself. Has he had convulsions?"

"I dink so," she returned vaguely, not quite grasping her visitor's meaning.

Betty dashed out of the door to meet Sandy half-way.

"Oh, Sandy," she cried, clutching his arm, "her baby's sick—it has pneumonia—it's very sick! And her husband is in Johannesport and no doctor nearer than there. She's all alone, poor thing. The baby's face is twitching. I know it's going to have a convulsion if we don't do something quick!"

She held out her hands to him in mute appeal.

"Quick, Sandy, think of something! What shall we do?"

"There's only one thing to do," said Sandy; "take them to Johannesport."

He turned to the woman. "How far is it?"

"I dink it's about twenty-five miles—maybe more."

"All right. Get the baby, and don't lose any time."

Betty dashed back into the house and gathered the baby into her arms. His little head hung limp; his face was waxen.

"Come," she said to the mother, "get in. We'll take you to Johannesport in a jiffy. I'll hold the baby; you must be tired. I know about—lung fever. Our gardener's baby had it this winter and I helped to nurse it."

She sent Sandy to dip his handkerchief in water from the brook and laid the wet bandage gently across the baby's hot forehead, and by degrees his facial muscles relaxed and the child drowsed.

It was an exciting ride, down-hill most of the way.

They did not talk much. Occasionally the baby coughed loosely, and Betty tenderly wiped his lips, and several times she made Sandy stop and re-moisten the handkerchief at wayside streams.

The speed at which this marvelous conveyance was taking her into town,

stunned the mother into silence, and she sat rigid and fearful, clinging with both hands to the seat, her eyes fixed on the baby's face.

At dusk they drew up in front of the doctor's house, and Betty carried in her little burden, the mother stumbling pathetically behind.

Sandy was sent to find the baby's father. The village was of fair size and by the time he had been located, the stars were out and shining brightly.

"The doctor is going to keep the baby all night," Betty announced from the step. "We put him into a cold pack and brought his temperature down two degrees. The doctor thinks he will live! Just think, Sandy, we saved a life this afternoon! Doesn't that make you feel good?"

She put out her hand to Sandy and he took it in both of his, a tender light shining in his eyes.

"Oh, Betty, I love you—I love you!" he said softly. "Kiss me, dear."

He folded her to his heart there on the doctor's step.

"Well," said Betty finally, drawing an ecstatic sigh, "we'll have to be thinking about going back. It's good to have those sandwiches, after all—and, oh, Sandy, I'm so tired!"

"Haven't you realized, Betty, that we can't take that ride back to-night? It's forty miles, over dangerous roads."

"But, Sandy——"

"I know, Betty, all that you're going to say, but let me say it first. It's really very simple. We'll hunt a minister, then some supper and a place to camp in, and then we'll telephone the glad tidings to Schultz's."

A crimson tide surged upward into Betty's face, as she laid her cheek against his shoulder.

"What will you telephone, Sandy dear?" she said coquettishly.

"That we've been married—what else?"

CHAPTER VIII.

WILLIE SEES HIS CAR AGAIN.

It is now expedient to pass lightly over events following upon the heels of the wedding in Johannesport, since they do not bear upon the story.

Mrs. Dennison's delighted amazement can be well imagined, and she had a thousand questions to ask the bride concerning the strange circumstances which had brought about such a happy event, but preserved an admirable restraint, since her husband insisted on staying a second day with the Schultzes in order to give the newly married couple an apology for a honeymoon.

Betty neglected her husband shamefully for the little pneumonia patient, whom she regarded as her special charge, and, thanks to her, the baby had safely passed the crisis of the disease.

Altogether, the Dennisons were delayed nearly forty-eight hours beyond Willie Davis' calculations, and when the great red car hove into sight of Coalville, late in the afternoon of the third day, Willie Davis, on the front piazza of the Coalville House, engaged in the arduous and unsatisfactory occupation known as "killing time," instantly spied them.

He had kept his eyes on that turnpike for the past two days.

A sudden bashfulness at being discovered assailed him, and although he had rehearsed a dozen times his speech to Mr. Dennison, his first impulse on actually seeing the car approach was to beat a quick retreat.

He compromised by pulling his soft felt hat down over his eyes and elevating his feet to the porch rail in the manner he had seen traveling men affect.

He decided not to speak to Mr. Dennison until after supper, when he would be rested and, it was hoped, in a conciliatory frame of mind. He watched the car—*his* car—sail up the steep incline like a bird, and felt the pride of proprietorship in the soft, clever humming of its cylinders.

"I tell you," he observed to a plump gentleman who had strolled out of the real estate office across the street, "there's an automobile for you!"

"Where?" demanded the plump gentleman, betraying considerable excitement. "That's my nephew, I'll wager. I've been expecting him for the past two days."

"Here, too," thought Willie to himself. Aloud, he said politely, "Your nephew?"

"Yes. He's run that car clear from New York. I didn't have any faith in it when he wrote me how they were coming, but they'd already started and I couldn't stop 'em. I'm glad they came. If they'd been much longer they wouldn't have seen me, for I'm going East myself. I guess my nephew'll take me back as far's I'm going."

Willie gave a discouraged sigh. It was more than probable that they would take him back in—their automobile. His chance of recovering it seemed very slight. It was a will-o'-the-wisp he was chasing.

The Dennison party had by this time arrived at the Coalville House and the ladies were very glad that their destination was reached. It had been a long, dusty run from Johannesport; the sun was hot, and any place to rest, even this bare, unlovely spot, was welcome.

They had left the green country and come into the bare coal regions. The squat, ugly cabins of the miners huddled together on the edge of the settlement, and the main street was given over to tawdry shops, saloons, and "cash" grocery stores.

The hotel was a cheap, bare structure, of impossible architecture, painted a flamboyant green and distinctly out of harmony with anything on the face of the earth.

Mr. Dennison regarded his uncle with awe. That he could live twenty years in this dreadful spot with only an occasional trip East to break the monotony, was almost unbelievable.

Henry Wood greeted the Dennisons with marked effusion and hospitality, helped them with the luggage and arranged for their accommodations, all in the twinkling of an eye. He then hustled his nephew, tired and dusty from the ride, over into the real estate office to talk business.

"You see, Warren," he apologized when they were seated. "I've simply got to get all this over with quickly. I must get through this week, for I'm going East just as soon as I can. If there's room, I can go back with you folks, and we'll kill two birds with one stone—do business on the trip."

"You're a hustler, Uncle Henry," laughed Mr. Dennison. "So you're going to quit Coalville? I don't see how you and Uncle John stood it as long as you did."

"Oh, all poor John ever thought about was money. I wanted a little of it myself, but John took all there was to be had around here. When he died, he about owned the town."

"And now the poor old fellow's gone and it all belongs to us!"

"He has. And praise the Lord, *I'm* not an old man yet."

Warren Dennison paused in the act of reaching out his hand for a document his uncle was passing him. Something in the tone of voice caught and held his attention.

"Of course not," he answered. "You have a whole lot of life ahead of you yet. I suppose you'll leave Coalville for good?"

"Well, I guess I will. For better or for worse, as they say. I've put in the best years of my life digging in this hole. Long ago I gave up hopes of anything better, when all of a sudden, along comes this money. That isn't the best of it, either. I'm—I'm going to Europe, and I——"

A rosy blush suffused his cheeks and he presented as coy an appearance as any girl. It didn't take a mind-reader to fathom his secret, and Mr. Dennison laughed outright as he exclaimed.

"Well, I congratulate you, whoever she is. I hope you'll have a swell time on your wedding trip. Perhaps we'll run across each other, for I mean to do a little globe-trotting myself."

Willie went in to supper early that evening, hoping to finish his meal before the Dennisons put in an appearance, but they were all hungry and distressingly punctual.

As luck had it, Mrs. Dennison's seat was directly opposite his, and she spent the entire meal trying to figure to herself just where she had seen him before. His face was familiar enough, but she couldn't place him to save her life, and the question intruded itself in such a manner as to spoil her supper.

She stared at Willie and that luckless youth choked over his tea in his embarrassment. He cut his meal short and left the room before the others.

Mrs. Dennison's puzzled gaze fol-

lowed him to the very door; then she gave a sudden start of dismay.

She knew!

"Warren," she said in a sepulchral tone, "did you notice the young man across from me?"

Her mysterious manner caused her spouse to suspend his eating operations sufficiently to follow with his eye Willie's figure as it passed along the porch before the dining-room windows.

"Well, Warren," she continued solemnly, "that's the same young man who followed us across Forty-Second Street the night we bought the automobile. It's out of all reason that his presence here is accidental. He's followed us here!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Dennison, resuming his meal.

Mrs. Dennison related the story with graphic details for the benefit of the others. She questioned the landlord—what was the young man's name and what was he doing in Coalville?

The landlord said he was registered as Davis, although considering the circumstances that might easily be an assumed name; and so far, he had successfully evaded questioning on the subject of his business—although every opportunity had been given him to unbosom himself. Most of the time he spent on the front porch, watching the turnpike.

That settled it for Mrs. Dennison. She was certain now that Willie's motives were ulterior, and she called upon her husband to seek out the young man and demand a full explanation of his suspicious conduct.

Her husband openly scoffed her suggestion, but he had scarcely gained the porch before Willie approached him, hat in hand, his most engaging manner and winning smile displayed for the former's conciliation.

"Mr. Dennison, I believe?"

"Yes," said the person addressed, curtly, "I think I've had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr. ——"

"Davis, is my name. Please sit down, Mr. Dennison, I want to have a few words with you."

"I think I can talk as well standing. Is your friend still in the market for automobiles?" he inquired dryly.

The subject thus tactfully opened for him, Willie plunged in.

"Yes, he is—that is, I am. I'll be truthful about it. I followed you here. I must buy that automobile. I can't tell you all the circumstances, but the car has a sentimental value for me, quite aside from any financial consideration. I sold it when I was hard pressed for money. I ought never to have parted with it—and I'll pay anything within reason to get it back."

"The money doesn't interest me," said Mr. Dennison, with newly rich carelessness. "The car suits me—I bought it and I don't care to sell it. My affection for it amounts almost to a passion—if I may be permitted the expression."

"So does mine," said Willie, stubbornly.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Dennison in the tone one uses to get rid of a book-agent. "I'm sorry that you had your trip for nothing and that I can't accommodate you—but I can't let you have the car under any circumstances."

"Then sell me the monograms," pleaded Willie, desperately.

"Well, hardly. It would deface the car to remove them."

"Oh, very well!" Willie turned on his heel and stomped away.

A mad impulse to rush out to the hotel sheds and take the car possessed him, but he dismissed it as impracticable, the best reason being that in all likelihood Mr. Dennison or Sandy had the cut-out plug, without which it would be impossible to move the car an inch by its own power.

There was just one thing to do, and he set about it quickly.

The night train left in ten minutes. Willie's packing was a matter of thirty seconds, he settled his hotel bill in less than a minute and in five more was pacing the station platform.

His course was clear. He'd go back to Philadelphia and try to purchase another automobile as nearly like the one he had lost as possible, and fix it up with monograms, so that Elsa would never know.

Elsa! He had quite forgotten her in the recent anxiety, and now he recollected that by this time she was almost certain to be in Philadelphia herself. Worse than that, even, she would wonder why he was not there to meet her.

His power of inventiveness was already strained to the breaking point and Willie wondered how it would survive this new emergency.

CHAPTER IX.

ELSA STIRS THE PUDDING.

THE first part of Willie's program was carried out to perfection. He arrived in Philadelphia on schedule time and immediately sought out the local agency for his car.

The simplicity of the new plan pleased him and he wondered at himself for not doing it before. How much better, all around, than humbling himself before this Dennison person as he had been compelled to do.

New car, new monograms, and he defied Elsa or anybody else to know the difference.

But Willie had never had experience in the purchasing of an automobile, or he would not have been so sanguine. Once more his good angel failed him.

There wasn't a car to be had in Philadelphia of the make he wanted, nor in New York, either, for he telephoned to find out. The best the agents could promise him was a car in six weeks, and they were doubtful even about that.

In his despair Willie realized how desperately he had bungled the whole matter, for in this foot-race against time he had lost place at the very start.

There seemed nothing to do but wait for the ax to fall and trust to the generosity of a much-neglected young lady, who quite realized her importance, and was already much out of temper because of the dearth of attention shown her.

In fact, Willie shuddered when he thought of Elsa.

Very likely she was in Philadelphia at that very moment—had no doubt been there for several days past. He knew perfectly well that he would find a message from her awaiting him at the hotel, and accordingly he shunned that fashionable hostelry.

In the midst of all this gloom he had an inspiration. He would go to see his Aunt Ellen and tell her his troubles. There wasn't the least doubt in the world but that she could help him out—at least her presence would be soothing, and he could count on her sympathy.

But, truly, this was Willie Davis' unlucky day.

Aunt Ellen had run down to Atlantic City to spend the last few days before her wedding, and rest up. Some thought of following her was in Willie's mind, but it was like chasing a forlorn hope at the best; he was quite disgusted with the turn things were taking; examinations were imminent, and without rhyme or reason, in face of the fact that Elsa was in Philadelphia ostensibly to see him, Willie calmly picked up his little grip and struck out for New Haven as fast as the trains would take him.

The disconcerting change of front that Fate had recently shown him was puzzling to this young favorite of fortune. He tried to hark back and fix the blame for his troubles, and he succeeded in placing it on one of two things.

Either the earthquake which had delayed the check was to blame, or Bert Henning, from whose fertile brain had come the suggestion of the racing-party.

Willie was so interested to know which that he tossed up a cent on it, and it came up earthquake, otherwise this story might have had a gruesome sequel, for Willie was nothing if not revengeful.

It would be difficult to set down the emotions which were assailing Miss Elsa Hitchcock during this interval. She came with her dress-suit case for a week-end visit to her cousin, Grace Hitchcock, and promptly sent notice of her arrival to Willie at the Bellevue-Stratford.

As a newly engaged girl, Elsa was of much importance to Grace, who was more than anxious to see the much-discussed fiancé. Imagine, then, if you can, Elsa's mortification at his non-appearance.

It was almost a foregone conclusion that Willie would wake up some fine morning in the near future and find himself jilted. Elsa wrote and re-wrote the letter breaking her engagement, but the effort always ended in tears and a consignment of finely torn note-paper to the waste-basket.

She just couldn't, wouldn't believe

him faithless until she had better proof. All the same, Willie was doomed to a wretched half hour when next they met.

Elsa strung out her week-end until Thursday, then could stand it no longer, and Grace sympathetically elected to bear her company to New York.

It was early—shortly before nine o'clock—when they reached the Broad Street Station, and Elsa's feelings which had been teetering on the edge of forgiveness as far as Willie Davis was concerned, received a decided shock and rebounded in the other direction when she saw, unmistakably, his automobile standing by the curb.

She drew Grace's attention to it instantly.

"That's his car! That's Willie's car!" she said excitedly.

"Are you sure?" said her cousin, stepping up close to it.

"Of course I'm sure. There isn't the least doubt in the world! I'd know it in a million. Look at the monograms. Very likely he's in the station this minute—perhaps waiting for somebody! Oh, it's outrageous! I'll never forgive him, never!"

"You poor thing! If we stand here, he'll likely come out—do you want to see him?"

"Yes—no! I don't think I ever want to see him again."

"Well, dear, there surely is some good reason. You know his aunt——"

"Oh, bother his aunt! I'll get even with him—trust me for that!"

She looked anxiously toward the station, but Willie was nowhere in sight.

"Do you see what he's done?" she said quickly, pointing to the machine. "He's left the cut-out switch in the coil! The idiot! Why, anybody could run off with the car in a minute!"

"Oh, there's no danger of that—people don't steal automobiles—the license numbers keep too good a tally on them."

"I know," continued Elsa mischievously, "but in this case, there's nothing to prevent *our* stealing it. It would teach him a lesson, too—and, besides, he never has let me run that car yet."

"Oh, Elsa, wouldn't you be afraid?"

"What of? I can run an automobile better than I can drive a horse. There isn't anything I don't know about it. Throw in your bag, girlie, and I'll get you to New York before you can say 'Jack Robinson'!"

Grace took another look around.

"You're sure it's all right," she persisted as she climbed in, "and you don't think he'd be angry?"

"Oh, I count on his being angry—that's what I'm doing it for."

She jumped up into the driver's seat, turned on the power, and in another minute they were speeding across Broad Street, headed for the suburbs.

"It seems almost too good to be true," Elsa said, when they were fairly out of the city. "Nothing could have happened to please me better. This will teach Mr. Willie a lesson, all right.

"I'm not altogether certain about the best route to take to New York, but it's easy enough to inquire. We ought to make it by six, easy."

"And then what will you do?" asked Grace, who was decidedly timid about the propriety of their act.

"Oh, I'll send him a telegram that will puzzle him a bit. I've got it all planned out."

The roads were fine and the morning clear and cool. The landscape seemed fairly to fly past them as they whirled along.

Elsa took off her hat, and her fine, curly blond hair blew out in the breeze like a fluffy aureole. Running the automobile had a soothing effect on her nerves, and she began to feel lighthearted and happy again. She could even consider forgiving Willie with a degree of calmness.

In due course of time they came to Bristol, and, by ill-chance, Elsa elected to stop for gasoline.

With no premonition of impending disaster, she inquired the way to a garage, found it, and directed the man to fill the gasoline and water tanks. Then she thought it would be wise to have the oil-tank examined and the rear tires pumped up.

All of this took time, and meanwhile a crowd had collected, for there is always a group of the unemployed to superintend jobs of this sort. Grace grew a little uneasy at the attention they

were attracting, and induced her cousin to retire with her to the office of the garage until the car should be ready for them to proceed.

Time went by until nearly an hour had been consumed, and then, just as Elsa was making ready to investigate, she could hear excited voices outside, and when they went to the window to seek the cause of it, they were thunderstruck to see to what proportions the crowd had grown.

A hundred people jostled elbows about the car, which two policemen were minutely examining.

The rude familiarity of the officers with her property angered Elsa more than it frightened her, and she was about to rush out and demand an explanation, when some one pointed to the garage office and one of the officers started in their direction.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" moaned Grace, "I told you we'd get into trouble! What do you suppose is the matter?"

"I'm sure I can't guess—unless Willie has telegraphed descriptions of his precious property all over the country. It hardly seems probable in so short a time."

"I think it's very probable," said Grace tearfully.

The officer opened the door and closed it after him, shutting out a disappointed audience.

"Excuse me, ladies," he said politely, "is that your automobile—outside?"

Elsa regarded him stonily.

"If it wasn't ours, is it natural that we would have it in our possession?" she demanded haughtily.

"Sure, an' it isn't, miss. Only, I'm sorry that it is. I don't like the job of arresting two such nice-lookin' young ladies."

"Arresting!" exclaimed Grace faintly. "What for?"

"An' you say it is your car?"

"Please explain, if you will, just what the charge is—do you mean to insinuate that it's for stealing an automobile?" Elsa's tone was a trifle more haughty, if possible, and the officer withered a bit under its contemptuous assumption.

For a second he seemed puzzled and a trifle confused.

"For — stealin' — an — automobile!" he repeated blankly. "Not that I knows of."

"Then, for pity's sake, what is your charge? Don't keep me waiting all day, please."

Elsa stamped her foot impatiently, and the officer looked uncomfortable. He felt that he was standing on somewhat shaky ground.

He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a piece of paper, then walked to the window and carefully re-read it, looking at the car as though seeking to verify something.

When he had completed his inspection, his mind was made up.

"As I said before, I'm sorry—but you'll either have to pay the fine or come into coort with me."

"Pay what fine?"

"A hundred dollars, miss."

"But for *what?*"

"For runnin' down the dairy wagon in Meyers, and damagin' it an' the butter an' the eggs. He swore out a warrant for you, so you'll have to pay the fine or go to coort."

"But I didn't——"

Grace squeezed her cousin's arm.

"For goodness' sake," she whispered, "don't make matters worse." To the officer, she said, "This—dairy person—that you say we ran down, how does he know it was our car?"

"Oh, he took your number—an' he had a witness, too. They both agreed on the number and description of the car, an' he said there was a girl runnin' it—only there was a young man with her on the front seat. But the girl was runnin' the car."

Elsa stiffened.

She saw it all very plainly now. Willie had been taking another girl for automobile rides—teaching her to run the car, most likely—and she had banged into that dairy wagon, as an amateur would naturally do.

Then they had run away and left the accident to take care of itself, and she, Elsa, had to suffer for it.

The worst of it was, she didn't have a hundred dollars with her, nor even a fourth of that sum.

She did some quick thinking.

"I haven't the money for the fine,"

she said, "but I can get it within a few hours. Will you let us wait here?"

The officer was doubtful, but after some coaxing, augmented by the gift of a five-dollar bill, he gave a grudging consent, and Elsa despatched an insistent and urgent telegram to Willie.

It was destined to astonish, frighten, and bewilder that young man, for it read:

> Come at once. Am arrested in Bristol, 44 Garfield Street. Your car is safe. Shall expect full explanation. The fine is one hundred dollars.
>
> ELSA.

The telegram was addressed to the Bellevue-Stratford in Philadelphia, from where it was promptly forwarded to Willie, reaching him in New Haven in less than an hour.

Meanwhile, Elsa was growing restless and nervous from worry.

She thought of communicating with her mother, but did not wish to frighten her until it was necessary, and as time sped on she bethought herself of calling up Willie's hotel to discover, if possible, whether or not he had received the telegram.

In a short time she had the Bellevue-Stratford on the wire.

"I want to speak with Mr. Davis—Mr. William Davis," she demanded.

"Yes—I'm sure he's staying in the house. The gentleman who had an automobile stolen this morning.—No, I didn't get the name wrong, it's 'Davis', not 'Dennison.'—Well, if he's there, put him on the wire at once, please, anyway.

"He isn't in?—Oh, dear, isn't there some one I can talk with?—Mrs. Van Buren?—Who is she?—His sister?—He hasn't got any sister—His sister-*in-law!*—He hasn't got any sister-in-law—You mean his *wife's* sister-in-law—*why he hasn't got any wife*—Wait a moment, please."

She put her hand over the mouthpiece.

"Grace," she exclaimed, "do you know, that girl says Willie is married! Do you think it could possibly be true? What shall I do? She wants me to talk with his *wife's sister-in-law!*"

"Do it," said Grace. "Find out all you can, but don't give her any information."

"Hello!" said Elsa, again taking up the receiver. "Are you there, the Stratford?—Yes, I'll talk with Mrs. Van Buren—Never mind who, it'll be all right.

"Hello! Is this Mrs. Van Buren?—is Mr. Davis in?—*Mr. Davis!*—Well, the gentleman who had a red motor-car stolen this morning—Perhaps he calls himself Dennison, but I happen to know that his real name is Davis—William Davis—Warren Dennison?—Oh, no, *I'm* not mistaken—He's just changed his name, that's all——

"Who am I?—I'm his fiancée—Yes, I know he's married, but he's engaged to me, all right, and he'll find it out, too.—He'll get a telegram from me—tell him his car is safe—I have it—Certainly, and I'm arrested for an accident that he had——

"Didn't he run into a dairy wagon in Meyers, Pennsylvania?—Well, that's it—Wasn't his *wife* with him?—Uh, huh, I thought so—The fine is a hundred dollars—You don't understand? Well, neither do I.—Good-by!"

Elsa hung up the receiver, her eyes flashing with rage.

"Well!" she exclaimed, turning to her cousin, "Now, can you beat *that!* Willie Davis telling me he was coming over here to look after a sick aunt—gets married and takes all his wife's relatives around the country with him. And I am arrested for his scrape! Oh, Grace Hitchcock, if ever I get hold of that deceitful thing again, I'll——"

Her eye fell upon her engagement ring as she spoke, and she promptly shifted it from the third finger of her left hand to the third finger of her right hand.

"Now! I'm not engaged any more."

Grace snickered. "I should think you weren't—but don't you give him his ring back."

"I don't think I ought to, after the disgraceful way he's treated me. I'll telephone to mama right away, and she can send me the money to get out of this dreadful place."

She lifted the receiver again, but before she had time to give the number a boy in uniform thrust a telegram through the half-opened door.

"Miss Elsa Hitchcock!" he bawled.

"Give it here!" exclaimed Elsa, snatching it away from him in her excitement.

She tore open the yellow envelope and read the message through half a dozen times, then handed it over to her cousin, mystification written all over her face.

Grace read the telegram through.

> Don't understand but am coming like mad. Be patient and wait. There must be some dreadful mistake.
>
> W. D.

"He's guilty," said Grace triumphantly, "and he's frightened to death that you'll find him out."

"That's what I thought at first, but Grace—*that telegram is from New Haven!* Don't you see? Willie is in New Haven."

"Didn't his wife's sister-in-law say he wasn't in?"

"She said he wasn't in the hotel—that he had just stepped out a moment, but he couldn't have stepped to New Haven in that time. It's ridiculous! I don't pretend to know what it's all about. We'll have to wait, as Willie says, and be patient. I just can't believe all those dreadful things of him."

"Don't be foolish, Elsa," said her cousin. "And, above all, don't believe everything he tells you—without proof."

"But you see, Grace, you don't know Willie as I do. He's the dearest——" mechanically she slipped the diamond ring from the third finger of her right hand to the third finger of her left hand. "He's the dearest boy, and I know he loves me!"

CHAPTER X.

AUNT ELLEN TO THE RESCUE.

On his hurry-up trip from New Haven to Bristol Willie did some lively thinking. A hundred times and more he took Elsa's telegram from his pocket and re-read it, but its import rivaled the famous How-old-is-Ann? riddle.

Elsa arrested!

The *car* safe!

A fine of one hundred dollars!

What did it all mean? And what was Elsa doing in Bristol? It was the last place on earth he would expect her to be in.

And what was the explanation she expected? Of course Willie knew he would have to explain his recent queer conduct, but somehow, this seemed different—pregnant with a deeper, more subtle meaning, as it were.

The trains couldn't go fast enough for Willie, but it was past four o'clock when he finally arrived at his destination, and immediately started out to seek 44 Garfield Street.

The interest excited by the arrest earlier in the day had died out, and by this time the solitary policeman was the only one on duty guarding the door of the little room where the girls were kept prisoners.

They were tired out from their long wait. Grace had fallen asleep in a chair, and Elsa sat by the window, dejectedly watching the street.

At the first glimpse of Willie hurrying along toward the garage, her heart gave a great leap and the tears sprang to her eyes—tears of relief and gratitude. And tears of happiness, too.

She would gladly have thrown herself upon his breast and sobbed out her troubles, but she recollected in time the many explanations and apologies he owed her, and she drew herself up to await his coming in a dignified and frozen attitude that would certainly have humbled Willie, had he been destined ever to see it.

But Willie halted in front of the garage and couldn't seem to get farther.

Something was clearly the matter with him. He stood as though carved from stone—*and stared!*

Elsa forgot her injuries in watching him and a curious feeling that perhaps he was losing his mind took possession of her. She pressed her face flat against the window to see what he was staring at, and the front wheels of the automobile came into her range of vision.

She tapped on the window impatiently; Willie looked up, saw her and dashed into the garage, pushing aside the policeman in his excitement, and met Elsa at the door.

He kissed her before she had time to assume her dignified air, and then demanded to know the answer to the riddle that had been puzzling him all the way from New Haven.

"Tell me the meaning of this!" he exclaimed, flashing the telegram at her. "And why on earth are you here, and *where* did you get that automobile? I can't seem to take it all in."

"I'm not the one who should explain." said Elsa, when she finally got her breath. "Where's your wife, Willie Davis, and *your wife's sister-in-law?* What do you mean by kissing me when you're already married?"

Willie looked at her in blank amazement.

"I, married! Why, Elsa, you are crazy."

Elsa laughed a scornful, somewhat tremulous little laugh.

"Oh, Grace knows all about it—this is my cousin, Grace Hitchcock. She's been anxious to meet you, Willie, but I never thought you'd meet like this."

Elsa subsided into her handkerchief, and Willie mumbled some conventionality in honor of the introduction.

Grace came to her cousin's defense.

"Well, Mr. Davis, it's all very strange. We'd be glad if you could explain it—we'd be more than glad if you'd explain it *satisfactorily.*"

"He can't!" wailed Elsa from behind the handkerchief.

"Perhaps I can, if you'll first tell me where you got that automobile."

"Hadn't you missed it?" asked Grace, with a trace of giggle in her voice.

"No, I hadn't. Where did you get it?"

Elsa looked up, displaying a pair of dripping blue eyes and a reddened nose.

"Why, Willie," she said in dismay. "Didn't you leave that car in front of the Broad Street Station this morning? And it was downright careless of you to leave in the cut-off plug."

"No, I didn't. I—what do you mean?"

"Why, it's plain, you silly boy. We saw it standing there and we ran off with it to—to—teach you a lesson. I was going to let you know as soon as we reached New York, but they arrested us here for an accident that you had in Meyers—what were you doing in Meyers?—and there was a lady with you on the front seat. Your wife's sister-in-law *said* your wife was with you. She didn't know you were engaged to me, either."

Here the resources of the handkerchief were nearly exhausted, and Elsa dived into her hand-bag for a new supply.

Willie was clearly mystified and he turned to Grace for assistance.

"Perhaps if we go at this thing slowly," he said, "it will work out. There must be an answer, somewhere.

"Now, in the first place I'm not married and never will be except to one girl—and she's the girl I'm engaged to. Is that point quite clear in your minds?"

"But, Mr. Davis——"

"And in the second place, I never was in Meyers in my life, and I haven't had an accident. Now tell me more about the car—it was standing by the station in Philadelphia, no one was there and you helped yourselves to it? Is that right?"

"Yes," faltered Grace.

"I think I begin to see. Now I'll explain to you," began Willie shamelessly. "Last week, as you know, my aunt was very ill. I had to go with her to Atlantic City; as I couldn't use the car myself, I lent it to some friends of ours, the Dennisons—they took a short trip in it. It was they you stole it from—not me."

"The Dennisons!" gasped Elsa. "Why, that was the man——"

"Elsa, don't you see," broke in Grace, "that's the man you thought was Willie, and all the time——"

"And all the time Willie was in New Haven!"

"Exactly!" said Willie virtuously.

"But the accident—and our being arrested?"

"Very simple. It was the Dennisons who had the accident. I'll pay the fine and we'll get out of this as quickly as possible."

"Where to?" asked Elsa.

"To Philadelphia, of course. I'll have to hunt up the Dennisons and explain to them about the car, or they'd worry."

The girls were not unwilling to be free once more and hurried out and climbed into the car. Willie settled with the officer, and was about to join them when the telephone bell rang long and loud.

"I'll jest answer that meself," said the officer suspiciously, "more'n like it's an order from headquarters. You'd best wait a bit."

"All right," said Willie, but he took his place in the driver's seat, his hand resting easily on the lever.

It was wise to be prepared for any emergency.

"Hello! Yes, this is Murray's garage—a lady did call ye up—sure, she's still here—This is a police officer talkin' to you—Sure, an' I did arrest her, but a gentleman's paid the fine an' I'm lettin' her go—She has the car—That's its number—What! Stolen!—Arr you sure you know what ye're talkin' about—Yes, I'll hold 'em 'til ye coom!"

But there's no given recipe for holding an automobile, especially at a second's notice. Before the officer fully realized that his prisoners had escaped him, they were half-way to the corner, beyond all hope of pursuit, and in less than ten minutes had left the city of Bristol far behind.

Although the dusk was descending thickly Willie did not dare to stop to light up until they were miles beyond the town, for he did not quite relish the idea of seeing Elsa and her cousin arrested for the theft of the car.

He would get rid of them first, and then stand up under whatever punishment chanced to fall.

It was dark by the time he had reached Philadelphia and taken the girls to Grace's home. He then drove straight to the Bellevue-Stratford to find Mr. Dennison.

It was a tired, disheveled Willie who presented himself at the clerk's desk, and disappointment met him there, for the clerk informed him that Mr. Dennison was out.

Did he wish to leave a message?

Willie assured the clerk that his message was very important. If possible, he must find Mr. Dennison at once. It was about the automobile——

The clerk's manner changed instantly and he gave Willie an address where Mr. Dennison might be found—in an emergency.

Willie stared at the address stupidly.

"Are you quite sure this address is right?" he asked.

"Quite sure," said the clerk coldly. "Mr. Dennison's uncle, Mr. Wood, wrote it out for me himself."

The clerk watched Willie as he slowly left the lobby, and something prompted him to leave his place behind the desk abruptly, and follow the discouraged-looking youth to the door.

Willie went down the steps, got into the automobile, turned it around, and started slowly off. As the car passed under the electric light the clerk recognized it.

He beckoned to the house detective.

"I'd better change jobs with you, Henry," he said. "Did you see that car go out just now?"

"What of it?"

"Well, that's the car you've been looking out for all day—all you smart fellows—that's Dennison's automobile!"

Oblivious to the excitement he had caused at the hotel, Willie was intent upon the mystery of the address he had just received.

Very plainly there was written on the card the street and house number of his Aunt Ellen. He couldn't understand why it should be so, but he suddenly recollected, with a pang of self-reproach, that this was her wedding-day.

He had completely forgotten about it in the hurly-burly of his own affairs.

"I'll go there, anyway," he said to himself. "And, perhaps, she can help me out of this scrape."

In a few minutes he had stopped before the house. The windows were all lighted up, but the shades were drawn and it was impossible to distinguish what was going on behind them.

The door opened in response to his ring at the bell, but it was not the smiling face of Hannah that greeted him. A frigidly polite darky in evening dress blocked the doorway, and held his ground when Willie started impulsively to enter.

All of a sudden he was conscious of his dusty, travel-stained clothes and felt much as a forlorn tramp might under similar circumstances.

"Excuse me, sah, did you want som'fin'?"

"Yes," said Willie haughtily, "I want to see my aunt, Miss Davis."

"Yo' *a'ant,* did you say, sah?"

"Yes, I said so, and if you keep me here waiting any longer, I'll knock your woolly block off—you——"

Willie's temper was rising rapidly and it is hard to predict just what might have happened if the man had not stepped back quickly.

Mrs. Dennison had been up-stairs to lay aside her wraps, and she came down just in time to meet Willie face to face as he was coming in.

She gave one startled look at him and then, regardless of the festive occasion, let out a piercing scream and rushed into the parlor, consternation written all over her face, as she cried:

"That man—he's still following us!"

Miss Ellen—I should say, Mrs. Henry Wood—grasped her husband's arm for protection, and Betty and Sandy leaped from their chairs simultaneously; Mr. Dennison started for the hall to discover the cause of his wife's dismay, but Willie was on familiar ground, and he brushed past him into the parlor.

"What man?" cried Mrs. Wood. "Where is he?"

Mrs. Dennison pointed an accusing finger at Willie.

"There! There he is!"

"You impudent scoundrel," exclaimed Mr. Dennison. "Explain, before I call the police, just what your intrusion here means."

"I'm not intruding," said Willie hotly. "What are *you* doing here, if I may ask?"

"Of course he's not intruding," said Mrs. Wood. "Why, it's Willie!"

"And I haven't kissed the bride, either," said Willie, mischievously suiting the action to the word.

A gasp of astonishment went around the room, and everybody inquired as with one voice, "Who's Willie?"

The bride was too happy for explanations, so she kissed Willie again.

"I'm so glad you could come, dear," she said. "I'm so glad one of the family could be here——"

"Do you mean to say," broke in Mr. Dennison, "that this young man is related to you, is——"

"My nephew, of course. He's my brother's son. Surely you've heard of his father, W. R. Davis? We're proud of Willie's father, for he's the only millionaire in the family."

Mrs. Dennison's wrath ebbed quickly before this news, and her husband plucked at his cuffs nervously.

"That may all be true," he said. "But why on earth—what should he want with that automobile?"

"Well," said Willie, "it's a long story, but I'll tell it to you. But first you ought to know that my—that your car is outside. I've brought it safely back to you. The whole thing begins and ends with the dearest girl in the world—the girl I'm going to marry. She——"

To tell it all over again would be working in a circle.

The most important part of it all to Willie was that, when he had finished, Mr. Dennison said:

"Willie, you can keep the car. You've earned it!"

THE END.

THE NERVE OF NORMAN.

BY BURKE JENKINS.

Romance at a summer hotel, with large checks in the foreground and a bell-boy on the side.

"FRONT!" cried Norman, rapping the marble-bottomed call-bell with an immaculate palm.

As Johnson of ebony countenance roused himself from a cat-nap on his bench to the right and came forward briskly, whisk-broom under arm, Norman shoved forward the bulky register and proffered a dipped pen to a rotund and perspiring personage.

This new arrival at the Hotel Claymore fairly exuded a sense of limitless wealth, a wealth of the newly acquired and self-made, pork-packing type. And the general air of opulence was by no means discounted when one glanced over

his rear guard, which consisted of an angular spouse of haughty and dignified mien and a daughter—well, of her later, for she figures prominently.

Now, none of this was lost upon Norman of the eye keen and the understanding knowing. He glanced at the signature and looked up.

"Well, Mr. Canfield," he said politely, "I suppose you want the best we have. A suite on the lake side, southwest?"

"I guess that's about us!" acquiesced Pa Canfield cordially, ineffectually dodging a dig in the ribs by a more grammatical better half.

And so the grip-encumbered Johnson waddled his lead to the elevator; and carelessly, oh, very carelessly, Miss Canfield glanced back over her shoulder at this good-looking hotel clerk in the Berkshires.

Now, though this was Miss Canfield's first summer up here, our friend Norman had been at this same post the season previous, which fact may account for his seeming nonchalance.

Be that as it may, a little inkling as to our friend's general outline will fit here very nicely.

Norman was not a bad sort of a chap. He had been thrown upon himself early in this little game we call life and had been forced to hoe his own row. And although that row might not serve as a model for theodolite straightness, still it was by no means as warped an endeavor as is turned out by many a young surveyor of life's vicissitudes.

In other words, we want you to like Norman, and if he later seems a little calculating, remember that he needed the money, and really was worthy of the girl.

But besides all this Norman was a light-hearted, easy-going chap with a free laugh, and, what is amazing in a hotel clerk, an undiminished supply of real *romance,* which had even survived the previous summer's campaign.

So after he had returned Hebe Canfield's gaze with interest, which is man's privilege, the elevator closed her from view and he turned to introspection, which found voice in the expression:

"Well, she certainly is the candy kid. Me for her; and it certainly is up to me to make it her for me."

And from that very moment he was hot on the trail.

Now Hebe, of course, knew that it was always well to keep "in" with so important a functionary as the clerk. Of course, again, that was the only reason why she would stop at the "desk" for a few words, "friendly" words, mark you.

So how could she find any excuse for a refusal when he first proposed a row on the lake? And the thing, as such things will, got to be a habit. They both "got the habit," and this yarn really hinges upon the habit that Norman got a little later on.

Norman's time "on" was really the most distressing period for them both, so Hebe went at her sketching and painting with a fervor that she strove to make help the time to pass quickly until Norman was off duty.

One day she lay back against a tree-trunk on the lake margin with her canoe's green showing its vivid contrast to the sharp white of the sandy beach. She was looking over the pages of her sketch-book. For the most part she had portrayed with no bad hand the points of wood and water interest about the hotel.

"Think I'll change my subjects," she mused, managing to get an independent idea thus wedged in the midst of her thoughts of Norman.

"I think I'll do some figure work."

And then she caught sight of the colored hall-boy, Johnson, just rounding his way past the bowling-alley. He carried a bundle.

"Why, he'll do for a model," she cried to herself in girlish glee, and with the quickness to action which marked her unbridled way she shoved off the canoe and paddled across the little intervening cove.

Johnson she met in the corridor just outside her own door. And over his arm there hung the most eye-perturbing suit of resonant black and white check that ever went a current style one better.

In fact, this "creation" went anything nine and a half better. You felt your breath sort of wheeze its way strenuously on sight of that extravagance of checkered riot.

And Johnson handled this "stunner" with a devout reverence; in fact, he might be said to fondle it. No dusky dude but what would cheerfully put head to block for the mere privilege of once donning these electrifying habiliments.

Hebe saw her picture already, a "colored sport *par excellence*," and she was not slow to seize her opportunity.

"Johnson!" she called after him, her course planned.

"Yaas'm," answered that personage, scenting a tip.

"Johnson," Hebe went on, "is money any object to you?"

"H-he, haw!" chuckled Johnson in an ebullition of African exuberance. "Law's, ma'am, 'cose money ain't nuthin' ter *me*. Ho-o-ha!"

And he almost wrinkled the outfit on his arm as he doubled up in the appreciation of his own sense of humor.

"No'm," he repeated, catching his breath finally, "money ain't no object ter dis h'ar cullud pusson!"

"Well, I just wanted to find out," answered the tempting Hebe. "I've got five dollars I want to pay you to pose for me in that suit you have on your arm. A half hour will do it. Pretty quick money, isn't it?"

"Ya'as'm," Johnson drawled, somewhat sobered, "but you see, ma'am, dis h'ar suit ain't——"

"Nonsense, Johnson." Hebe wasn't used to being balked. "Be back here in ten minutes, all dressed; I'll stand sponsor for you."

And in nine minutes Johnson appeared, a little nervous, but unable entirely to suppress the ecstasy aroused by this eloquent and far-resounding apparel.

In thirty minutes the sketch was completed.

Hebe tendered the five.

"Thank'e, ma'am." Then he hesitated. "Please doan' say nuthin' about it, ma'am. Yer see, it's dis-a-way——"

"That'll do, Johnson."

Johnson withdrew and Hebe went to work laying on colors.

Then in came Ma Canfield from her afternoon walk with a pink parasol and a pet poodle.

She stepped behind Hebe.

"What on earth!" she ejaculated as she caught the tenor of the growing scene on the canvas.

Hebe explained.

"Isn't that suit positively the limit?" Hebe paused, brush poised.

"If you mean by that current localism that the suit is distinctly loud, why, yes!" admitted ma, startled by the apparition in spite of herself. "But men's tastes are unaccountable. Now, there's your father——"

"*Some* men's tastes," broke in Hebe, mindful, by the way, of Norman's tasty attire.

Conversation lagged and Hebe slapped pigment.

"Mama," she finally drawled, speaking between dabs, "how does it feel to be in love?"

"For heaven's sake, Hebe, who's been making love to you?"

Hebe looked up innocently; in fact, with an innocence far and away above what was to be expected of this, her first case.

"Why, nobody," she answered sweetly.

"Well, what makes you ask such a question?"

"Oh, nothing; I was just wondering how it felt."

Ma Canfield stepped before the canvas. She drew herself up to her full height, which was something.

"See that suit?" she asked.

"Yes," assented Hebe.

"Well, if you were in love you'd marry the man who courted you in a suit like that."

"Nonsense," commented Hebe with a chuckle. "Never."

"I know!" answered ma imperiously, and she swirled her way out to her own room, followed by the pampered poodle.

Then Hebe glanced at her watch.

"Heavens!" was her mental comment as she set about getting into a duck suit of sailorish cut. You see, she had an engagement to go boating with Norman before dinner.

She arrived at the appointed place a little ahead of time.

This was her chance to reflect a little.

She was well aware of the fact that Norman was "head over heels," as the saying goes, but how did she herself really stand?

She loved him? Yes. But how about

that "artistic career" she had planned? "Oh, well," and so she sighed, complacently gazing out over the water.

In keeping engagements, Norman was prompt, but not ahead of time. He knew the full value of keeping the other side waiting just a moment, that moment which puts the edge to expectancy.

It must be continually borne in mind that this was Norman's second season, so he was more or less of a past master. But, again, it must not be forgotten that he was really in love with Hebe.

He was just approaching things carefully, not to flush this little plump partridge, for Hebe was full solid, taking, as she did, after Pa Canfield.

So it was quite five minutes before she heard his footfall behind her. She had reached that stage where she recognized his step from the host of other masculine treaders.

Accordingly she did not turn to greet him, but awaited his approach, still gazing out over the lily-bedecked waters of the lake.

Instinctively she felt the psychological moment. Why he did it at that very moment Norman himself couldn't have told, but with a flood of real eloquence he voiced his passion, stepping up behind her.

She toyed with the toe of her little pump in the gravel and breathed quicker.

But Norman's words were not all bliss. There crept in a well-modulated note of sadness, verging upon despair.

"Ah, Hebe," he choked. "But what's the use—same old story—rich girl—poor man." This with a sigh *finale*.

Norman watched her eagerly. He reached for her hand. She offered no resistance, so he drew her back against his chest.

She continued to glance down.

Then she spoke soothingly.

"Perhaps things are not as bad as they might be—let's not borrow trouble.

"Of course, if you're going to take that stand about the difference in our positions in life," she went on, "why, I guess," with a big sigh, "you can manage papa's new big hotel in Maine. It's nearly completed. I like the stand you have taken very much—only I wish you hadn't mentioned it—mama and I sail next week for Europe—and I will feel bad——"

Norman felt terrible, too, about that moment.

"I wish you were going with us," the girl continued, "but it cannot be helped."

She sulked a little.

Norman's fertile wit for once proved barren. He had won the girl, it's true, but in a way he had made a mess of it.

Imagine him up at a lonely hotel carving a fortune while she was on the high seas with moonlight night accompaniments. And Pa Canfield with all those oodles of money, too.

Norman thought that he might have tried another tack to better advantage. Still, he decided to make the best of the situation.

"Come, then, sweetheart, let us kiss a bond of troth." Rather well worded, and he said it as though he'd never said it before.

She turned her face up to his.

Their lips were about to meet—her arms encircling his neck.

Suddenly she pushed him off at arm's length, and there came over her face a peculiar look.

Her eyes grew twice their normal size. The blood rushed to her cheeks, her arms fell to her side—then limply she backed off, steadying herself with her parasol.

She was unable to utter a word. Norman was beside himself with surprise.

He couldn't figure out what had happened.

As he tried to put his arm around her waist, she pushed him away—then, as though she had recovered from a shock, she braced herself for a reply; but she could only gulp. How was she to tell him?

Norman could be mighty dramatic on occasion.

"Are—are you laughing at me? Speak!" And he struck a Chauncey Olcott attitude.

"No, I am not laughing at you," Hebe at last managed to stammer, somewhat awed by his fierceness.

"What is it then?" he continued, a little less violently.

Could he have been deceived? Was she, after all, simply an accomplished flirt?

"Then you mean to say," he broke out, "that our engagement is off; that you are engaged to some one else?"

"No-o-o," Hebe was able to bring out.

"Well, then, what is the meaning of this extraordinary behavior?" And Norman's attitude bordered now upon Richard Mansfield's best.

"The reason for my behavior? Oh! I cannot explain!"

"I demand an explanation!" replied Norman with lofty dignity, and he was right.

Hebe knew down in the bottom of her heart that Norman had a right to know what had come over her at that moment which meant happiness or misery to both.

Hebe felt the earth unstable. How could she word it? How could she tell him that the suit which he now wore was the very suit—there could be no two like that—she had bribed Johnson to dike himself out in; was the one she had so cleverly painted; was the one she had held up to ridicule and which really was an abomination to her artistic eye.

She remembered the conversation with her mother; and she remembered all too vividly how vehemently she had denied that she could ever love a man who would wear such a suit.

And now, as she looked at him in those awful clothes, she couldn't make up her mind as to whether she really did love this man. Could that love stand such a test as her mother had indicated?

She hesitated, and further opportunity was lost.

Drawing up his padded shoulders to their full extension Norman stalked away, leaving behind him a distinctly crestfallen maiden, and one who really cared.

She headed for her room—for a good cry, I suppose.

Arrived at the door she heard voices and laughter. She entered.

There before the easel whereon glittered the abominable cartoon stood her mother and, horror of horrors, a full half dozen of the worst gossips in the hotel.

They certainly were enjoying the sight of that colored sport as delineated by Hebe's facile brush.

And Norman had just returned and was probably at that very moment downstairs with that very suit on!

What could she do to save him? Go to him; overcome his anger; and explain it all? She could hardly find it in herself to take so radical a step.

In reality she retired up the corridor until the ladies left, which they did shortly. Then she flung herself into her room, flopped fully dressed on the bed, and refused to be comforted.

And Ma Canfield, coming in later, found trouble in deciphering the ailment.

The next few days mounted the anguish for both Hebe and Norman.

It would be hard to tell which suffered the more. Perhaps Norman; for his suffering was coupled with a sense of mystery in it all. And this mystery grew. He didn't connect it for a moment with that suit.

How could he? Didn't he receive his clothes regularly from that irreproachable tailor in town who gave him these creations as per advertisement? Wasn't that tailor's taste to be trusted? Norman never even thought of the matter as a clue at all.

And of course he didn't know of the Johnson episode. He only seemed to be the butt for half-concealed mirth from every one in the hotel.

Heavens and earth! Could that girl have been laughing at his love all the time, and could she have had the effrontery, not to say veritable cruelty, to tell of the thing openly? The very idea was unthinkable. But what could it all mean?

He hadn't seen her since the events at the lake side, for she had kept to her room.

Finally Norman could stand it no longer. He decided to inquire of some one. Who would it be? Whom could he trust?

Did you ever notice that in such a quest for a really dependable friend you finally light on one somewhat subdued in the social scale?

Even so Norman.

He picked out Johnson of the ebony hue and called him to his room. He had secured Johnson's present situation for him and he felt he could trust him.

Needless to say, all this time Johnson had been in the hottest of mental waters. That five dollars had certainly been dearly won.

So, when Norman called upon him for an explanation of it all, it was a positive relief for the really good-natured darky to throw himself down on his knees before Norman and blurt out a stammered but perfectly intelligible confession of the posing and the picture, along with the added fact that the ladies of gossip fame had seen the cartoon and spread the story.

Norman did some lip biting.

"Is that all, positively all, you know about this matter?" he asked finally.

"All, Miss'r Norman, 'cept wha' I hearn at de do' when de ole lady Canfiel' cum in?"

"What did you hear at the door, you eavesdropping rascal?"

"I hearn Miss Hebe ax her ma how ter reely know when y' lub a man?"

"How to know when she really *loved* a man?"

"Yaas'r, da's it! 'En her ma sed dat ef she reely lub a man she cud lub him wid dat suit ub close on."

"If she really loved a man she could love him with this suit of clothes on?" Norman repeated.

"Yaas'r," answered Johnson, and a light of realization broke over the clerk, and a plan took birth in his brain.

"Johnson!" he said imperatively.

"Yaas, Miss'r Norman."

"Do you carry her meals to Miss Canfield?"

"Yaas'r."

"Well, here's what you've got to tell her next time you go up."

And he wouldn't let the negro depart until he was word perfect in the story.

That evening Johnson told a large-eyed Hebe how he had listened at the door to that memorable conversation with her mother, how Norman had found him thus eavesdropping and had forced him to confess what he had been doing there. The whole picture-posing episode had come out, but with this difference in the revised version: the suit was Johnson's own. And so Norman was really wearing it just to test her love for him, and all his consternation had been but acting.

"Ah!" sighed the unhappy girl. "I have failed. But I *do* love him; I love him now in any old suit."

Johnson, his mission so fortuitously fructifying, beat a well-ordered retreat, giving way to Ma Canfield, who entered to soothe the sufferer, and Hebe cried out the news on Ma Canfield's shoulder.

"Are you really sure you love him?" she asked seriously.

"Yes, mama, that suit and all," answered Hebe, a little smile trickling among the tears.

"Well, that's certainly the test," replied ma, who, luckily, was blessed with a sense of humor. "And I think things can be arranged."

When Ma Canfield said that, Hebe knew it was as good as consummated.

So, through ma's adroit management, the "whole story *leaked out.*"

"How romantic!" said one.

"Was willing to put himself in such a ridiculous position," remarked another.

"True love not a myth after all," quoth a maid of fifteen rapturously.

The week-end saw a new clerk at the Claymore. And from the liner's deck, off to one side, where neither pa nor ma nor young bride could witness the transfer, Norman, of future ease and luxury, tossed a bundle to a grinning son of Ham.

The checks almost burned their way through the paper wrapper.

THE POPULAR CREDO.

DIMES and dollars! dollars and dimes!
An empty pocket's the worst of crimes!
If a man is down, why, give him a thrust—
Trample the beggar into the dust!
Presumptuous poverty's quite appalling,
Knock him over, kick him for falling.
If a man is up, oh, lift him higher,
Your soul's for sale, and he's the bu

..arles P. Sh..as.

THE SCARLET SCARAB.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "In the Lion's Mouth," "The Fugitive," and "Blundell's Last Guest."

A story of Naples up to date in which an American gets on the track of romance by accident and is thereafter made to dance to a dangerous tune.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROMANCE HUNT.

"WHAT am I doin' in this joint, anyhow?" plaintively queried Gregg. "This Eyetalian lan'scape an' tea-chromo scenery an' comic-opera villains an' villainesses loiterin' about in two-dollar-an-hour poses—this sort of thing may be all to the merry for long-haired folks with the poetry habit and ingrowin' brains. But not for mine. I don't belong. I feel like I was wearin' yeller shoes to a dance. What's there in it for *me?*"

It wasn't the first nor the twenty-first time that poor Billy Gregg had thus unburdened himself to me since we had left New York harbor behind us three months before.

I had long since given over any attempt at arguing or expostulation. So I sat in patient silence on my lofty perch along the Naples sea-wall and puffed optimistically at a very vile native cigar with a straw through its center.

But Gregg, who stood leaning on the wall and scowling across the stretch of blue water toward the Castel del Ovo, was not content to let it go at that. He had a grievance and he wanted to talk it out. Silence on my part could not switch off his flood of complaint.

"What am I here for?" he reiterated crossly. "Just tell me that, if you can? What's a sane, square-rigged man like me doin', leavin' good old Manhattan an' chasin' around on the foreign slabs of the map?"

"Upon my soul," I retorted, annoyed out of taciturnity by his persistence and his lack of appreciation of the glories of day and scene, "upon my soul, Billy, I don't know."

"Well, then, if it comes to that, what are *you* doin' it for?"

"I have told you already," I answered wearily, "I'm looking for romance."

"Romance?" he snorted with sublime contempt. "An' what may that happen to be? I've heard you do a lot of spielin' about it, but I'll bet a box of perfectos against one of those dago Flor de Garbage cheroots of yours that you don't know what it is, an' wouldn't pipe it if you met it in broad daylight. Oh, you can grin an' act superior if you like. But when it comes to a show-down, what *is* this fool 'romance' you're gunnin' for?"

The waves were plashing against the base of the wall. Across the road a beggar lounged on the steps of a church, picking lazily at a mandolin. The early spring sun poured lovingly down on the crescent city; and, beyond, across the bay, rose old Vesuvius, breathing up into the blue sky his ceaseless cloud of gray smoke.

I wondered idly if volcano smoke could be so very much worse than that of my Naples cigar. Then I threw the cheroot over the wall into the bay and turned on Billy Gregg.

"Maybe you're right," I began. "Maybe I wouldn't recognize romance if I met the real thing. And maybe a hard-headed New York business man is a fool to wander half-way across the earth to look for something that perhaps doesn't exist outside of books. Possibly I'm cracked. But if I am, my delusion doesn't hurt any one but myself, does it? If it's expensive—well, I've worked long enough and hard enough to earn the right to spend a bit of money; and to have a holiday besides."

"I s'pose you have," he assented dubiously, "an' after all, it isn't so much foolisher or costlier than whirlin' through an inoffensive country road on a honking homicide-cart, or yeo-hoing

along the coast in a yacht you don't know how to sail. I didn't mean to roast you; only I was tryin' to get a line on the point of it all."

"There's no point to it," I confessed. "You see, Billy, it's like this: When my parents were killed in the Ashtabula railroad smash-up, I was only thirteen. I'd been brought up as a rich man's son. It turned out my father had lived up to his income and I was left without ten dollars to my name.

"My father's brother took charge of me. He was a hard-headed, close-fisted Business Success—a self-made man that glorified his maker. My father had been an artist and his brother had had no patience with him. He determined that *I* should be brought up to have no such silly views of life. So he sent me to work in his factory as office-boy at ten hours a day and three dollars a week."

"Race-horse trainin' an' then plow-horse work," commented Billy.

"Just that. I had twelve years of it. Twelve years of ten-hour a day grind. My uncle didn't believe in vacations. And at night I was too tired to do anything but tumble into bed. But at the end of those twelve years I was a business man. Even my uncle admitted 'there was no artistic idiocy about me.'

"Now there's where he was wrong. I'd had no chance to do anything but work; nor to meet any people except workers. But nearly every day I'd read in the newspapers of some romantic or exciting thing that had happened at home or abroad; and I fell to envying the people such things happened to. Nothing ever happened to me. Nothing *could*. And the more humdrum my life grew, the more I longed for romance. I suppose you think that's silly?"—

"No-o" said Billy contemplatively, "I can't quite say as I do. I've had the same feelin' myself once in a while when things was goin' slow. Only, such times, I'd take in a good hot prize-fight or loop the loop a few times at Coney, or get pickled, or pick a row with a cabman, or——"

"Those safety-valves didn't occur to me. I took to reading romantic stories in off-hours—Scott and Dumas and Stevenson and all those—and that only made the longing stronger. Most men have more or less romance of a mild sort mixed into their every-day lives. I was too busy for that. But I made up my mind I'd get it some day. Then my uncle got into a big business deal with Amos Todd——"

"The deuce! Not——"

"Yes. That's the one. Todd was a crook and he cleaned my uncle out. Poor old uncle! I think it was the fact that any living man had been able to 'do' him, more than the actual loss of the money itself, that gave him his stroke of apoplexy. He left things awfully muddled when he died.

"I was kept busier than ever, for five years more, straightening out. At last I got the factory on a paying basis and stood a show of being a rich man in a few years more. But I'd had enough of it. I happened to get a big offer from the Trust and I sold out at enough to keep me comfortable for the rest of my days."

"An' then you thought you'd take a look-in on romance, hey?"

"Exactly. I'd slaved like a dog for seventeen years. At thirty, when most young men are in their early prime, I was just a working-machine, fit for nothing else. So I came across to Europe."

"But—say! You could 'a got all the excitement you was lookin' for right in little old New York. There's the explodin' manholes, an' auto runovers, an' Subway accidents, an' clubbin' coppers, an—— Why, there's no end to the fun a man could have in New York if romance was the line of diversion he was courtin'!"

"I wasn't looking for just that sort of excitement," I answered, despairing of a definition to romance in words fitted to Billy's East Side comprehension. "I wanted the sort one reads about in books; adventure, mystery, thrills, and a love affair lurking somewhere in the background. I——"

"Say!" interrupted Billy scornfully, "you've got on the wrong wire. 'Romance' ain't the word you're thinkin' of. You're thinkin' of meelo-drama. And you'd 'a got more of it by takin' in a few shows at the Third Av'noo Theayter than in all Dagoville. An——"

"Maybe I'm looking for a cross between the two words," I compromised. "Anyhow, let's call it romance for lack

of a better name. My mother was an Italian. We spoke Italian and French all the time at home when I was a little chap. Especially Italian. That's how I happen to be able to speak it as well as the average Neapolitan. And that's one reason I came to Italy. That, and because in books Italy is usually depicted as a hotbed of romance and mystery."

"From where I sit, I haven't noticed you connectin' with either of 'em to any remarkable extent," drawled Billy. "If they're comin', I guess they're both about due. Here we've been traipsin' about France an' Italy for three whole months, an', so far as I can remember, the only real thrillin' adventure we've had was when a fruit-dealer in Florence give us the wrong change. Oh, this is the land for romance an' mystery all right—I don't think! A cloaked form slinks outer the shadders, as they say in Laura Jean's books, an'—it turns out to be a beggar askin' for pennies to buy his starvin' wife a new bicycle. An armed man springs up to bar the path—an' he turns out to be a Jonny-darm askin' for his tip for showin' you a measly ruin. Oh, I——"

"You're right—so far!" I sighed. "But I've a feeling there *is* romance—real, stirring, hot, mysterious romance—*somewhere*. And in time I'll find it."

"Say!" broke in Billy, "you spoke about Amos Todd double-crossin' your uncle. Does he know you're the poor old cuss' nevvy?"

"No. He never saw me till we met at the Hotel Masaniello here, last week. I was named for my uncle. It was an old French name—for my father's family was originally French—but my uncle Anglicized it, and called himself Peter Dobbin, instead of Pierre D'Auban. So when Todd was introduced to me he never connected Pierre D'Auban with the Peter Dobbin he ruined. And I don't intend he shall—yet."

"'Yet?'" echoed Gregg. "That sounds like a good start to meelo-drama. How about his daughter—Miss Doris? Is she booked to figure as the 'background of love int'rest' you was talkin' of?"

"No," I said shortly.

I do not like discussing women with other men. But Billy did not take the hint.

"That count party over t'the hotel acts like he was plannin' to arrange a little 'background of love int'rest' fer her, himself," he went on. "An' he's sure makin' a good, swift start. He's a willin' performer. I must say that fer him; even if he does turn up his nose at us an' speak loudly of us in French as—as—what was it you heard him call us?"

"'*Canailles*,' '*parvenus*,' '*sales Américaines*.' Those were three of the terms I overheard," I answered; "and the worst of it was I couldn't punch his head for he was saying it to a lady. That little French countess, Mme. de Tournon."

I did not add that the opprobrious epithets had been called forth by Billy's smiting the count merrily on the back (they were total strangers) and asking him to have a drink.

"I'm goin' to look up them insultin' words in my French talk-book," announced Billy with solemn determination, "an' if they mean what I think they do I'm goin' to hand out a gentle lickin' to friend Count Sebaste. And—say—I'm sorry I was grouchy a while ago. If you're in the romance hunt, I'll hunt it with you. I ain't reely so sore on Italy as I made out I was. An' I guess *I've* got a holiday comin' to me, too. Just as much as you had."

"Yes, I suppose you have, from all you've told me. But you made your pile quicker than I did."

"Oh, I earned it all right!" he replied, eager as ever to recount for the fiftieth time his checkered career. "Bootblack, green-goods trailer, bouncer in a gin-foundry, race-track tout an' patent med'cine rustler. That's my ticket. Tried 'em all an' took a turn at the prize-ring besides. An' never a stroke of half-way decent luck till I blundered on to the news of a hundred to one dark horse the owners was nursin' for a Sheephead Bay killin', a year ago. Then it was I went on the hustle an' begged an' borrowed an' hocked—an' shook down some men that was shakable; an' when that race was run I'd knocked the odds down to twenty to one an' landed a cool thirty-five thousan' at that. Says I: 'Me for a little run to Lunnon for a month. I hear there's easy marks over there an' maybe my thirty-five

thousan' may attract a few more thousans.' I'd just found out what tightwads the Britishers are when I ran across you an' kind of fell into the idee of seein' a bit of the world in your comp'ny. I don't see, though, how a high-roller like you can stand for hitchin' up with a mutt like me," he ended reflectively.

The same question had puzzled me more than once. But there was something perennially fresh and original about the man; something likable under his glaring lack of education and breeding.

He was a new type to me. I enjoyed studying him. His views, if garish, were usually new. It was like seeing Europe through two pairs of eyes. I had grown to like him.

"You're all right, Billy," I said, as I rose to return to the hotel. "We must start back now or we'll be late for lunch. And don't get discouraged about the romance. We'll find it sooner or later."

How soon and how strangely, no mortal could have foretold.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN AND A MAID.

LUNCH was over. Billy had suborned a guide to take him to the steeplechase races and to translate the score-card for him. He had asked me to go and had even invoked my aid in a proposed attempt to break the Naples betting-ring by Sheepshead Bay methods.

But I could not rouse myself to the necessary energy and enthusiasm. The languor of Italian springtime had got into my blood. It was enough, for the moment, to breathe and be happy.

I planned a loafing stroll in the Villa Nazionale gardens and, perhaps, a swim later on in the afternoon. Accordingly, clad for the walk, I came down from my rooms in the Masaniello and was crossing the big, garish corridor toward the street exit, when I chanced to note Doris Todd, with hat and parasol, as though about to go out.

She was standing near the desk, glancing over a scrawled note she held.

As I passed, I heard her murmur a pretty little exclamation of annoyance. She looked up as I passed. In common civility I had to pause and speak to her.

I had not intended to, and I told myself I was sorry I was forced to do so. Yet, in spite of all, I didn't really regret the necessity of a word or two with her.

Amos Todd was a crook. One of the ultra-respectable, pillar-of-society sort. He was not a man of bad morals. He was simply a man of no morals at all. White side-whiskers and a generous white waistcoat imparted to him an air of prosperous righteousness that had carried him unscathed through many a crooked deal.

Warned by my uncle's fate I had, as far as the barest politeness permitted, steered clear of the man since our first meeting in Naples, a week before. As he and his daughter sat at the same table with me at the Masaniello and as we were compatriots, this aloofness on my part was not always the easiest sort of attitude to maintain. The more so since the old fellow seemed to have taken a mild fancy to me.

Miss Doris Todd I had especially avoided. Like father like daughter is the maxim too frequently true to pay one for hunting out the rare exceptions. I could not see how any daughter of Amos Todd could be the sort of woman that we Americans are taught to revere as something on a higher, better plane than mere man.

True, she had a way of looking square at you with those honest-appearing gray eyes of hers; but I've lived long enough to discredit that sign. A crook is quite certain to look you fearlessly in the eyes when he is cheating you out of your last dollar; and I've seen many a man who was the soul of honor and yet whose eyes shifted furtively in every direction except in that of his interlocutor's.

If that ancient and miserable theory that no man who is not honest can look another straight in the eyes were only nailed once and for all as a hoax, there would be fewer gold-brick victims.

So I discounted those brave, honest eyes of Doris Todd and remembered only that her father was a smug scoundrel and that it was quite possible his daughter inherited, in a more or less modified form, some of his unlovely traits.

For this reason I had fought shy of her, so far as I could without positive rudeness. I had at first applauded my own acumen in this matter; but latterly I was, unwillingly, beginning to feel less happy in my career of caution.

Thus, I was not as sorry as I should have been when, on seeing her look of disappointment at the contents of the note she was reading in the corridor of the Masaniello, I felt myself bound to pause and inquire if I might be of any assistance.

She seemed a little surprised at my question. Perhaps because it was the first time I had ever voluntarily addressed her. But she answered promptly enough:

"No, thanks. There's nothing you can do. Father and I were going to make a tour of some of the curio shops in the upper town this afternoon. Count Sebaste tells me there are lots of rare little antiques that can be ferreted out and bought for a mere song. I ordered the carriage for three o'clock. And now I get this note from father saying he has been called to Sorrento on important business, and can't go with me."

"What a shame!" I agreed, vaguely wondering what "important business" Amos Todd could find to occupy his attention three thousand miles away from his usual haunts. "And it's such a glorious day, too! It's a pity to wait till to-morrow, when——"

"But I'm not going to wait at all. I was only annoyed because I'll have to go alone instead of——"

"Go alone!" I echoed. "You don't mean to say you're——"

"Of course I do. Why shouldn't I? I know the addresses of several of the places Count Sebaste spoke of. All I have to do is tell the driver——"

"But——" I stammered. Then I stopped.

How could I explain to this clean American girl that in Italy nice women don't go driving alone in a hired carriage? Moreover, that when one gets off the main thoroughfares and into the tangle of native streets, Naples is, at best, not a safe nor pleasant place for a young and decidedly pretty girl to go unattended.

All this, of course, I could not tell her. Besides, what affair was it of mine? Yet she was my countrywoman, and she was young and inexperienced; and—and she *did* look innocent and friendly in that soft, light dress of hers—and more than pretty, too.

So, as she still stood waiting in amused expectancy for me to explain my half-uttered protest, I went on, lamely enough, grasping at the first awkward solution of the difficulty that happened into my brain:

"I—I was surprised; because it happened that I, too, was thinking of making a round of some of the native quarter curio places this afternoon. You see, I overheard Sebaste——"

"Oh, you were?" she cried interestedly; and before those honest-looking eyes of hers I felt just a trifle ashamed; even though my lie had been in so good a cause.

For I hate stuffy little shops, and curios and antiques bore me to death. Still I continued heroically:

"And I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind if we went together. You see, I'm an awful duffer at picking out art things. You could help me a lot. It'd be ever so good of you. Won't you please?"

I was talking like a ten-year-old boy asking his father for a quarter. But I have sometimes thought since then that my bungling manner and my apparent helplessness stood me in good stead. For she evidently took pity on me and waived the gross unconventionality of my request.

Then, too, she was the sort of girl who can rise above convention at times when convention is a useless clog.

So it was that, five minutes later, I found myself seated in a rickety open carriage alongside a girl with whom I had never before exchanged fifty sentences. To make matters worse, just as we turned off the Riviera de Chiaja and began to mount the hill we came upon Count Sebaste, strolling homeward from a walk.

He favored me with a stare compared to which the average man's survey of a scavenger dog would seem laudatory; then, as he bowed to Miss Todd, I saw his beady Italian eyes widen with wonder and disgust at seeing her in such company. Neapolitans can express vol-

umes in one look; and at that moment there was a complete Carnegie Library in Sebaste's face.

My awkwardness wore away, though, as we drove onward. No normal man could have failed to be at his ease with that girl.

Without letting myself lose hold of any of my earlier prejudices, I found myself shoving them unobtrusively into the background, for the time at least, and giving myself up to the full enjoyment of her unconscious charm.

We had left the broad "fashion thoroughfares" behind us; and the streets we were now traversing were narrow, dirty, picturesque, redolent of a thousand strange odors.

Curious were the glances shot at us from loafers, beggars and tradesmen as our bony horse toiled slowly upward. Again I was glad I had not let Miss Todd come alone.

"Not much like the section of New York that you are used to, Miss Todd," I commented, as she looked about her with the frank interest of a child.

"I'm not used to any sections of New York," she answered. "I've never been there half a dozen times in my life."

"Really? Why, I thought Mr. Todd——"

"Oh, father goes to New York often on business. But he seldom takes me. I'm a Denver girl. I've seldom strayed far east of the Rockies. Does that put me outside the pale, to your New York mind?"

"Why should it?"

"Don't the New York girls you know look down on——"

"I don't know. You see, I never met any New York girls."

"Oh! I thought you were a New Yorker."

"I am."

"And you never met any New York girls? Are you a woman-hater?"

"Not at all. I've simply been too busy. Of course, I had a nodding acquaintance with the stenographers at the factory and with my landlady's daughter, but I never had time to talk with any of them."

She was sitting very straight and looking keenly at me as if to determine whether or not I was jesting.

"Do you actually mean to say," she began, at last, "that you've never had any girl acquaintances in all your life?"

"Never until I met you. I suppose we *are* acquaintances, aren't we? I've talked more with you than I ever did with any other girl."

"I really believe you're telling the truth!" she murmured with a sort of incredulous awe. "And to think of a man living to your age without ever even having had the misfortune to fall in love!"

"But I didn't say I hadn't fallen in love!" I protested. "I *have*—often."

"Why, you said——"

I saw suspicion leap into her big eyes, but I went on:

"I've fallen in love successively with *Juliet, Portia, Desdemona, Di Vernon,* the *Lady of the Lake*——"

"Oh!" she laughed, the suspicion fading. "So you took all your sweethearts from books?"

"Where else was I to find them? The best thing about falling in love with a book heroine is that she can never break your heart by rejecting you. And, if she marries another man, one has the satisfaction of knowing the lucky chap never really existed except in some writer's brain."

"Do you know," she interposed, "what you tell me makes me very much ashamed of my earlier ideas about you? You were so stiff—almost uncivil—whenever I tried to talk to you at the table. I put it down to sulkiness; while really it was only because you weren't used to talking to girls."

Remembering my real reason for avoiding her, I felt a twinge of conscience at her naive speech. But it also brought me back to my senses and warned me that I was in dire danger of forgetting that Amos Todd's daughter was probably not the sort of woman in whom a sensible man ought to allow himself to get too deeply interested.

I drew back into my shell; but any awkwardness incident on my awakened precautions was averted by the stopping of the carriage in front of an exceptionally dingy shop.

"This is the place!" said Miss Todd, consulting a paper in her hand and comparing it with a half-effaced name above the shop door. "This is the place Count

Sebaste told me contained more antiques than any other in Naples. He says lots of the better classes deal here in spite of the shabby locality. It seems that Dardo, the man who keeps it, is an artist in his own line of repairing or furbishing up jewelry."

I stood aside to let her pass before me into the darksome, musty, little room. Then I followed and found myself in the midst of what looked like a junk-shop in an advanced stage of disintegration.

Lamps, trays, hangings, weapons, metal cups, tarnished finery, jewels, carvings, medieval doublets, helmets and armor, leather screens, battered furniture—ten thousand heterogeneous articles were jumbled together with no semblance of order, and all gray with dust.

I stood confused, bewildered, fearing to move lest I smash something or overturn a tableful of trinkets.

But Miss Todd had no such fears. Womanlike, she flitted here and there, picking up one thing, stooping to inspect another, turning a third to the light for closer view; upsetting nothing, though seemingly taking no heed of where she went; giving little gurgles of ecstasy at sight of some particularly atrocious bit of marble that looked to me like a cut-rate tombstone, and turning away without a second glance from brighter, gayer looking pieces of jewelry that seemed to my inexperienced eyes the only attractive things in the place.

As I waited, stupidly watching her and marveling at her safe progress among all the tottering masses of medievalism, on old man hobbled in from a rear door.

He looked dingier and more dilapidated than anything else in the shop. He eyed us sourly as Miss Todd turned on him.

"Are you Signor Dardo?" she asked, in rather bad Italian.

"Eh?" he grunted, turning his head sideways, after the inimitable manner of the half-deaf.

She repeated the query in a slightly higher pitch.

"No," he muttered, in the vilest of Neapolitanese; "no, Signor Dardo is out. I am keeping shop for him. What do you want?"

He actually seemed to resent our presence there and looked suggestively at the still open door. Decidedly, Dardo was not likely to make much money if he trusted this sort of substitute to boom the wares during his absence.

But Miss Todd had no idea of taking the old fellow's hint. She continued her inspection of the shop, the Neapolitan hobbling along in her wake with many a grumbling remonstrance. Unlike the shoppers I have read of in the comic papers, she was not content with handling and pricing. She also bought.

How she did buy! Lengths of yellowed old laces, bits of grimy carving, dented metal clasps with queer tracery and fretwork, tattered tapestry and all manner of similar things that no normal man would give house-room.

And never once bargaining, or disputing the incredible prices the old shopkeeper chose to charge.

"Well," I said to myself, as I stood idle in the dusty corner whither I had backed for safety, "if Amos Todd earned his money by robbing his fellow men, there ought to be a sort of poetic justice in the way he's being robbed of a goodly portion of that money just at this minute."

Once or twice I feebly tried to intervene and to suggest to the reckless buyer that I might perhaps be able to drive a better bargain than she with the aged junkman. But she was too excited to hear me.

So I remained inert, useless, open-mouthed, drinking in my first object-lesson of what a woman may do when the frenzy of shopping is upon her.

At last she seemed to have regained some hold on her sanity, for she said with a regretful little sigh:

"I think I've bought enough for to-day. Shall we go now?"

Then, as she noticed my attitude of miserable, helpless inertia in my corner of refuge, she added contritely:

"Oh, how thoughtless and selfish of me! I've been taking up all the clerk's time and you haven't been able to buy a thing. I'm so sorry! But, really, in a paradise like this shop any woman would have forgotten her manners."

I wondered, even as I mumbled some civil rejoinder. If this junk-shop had

deprived her of her wits, she would probably go stark mad if she could visit one of the old-iron dumps under Brooklyn Bridge. I thought of it; but, thanks to some rare instinct of self-restraint, I didn't say it.

"And now," she resumed, seating herself in a carven throne-chair, a half inch thick with dust, "and now I'm going to sit back and enjoy *your* shopping."

Clearly, it was up to me. I was about to declare that there was nothing in the place I cared for, when I chanced to remember my former lying assertion about taking an interest in curios. One good lie involves another.

I glared impotently about me, undecided whether to price a hideous fifty-pound gargoyle that leered at me from a shelf or to make an offer on a two-ton box bedstead with silly fat cherubs crawling all over the panels.

I moved cautiously out of my corner and into another. In the latter, my eye fell on a little heap of shiny trinkets in a tray behind the counter.

It caught my eye, for the trinkets were the only things in the whole place that were not either tarnished or dust-coated.

I saw I had to make a move of some sort. If I could make even one purchase I might be able to get out of the shop with some show of self-respect.

I walked up to the tray and turned over the glittering bits of jewelry wherewith it was heaped high.

Here was a mosaic brooch, here a gold slipper-buckle and here a gemmed garter-clasp. Certainly none of these would serve me.

I was about to turn away when a gleam of red, midway down the heap, caught my eye. I brushed aside the gewgaws about it and unearthed a long gold scarf-pin in which was set a scarab about the size of a man's finger-nail.

The odd thing about the scarab, apart from its exquisite carving, was the fact that it was of vivid scarlet.

Now I know little of such things, but it occurred to me at the moment that while I had often seen scarabs of green, dull blue, gray or even brown, I had never before seen or heard of one that was colored scarlet.

It was no dull brick color, either, but a vivid, striking scarlet that pulsated like a carbuncle, so sharp and intense of hue as almost to hurt the eye.

The thing was gaudy, perhaps even in rather bad taste, but, as I said, it caught my fancy. It looked so bright, so cheery in that shopful of dirty fifteenth-century junk.

"How much is this?" I asked the old man, who had followed me suspiciously behind the counter.

I spoke in a rather low voice, forgetting he was deaf. Then, recalling the fact, I prepared to repeat the question.

But, to my surprise, he nodded comprehension and scuttled away to a moldy ledger farther down the room.

After turning over one or two leaves he called across to me:

"Three *lire*" (about sixty cents).

I looked again at the scarf-pin; this time in amaze. It was very evidently of gold, as its appearance and the hall-mark proved. The setting was massive and the scarab was finely carved.

Sixty cents!

"Aren't you mistaken?" I asked.

"No, I'm not!" he snapped, slamming shut the book. "Three lire is the price. You can pay it or you can put the pin back."

There was a mistake somewhere. Any fool could see that. But, at sixty cents, *I* was not likely to be a loser.

I handed him a five-lire note and, while waiting for the change, crossed to where Miss Todd sat.

"What a beauty!" she exclaimed as she turned the pin over and over in her pretty pink palm. "It's a regular gem! I almost wish I'd seen it before you. It would have been nice to give to father."

"Father'll be in a warmer place than Naples before he gets a present like this from me," I thought, grimly; but aloud I joined in her praise of the trifle.

At her suggestion I even went over to a cobwebbed Borgia mirror and adjusted the scarab in my white stock.

And so we left the shop, the old caretaker glowering surlily after us as our carriage turned down the hill.

Miss Todd was jubilant over the parcels that lay piled about her feet. I, too, was rather pleased, though still puzzled over my own three-lire investment.

If I had possessed, for one minute,

the gift of foresight, I should have thrown the miserable scarlet scarab into the mire of the roadway; or, at the very least, have entreated my companion to accept of it as a gift for "father."

CHAPTER III.

I BEGIN TO WONDER.

I GLANCED toward the westering sun.

"It's growing late," I ventured. "We spent an unconscionable time at Dardo's. Suppose we let the rest of the junk—the curio places—go for to-day?"

I was bound I would not endure another such hour of shopping as I had just suffered, if by any pretense within the scope of human wit I could avoid it. As she hesitated I went on quickly.

"It's only a little way down the hill to the Chiaja. The Riviera is at its brightest at this time of afternoon. All the nobles and ignobles are on parade there—and a lot of tourists besides. It'll be a jolly fashion of winding up a jolly afternoon. Sha'n't we go home that way?"

"I believe you want to give the Neapolitans a chance to view that new scarab of yours," she laughed. "Vanity, thy name is Man! And you were such a modest, unassuming person, too, until you acquired that adornment! Well, as you can't exactly desert me and as you will be miserable if we keep all your glory hidden among these back streets, I suppose I must agree. But you are very selfish, for all that," she went on. "How do you suppose I shall enjoy driving amid the élite of Italy in this aged and tumble-down carriage drawn by one decrepit horse and hemmed in by paper parcels? You will have to look very imposing indeed to counterbalance all that."

"I'll try," I promised meekly, glad, at any price, to get out of more shopping.

I gave the driver the new direction, and three minutes later we had turned into the Riviera de Chiaja.

As I had predicted, the drive was thronged. Every sort of costume and every sort of equipage crowded the broad roadway, while the sidewalks were alive with Neapolitan dandies and gaily dressed women.

Out and beyond, the blue bay blazed and sparkled beneath the bluer Italian sky. Far to the east—the one point of solemnity and grandeur in all its lavish, gay beauty, rose old Vesuvius; dark, grim, menacing; towering mighty and bare out of the green, sun-kissed plains; the fan of dense smoke hanging ever above the summit as if in stern reminder of what had been and sterner warning of what might yet be.

It was foolish, but never was I able to look on Vesuvius without feeling an involuntary shudder of fear. As a child I had read and trembled over "The Last Days of Pompeii," until to my mind the fire-mountain had taken on the horrid aspect of a fairy tale ogre or dragon. Now, on looking across the bay at it I recalled the old custom of lifting on high a death's head at every bacchanal feast as a summons to remember death.

Vesuvius, in the background of this fairest, jolliest, most care-free bit of the world, seemed to me to serve the same purpose—to embody the same mute summons. Yet, as at the bacchante revels, none looked, none heeded.

I was recalled to pleasanter thoughts by Miss Todd.

"Why did you buy the scarab?" she was asking.

"Because it was pretty," I answered in some surprise. "Isn't it?"

"Yes, very. Only you dress so quietly, so unobtrusively as a rule. The scarlet scarab somehow doesn't seem to go with the rest of you. It is all the more noticeable on you on that account. Now, if it were worn by your friend Mr. Gregg——"

She paused and we both laughed.

"Poor Billy!" I said. "It's a shame to make fun of him; even if he does try to come a close second to Joseph's coat of many colors. His taste in dress is just a trifle noisy, I admit. But at heart he's an awfully decent chap!"

"Look!" she cried, with sudden change of subject. "Here come the Duke of Ferata and one of his aides! Count Sebaste pointed him out to me yesterday."

A victoria with two gray horses, liveried coachman and footman, was spinning along the Riviera toward us. In

it lolled a short, fat man with a scrubby beard and bloodshot eyes. Opposite him sat a very erect, dandified little officer.

I looked with considerable interest. For I was too newly arrived from the Land of the Free not to feel keen interest in the sight of royalty or even semi-royalty.

As we surveyed him in open curiosity the fat little man chanced to raise his bloodshot eyes and met our gaze. To my unbounded amazement he did not glance away carelessly as I had expected him to, but gave a second and closer look—not at my lovely companion, but at *me;* then, uncovering, he bowed gravely—to *me*—and passed on.

I sat bewildered, with barely sufficient presence of mind to raise my hat in reply to the salute.

Truly, I *was* coming on. A few months before I had been a workaday nobody. To-day, dukes were taking off their hats to me.

Miss Todd's surprised voice brought me back to my senses.

"Why, Mr. D'Auban," she gasped, "I didn't know you knew the duke. Where did you meet him?"

"I don't," I answered, still dumfounded, "and I didn't."

"But he bowed to you."

"So I noticed."

"It was to *you,* not to *me.* And it wasn't by mistake for some one else, either. I saw a look of surprise and then of absolute recognition flash across his face. You *must* know him."

"Must I? I'm sorry, but I don't."

"Then why did he bow to you?"

"I didn't ask him. Shall we turn back and——"

"Don't be flippant!" she reproved. "You say you don't know him; and yet it's evident he does know you. How do you account for it?"

"I don't. I let it go at that. On my honor I don't know a soul in Naples, outside our hotel."

A big red automobile chugged by. A woman—gorgeously dressed, handsome in a dashing sort of way, and unmistakably Italian—was its sole occupant with the exception of the chauffeur.

There was a momentary block of traffic and we found ourselves just opposite her. She gave the lie to my last words of denial by leaning forward and bestowing on me a gracious, almost reverential bow. Then the block was opened and she whizzed past, while I was still clutching my hat in one hand and gripping the side of the carriage with the other.

I turned in perplexity to Miss Todd. But now her great gray eyes were dark with disapproval.

"You said," she observed after a dreadful pause, "you *said* you knew no one in Naples outside our hotel. I do not recall that woman's face in the dining-room. Also, I think you said a while ago you knew no women at all."

"I don't!" I blurted out, angry at the quiet disbelief in her voice and face. "I know you think I'm lying, and I don't blame you. But on my honor I never even *saw* either of those people before. I can't imagine why they bowed to me; unless since we left the hotel there has been a meeting of all the Italian nation, and as a pleasant little surprise they've unanimously elected me king or president or something. You must believe me. I don't see why you should. But you *must.*"

"Mr. D'Auban," she said, puzzled, "you are either the very simplest or the very deepest man I ever met. Which are you?"

"Neither," I answered; "I'm not a schoolboy and I'm not an emperor in disguise. Ten minutes ago I should have said I was a commonplace New Yorker on a holidy. But after a few more illustrious strangers have bowed to me I'll be ready to believe I'm almost anybody."

A coupé was turning into the Riviera from the Via Caracciolo, and in it I recognized Count Sebaste.

"It's your turn now," I went on, "here's some one who will bow to you and who most assuredly won't notice *me.* He cuts me dead."

The coupé crossed in front at right angles to us. Sebaste saw Miss Todd, and, leaning far out, bowed to her. Then his eyes sought my own unworthy form, to bestow on me, presumably, another such look of disgusted contempt as he had lavished on seeing us leave the hotel together.

But, as he looked, his expression changed. For an instant his face was al-

most as foolish as had been my own when the Duke of Ferata had saluted me.

He started, hypnotized, empty-eyed. Then collecting his dazed faculties, he gravely raised his hat once more. To *me,* this time.

All this occupied only so long a time as it took Sebaste's coachman to round the corner and steer his coupé into the stream of eastward-bound vehicles directly in front of us.

"Miss Todd," I said, "I wish you'd look at me carefully. Have I changed so, within the past few hours, that I resemble anybody else? Somebody, for instance, that everybody feels impelled to bow to? Is there anything majestic in my appearance——"

"I thought," she broke in, without heeding me; "I thought you said Count Sebaste always cut you."

"He always does. Maybe it's a custom for everybody to bow to everybody else on this street."

"We have passed several hundred people who have not bowed to you," she retorted, "and——"

A tall, angular man, of German physiognomy, strolling along the sidewalk caught my eye as I was about to answer. He clicked his heels together, drew himself up in stiff Teutonic fashion and lifted his felt hat several inches above his head, disclosing a thatch of stiff yellow hair.

It was too much. I glared helplessly at Miss Todd. She returned the look with one of terrible severity. Then, by one impulse, we leaned back on the moth-eaten cushions and laughed. Laughed long and inanely.

The German stared with wooden surprise after us as we passed on.

"I don't know why I'm laughing," she murmured at last, "for it isn't funny. It's like some perfectly idiotic dream."

The laugh cleared the air of the clouds that had so obscured the sun of our afternoon together.

Queerly enough, I felt that we were closer together, she and I, than before; and that we could never again be merely casual acquaintances. We were drawn closer by a mutual laugh.

True, we did not know why we had laughed. But it was none the less a bond of common interest.

As we looked at each other, I knew that she, too, felt the new relationship and that she perhaps resented it just a little.

Yet it was she who spoke first:

"Forgive me for doubting your word," she said, "I——"

"I don't blame you," I answered, embarrassed; "I'm inclined to doubt it myself."

"I don't understand any of the matter yet," she resumed, "but I honestly believe you don't either. And——"

"Sha'n't we let it go at that and be friends again?" I begged.

I held out my hand, unconsciously, as I might have done to a man with whom I had quarrelled and had later made peace. You see, I knew nothing of women, nor how they expected one to behave.

Realizing that perhaps I had made a mistake I was about to draw back my proffered hand, when to my relief she put hers into it, with a grasp, light, but as cordial and as honest as a boy's. A sort of thrill seemed to rest in the tips of those gloved fingers of hers, and it ran through my whole being in an utterly inexplicable way.

So taken up was I in analyzing this wholly novel sensation that I quite forgot to release the slender hand, gripped so tight in mine, until a gentle tug from its owner apprised me of my absent-mindedness.

Red and abashed, I opened my fingers reluctantly. I think she noted and maybe pitied my embarrassment, for her own cheeks were flushed as I looked quickly at her to see if she were offended.

And her eyes did not once meet mine in that frank gaze I had learned to expect.

Certainly those eyes of hers were not in the very least like Amos Todd's. And there is a great deal of character in eyes, after all.

The next moment she was talking gaily on all sorts of indifferent matters; and in another minute or two we were at the Masaniello.

I helped her to alight, and a *facchino* came out to gather up her purchases. I stopped to pay the cabman; and, when I reached the corridor she had already gone to her rooms.

I looked about in vain for Billy Gregg; and, finding he had not yet returned from the races, was about to go up-stairs to dress for dinner when, at the entrance to the writing-room, I ran across Count Sebaste.

I stood still, waiting for him to pass around me. I had no intention of turning out for a man who had systematically snubbed me and sneered at my nationality.

To my astonishment (for in the unexpected moment of confronting him the recent scene on the Riviera had slipped my mind), he again uncovered, and, grasping my hand effusively, inquired how I had enjoyed the drive, and commented on the beauty of the day.

I answered him with an attempt at cordiality and, as soon as possible, turned on my heel and left him standing there.

But he followed me and was at my side before I had reached the lift.

"I do not wonder at your caution, sir," he began, "for I myself noted that there were several of the guests, writing, within easy earshot. But you surely did not suppose I intended to speak of private matters in such a place? I merely wished to greet you and to let you know how grieved I am to have treated you heretofore with rudeness. Believe me it was unintentional. I was so stupid as to mistake you for a traveling American. Your disguise and acting are unsurpassed, if you will permit the praise."

Now, there I stood, looking, I doubt, a trifle wiser than a stuck pig, dully listening while this hitherto haughty nobleman was fairly outdoing himself to be civil and agreeable to me.

That he mistook me for some one else was most certain. But, if so, why had he waited a whole week before making that mistake? He had had plenty of chances to observe me. Also for whom did he now mistake me, and why?

It was on the tip of my tongue to put some of these queries into words and to apprise him of his error, when an idea—a real, inspired idea—swept over me.

I was in Italy in search of romance. Surely a mistake of this sort (coupled as it was by the salutes I had received on the Riviera) spelled something very like romance. Is not romance based on mystery? And was there not surely the strangest sort of mystery here?

I was on the track of the very thing I had traveled three thousand miles to find. And, but for an inspired afterthought, I had been on the point of wrecking all my chances.

So I bit back the words that had been trembling on my lips and said instead (speaking in Italian, as he had done, and in a manner I sought to make lofty):

"I thank you, count. And I quite understand the motives that prompted you."

Which was the most egregious lie I had ever told.

But it seemed to satisfy him, for he bowed again and, stepping closer, and dropping his voice to a mere whisper, continued:

"We expected you a fortnight ago, sir. May I venture to ask what detained——"

"My reasons were imperative," I answered coldly.

"A thousand pardons!" he muttered, with humble deprecation, and added:

"How are matters in Vienna? What commands do you bring?"

How was I to know? This was a poser.

CHAPTER IV.

A POSTPONED DISASTER.

COUNT SEBASTE'S queries left me for the moment groping wildly for a reply.

How was I to know how matters stood in Vienna, or what commands I was supposed to issue?

For an instant my nerve wavered. How could I take a single step along this alluring pathway that seemed to lead to romance without blundering so awkwardly as to get myself cast forth again into the drearier, if broader highways, of every-day commonplaces?

Best, perhaps, make a clean breast of the matter.

But my resolution came to my aid. Was I—the avowed hunter of romance—going to turn my back on that fickle deity when for the first time in all my humdrum life I was apparently about to enter her domain?

A hundred times, No!

And with the resolution came resource.

The count, fancying probably that I had not caught the drift of his questions, opened his lips to repeat them. But I forestalled him by turning, with as fine an assumption of superiority as I could summon up, and remarking with a really delightful aloofness:

"Is this the time or place to speak of such things?"

Again he bowed, confusedly; red with wrath at my rebuke, yet schooling his tongue to mutter an apology of some sort.

Just then, like an angel of rescue descending from the skies, the lift appeared. With a curt nod to the still-apologetic Sebaste, I stepped inside and the metal gate clanged between me and him.

I sighed with real relief. If I was going to pit my wits against this smooth Italian's I wanted a little time wherein to lay out some plan of campaign before plunging headlong into the mystery.

Accordingly, as I dressed for dinner I tried to gain some line on the matter.

That Count Sebaste mistook me for some one else I knew. Why he did so, I could not possibly imagine. I looked exactly as I had looked all the week. Yet, up to this afternoon, he had never deigned to notice my existence.

Then, too, three total strangers had that afternoon bowed to me. One of them was a duke. If blind, incomprehensible mystery were the basis of romance, then surely I was at last on romance's track.

But what was to be the next step? How was I to keep up the illusion—whatever that illusion might be? How was I to avoid inadvertently betraying the fact, at my first word, that I had no place in that same baffling mystery?

And, for that matter, what *was* the mystery? Why should a conservative if notoriously impecunious duke bow respectfully to an American factory-owner whom he never before had seen? Why had the woman in the automobile and the wooden-faced German bowed?

Why, especially, had Count Sebaste, who had seen me at meals every day for a week, suddenly thawed into a deferential, obsequious seeker of my acquaintance?

The more I conjectured, the more hopelessly confused I became. But with growing confusion also grew a keen joy in the situation.

This was what my workaday soul had longed for. Romance!

And I had not tried to palm myself off as any one else than myself. If this supercilious Neapolitan chose to mistake me for another, it was his lookout, not mine. Moreover, when explanations should at length become necessary it would be highly gratifying to let him see that for all his superior airs he had played the fool for a mere "American tourist," as he had sneeringly called me.

It made my Yankee blood boil to recall that sneer. And at once my resolution to humiliate this miserable Italian sprig of nobility became adamant.

But how?

He had asked how affairs were going in Vienna. Clearly, then, I was supposed to have recently arrived from Vienna.

Also he had asked concerning "commands."

There were two points of information that might prove of benefit to me, particularly the latter. For, as I was evidently in some way or other Sebaste's superior in this mysterious business, I could perhaps, if necessary, suddenly become haughty and refuse to reply to any embarrassing query.

One point, however, in my recent brief conversation with him troubled me not a little.

He had said I had been expected in Naples sooner. From that it was evident that the man whom I was involuntarily impersonating was overdue. He might arrive at any moment. Having arrived, he might not take kindly to my attitude.

However, I must risk that. And I must waste no time in entering on the game unless I wished to be forestalled by him.

Sebaste and I had spoken in Italian. I did not know whether or not the man from Vienna was supposed to be an Italian. If he were, I had no fear of discovery. For though I am heart, soul, and body an American, yet my mother was Italian and had taught me her own language before I was five years old.

We had spoken Italian or French most

of the time at home when I was a child. In consequence I spoke both with no foreign accent, and as easily as I did English.

Despite my doubts as to my ability to keep up the part, I began to yearn for my next encounter with Sebaste.

I had just finished dressing when Billy Gregg stormed into my room.

"How did the races go?" I queried. "Did you clean out the Naples bookies?"

"Clean out nothin'!" he growled, drawing out a cigar and unceremoniously rummaging my dressing-table for a match. "These dago horses are the measliest gallery of skates I ever bucked up against. I piped a jock that could speak a mouthful or two of something he miscalled 'English.' I slips him a fiver an' tells him to put me wise to a good thing. An' he pockets the dough an' tells me money's the goodest thing he's wise to. An' I find out the races is sassiety events an' run on the square, an' no way a poor feller can find out what's doin'. I drops a bunch of these lira shin-plasters on the wrong skate an'—— Holy Saint Tammany, what's that red headlight you got?"

His wanderings in search of a match had brought him to the dresser-drawer into which I had dropped the scarlet scarab when I changed to evening clothes.

He fished the scarf-pin out of its resting-place and held it up to the light.

"Well, of all the funny-lookin' lamps I ever struck!" he commented, turning it round and round. "Where'd you pick it up?"

I told him.

"H'm!" he went on. "Not so ugly, is it? Dinky an' furren lookin', but swell for all that. Did they have another?"

"No. Why?"

"I'd kinder like to get one. It'd look tasty with my red satin tie an' that stylish, red-spotted vest of mine."

And he sighed with pure joy at the beauteous vision he had conjured up.

"Take it if you like," I suggested carelessly.

I had already lost my first enthusiasm over the garish bauble. But he drew back.

"Not me!" he decided (thereby, as it happened, unconsciously changing the whole current of my future life). "Thanks just the same. But it'd bring me bad luck. Never take a pointed or sharp thing for a present. Breaks friendship. And I ain't cravin' to lose you just yet a while. Say, what's this red stone on the head of the pin?"

"Jade, I suppose, or sardonyx, or——"

"No, no! I don't mean what's it made of, but the thing carved on it?"

"Oh! A scarab."

"A which?"

"A scarab. The ancient Egyptian emblem of——"

"'Scarab's' a new one on me all right. Looks more to me like a beetle."

I explained to him the symbolism of the carven beetle placed in the hands of dead Egyptian kings; and how, thousands of years afterward, the sacred relics from rifled tombs became fashion's toys. Incidentally, I mentioned that a firm in Birmingham, England, is said to turn out more "genuine antique" scarabs in a year than were ever dug up in all Egypt.

Billy was not especially interested in the historic sketch; but the vivid color and strange design of the pin had evidently captured his fancy. Again I offered it to him and once more he declined.

"Why not wear it with them open-faced clothes of yours?" he suggested, eying my evening waistcoat. "You'd look less like a waiter an' more like a real hot sport. Well, so long! I 'spose I've got to clamber into my own merry regalia. What fool ever invented this crazy idea of harnessin' a man into a tombstone-front just because it happened to be evenin'? South of Fourteenth Street, folks'd think we was goin' to th' Cigarmakers' Ball."

I was not paying much heed to his complaint. This protest against dressing for dinner had been a nightly affair with Billy.

My mind had gone back to the Sebaste matter, and I was wondering how best to conduct my inevitable interview with him.

"Say, Billy," I called across to him in the adjoining room, where he was strug-

gling into his tight evening clothes, "I want your advice."

I was about to confide the whole matter to him. But, on second thought, I feared he might not be content to remain a mere spectator when so interesting a game was afoot. And two unguarded sentences of Gregg's East Side diction would bring all my plans to wreck.

I resolved, for the present, to keep my own counsel. So I went on:

"You said you were in the prize-ring once. What would you do if you were matched against a cleverer man than yourself and wanted to make him think you were cleverer than he?"

"Is there a funny comeback to it? No? Well, I'd lay low an' look wise, an' let him do all the leadin', and I'd watch my chance an'——"

"Thanks, old man!" I broke in. "Your advice is good. And I mean to follow it."

CHAPTER V.

I TAKE A LEAP IN THE DARK.

I HAD seldom enjoyed a meal as I enjoyed that night's dinner at the Masaniello. Not that the food had any marked traits in common with the ambrosia of the ancients, but because of my surroundings.

Sebaste always sat at Doris Todd's left. The Englishman who had occupied the place at her right had gone on to Rome by the afternoon train, leaving the chair temporarily vacant. To Billy Gregg's infinite amazement, and a little to my own, I found myself preempting the place of honor at the right hand of the prettiest girl in the room.

She did not appear to resent my boldness. Remembering, I suppose, my confession of bashful inexperience concerning women, she was even kind enough to welcome me to my new place and to be extremely pleasant to me throughout the meal.

Sebaste did not seem especially happy over the new arrangement; but it did my heart good to note the new cordiality and even respect in his voice the few times he had occasion to address me.

Some of his superfluous civility actually seemed to overflow far enough to include Billy. I could see he was puzzled as to Gregg's status in the matter and that he no longer dared to treat my fellow traveler with quite his former contemptuous superiority.

Billy was equally puzzled over the count's diffident overtures and met them with the air of sullen caution that a farmer who had already bought experience at a high price might bestow on a green-goods man.

Amos Todd, at the opposite end, beamed unctuous approval at the clever sallies and anecdotes of the little dark-brown French Comtesse de Tournon, and now and then condescended to roll a ponderous witticism down the table in the direction of us younger folk.

Altogether, it was an amusing meal. Only once did I sight breakers ahead. That was when Sebaste broke into the jolly *tête-à-tête* Miss Todd and I were having to ask if she had enjoyed her afternoon among the curio shops, and what she had bought.

She plunged into a long technical description of the antiques she had been lured into purchasing and went on to tell of our homeward drive along the Chiaja.

"It was the oddest adventure!" she said. "We met the Duke of Ferata and——"

"What a jam there is on the Riviera in the late afternoon!" I rudely interrupted, fearful lest she betray by some chance word my ignorance of the reason for my sudden rise in popularity. "I wonder there are not more accidents. What with all those carriages and autos and——"

"It ain't deuce-high to Fif' Av'noo on a bright Sunday!" boasted Gregg, unconsciously following my lead and helping to steer the ship of romance off the threatening rocks. "I'll bet a week's board there's more good dollars represented in one blockful of Fif' Av'noo paraders than in a whole mile of these Eyetalian dukes and dukesses. Why, when I was to the ball Croker give in honor of——"

"Oh, Mr. Gregg," broke in the Comtesse de Tournon, adopting Sebaste's new-found air of civility toward Billy, "was that the Croker who owns New York?"

"*Owned,* ma'am. Not *owns,*" corrected Billy. "A whole lot of things has been pulled off since the Hall handed Croker a lemon and made him wise that he was dead."

"'A lemon'—'wise that he was dead'?" echoed Mme. de Tournon, her slight French accent tinged with bewilderment. "I don't think I quite comprehend. Is it idiomatic English you speak, or——"

"No, ma'am," responded Billy, "I speak New York."

The calm pride with which he said it, coupled with the countess' look of hopeless amaze, and his ignorance of having said anything out of the ordinary, was too much for Doris Todd and myself. For the second time that day we laughed heartily in unison; and again I felt reluctantly drawn into closer fellowship with her because of the laugh.

Billy, deeply offended at our mirth, relapsed into sulky silence, from which all the countess' efforts at acquiring knowledge of American colloquialisms failed to arouse him. Sebaste, evidently more and more puzzled, also grew meditatively silent; and except for Amos Todd's platitudes, Doris and I had all the talk to ourselves.

Really, it was hourly growing harder for me to realize that she was Todd's daughter. I knew I was in no danger of allowing myself to grow unduly interested in any scion of such stock; and in the meantime I was beginning to find a strange pleasure in listening to her voice and in looking into those big, honest-seeming eyes of hers.

Dinner over, I strolled, as was my wont, into the smoking-room for a post-prandial wrestle with one of those vile Neapolitan cigars. Billy, who usually accompanied me, was still in the sulks and had wandered away somewhere.

I purposely chose a seat in a remote corner, far away from the room's few occupants, and, bracing my wits, awaited events.

As I had foreseen, in less than five minutes Sebaste appeared in the doorway. His gaze swept the room in an impersonal fashion and he seemed about to withdraw. Then, catching sight of me, he nodded pleasantly as to a casual acquaintance, seated himself near the center of the apartment and glanced over a paper.

Presently, politely stifling a yawn, he tossed the paper aside, as if bored, and glanced about in search of something to catch his errant fancy. Again his eye lit on me and he slouched across the room, drawing out a cigar as he came.

"May I trouble you for a light?" he asked in a voice perfectly audible to the other smokers. "Thanks. I must have lost my match-safe."

He threw himself down carelessly on a black leather fauteuil beside me.

"Well?" he said in a lower voice.

"Well?" I repeated with (I hope) equal coolness.

The battle was on.

I recalled Billy Gregg's inspired advice, to "lay low, look wise, let him do all the leading, and watch my chance"; and again I resolved to profit by it.

But it was not easy. Sebaste seemed in no hurry to begin. In fact, he waited so long that my nerves began to get the better of me and I was half tempted to shout: "I'm not the man from Vienna! You're making a fool of yourself!"

Instead, I puffed thoughtfully at my miserable cigar and tried to look Machiavellian.

"We have waited long for you," he said at last.

"I could not come sooner," I replied.

"But—all during the week that you've been here——"

"As I told you this afternoon, there were reasons."

All right thus far, but leading to nothing but a second dreary pause.

"May I ask," he said finally, with a faint suggestion of sarcasm, "if I may be honored by receiving your instructions?"

"All in good time. I must crave your indulgence and patience. I am not at liberty to do everything at once; and I must follow the plan laid out. You understand, I hope——"

"Perfectly!"

I was glad he did. *I* didn't. But my more confidential manner had apparently softened his resentment at my first peremptory words, and he regarded me with a friendlier look.

"All is well in Vienna, I hope?" he ventured.

"H'm!" I said discontentedly, "I wish I could answer you 'Yes.'"

He started up in excitement.

"You surely don't mean——"

"I do," I answered solemnly; "I mean just that."

He sank back, scowling and nervous.

"However," I went on cheerfully, "matters are not as bad as they might be. Everything will be adjusted in the course of a little time."

"You really think so?" he asked.

"I am sure of it!" I cried in a glow of rosy confidence that seemed to reassure him more than did my mere words.

"And in the meantime——" I resumed, and checked myself.

"In the meantime," he repeated, "I trust it will in no way interfere with our plan here?"

"Not in the very least," I assured him. "At least—not as matters now stand."

What I meant by that last clause I myself had not the slightest notion. It sounded well, that was all. But it had a delightful effect on Sebaste.

"Ah!" he exclaimed as one who sees a great light. "May I hazard the guess that it was in order to make arrangements for the safety of our plan—in view of the disappointment at Vienna—that you remained here a whole week incognito?"

I positively beamed on him.

"My dear Signor Sebaste!" I observed, "you should have adopted the career of a diplomat!"

"I have chosen a more lucrative profession," he retorted dryly, pleased nevertheless by the compliment and by his own acumen.

All this was more or less entertaining; but we were talking to no purpose. I, at least, was learning nothing; and he was merely jumping at wild conclusions. We were getting nowhere. I decided to start on another tack.

"And now, count," I said, in a businesslike fashion, repeating a little speech I had rehearsed while awaiting his arrival, "and now, let us get down to business. May I hear your report?"

"My report!" he echoed blankly, staring at me in genuine vacancy. "I do not understand, sir."

My one best shot!—and it had flown wide. I made haste to recover myself.

"Surely," I protested with a show of pardonable annoyance, "you must have *something* to report?"

"How should I, sir? You received our full report before leaving Vienna, and replied in full to it. Since then, we have merely been awaiting your arrival."

"Of course!" I agreed impatiently, "I understand *that*. But I had thought—I had ventured to *hope*—that *some* progress might have been made in the interval."

"Surely, sir," he replied wonderingly, "you did not think we would take any steps without your sanction and commands?"

"No, no," I explained, "you misunderstand me. I only hoped that something might perhaps have occurred without your taking such steps—something to further our——"

"No," he answered gloomily, "nothing. Everything awaited your arrival; your word. And now that you are at last here——"

I was beginning to perspire gently under the collar. My mind was slowly becoming a jumble of meaningless phrases and sounds.

Verily the pathway to romance was not lined with roses. I felt as if I were trying to run across a strange room in the dark. But, having begun, my Yankee grit held me from turning back.

"And now that you are here," continued Sebaste, "what am I—what are we—to do?"

"For the moment—nothing!" I said. Then, noting his look of amazed disappointment, I hastened to add:

"Don't worry. When the hour for action comes—and it is at hand—there will be enough work for all."

It sounded like a labor agitator's slogan. But such as it was, it visibly impressed him.

"You really think so?" he cried.

"There can be no doubt of it."

"And in—in Case No. 1 of our report—is it an impertinence to ask who has been chosen?"

Now there is the advantage of Italian over English. In the latter language, the word "who" is sexless. In Italian it of course takes a gender form. And the form Sebaste had used was masculine.

Clearly then, it was a man, not a woman, to whom the mysterious "who" referred. Thus were my chances of making a mistake reduced by one-half.

But that gave me scant comfort. Who *had* been chosen? And for what?

There were evidently several people, at least, concerned in the affair to which Sebaste referred. They were presumably Neapolitans. And, except for the people at the hotel I knew no one in Naples.

Yet I saw that an answer of some sort must be made, and quickly. I spoke the first Neapolitan name that came into my muddled brain.

"Oh, in Case No. 1?" I said reflectively, "*il* Duca di Ferata."

Why I said it, I do not know; except that the duke had bowed to me that afternoon and that he was one of the very few Neapolitans I chanced to know by name.

Then came a bit of sick reaction.

To what had the Duke of Ferata been "chosen"? To robbery, or even, perhaps, assassination? I was getting far beyond my depth.

To amuse oneself by a romance hunt was one thing. To play the clown and in that capacity to condemn some total and inoffensive stranger to misfortune was quite another.

The thing had gone far enough. I must explain; or at the very least discover what evil I had conjured up for Ferata.

But Sebaste's next words relieved me of any fear lest I had done the duke an injury.

"Ferata?" he said, and his face again showed a slight chagrin. "I had hoped that perhaps—in view of all I have done—*I* was to be the fortunate man."

"Your turn will come," I told him consolingly. "Have no fear. You will be rewarded and——"

"Believe me," he interposed courteously, "I had no intention of complaining. I rely absolutely on your generosity and justice. It was only that I have grown to feel a sort of vagrant fondness for——"

"I quite understand and sympathize," I declared, glad to be for the moment on safer ground.

"But Ferata?" he went on. "I wish I had known earlier. I could have facilitated matters. Why, I doubt if he is even acquainted——"

"That can doubtless be arranged without trouble," I interrupted in haste.

I did not know but that his next sentence might involve me in another slough. I was eager to let well enough alone, and to give over for the present the vain hope of learning what my random decree had confered on the duke.

"It can readily be arranged, as you say," agreed Sebaste. "Be assured I shall waste no time. By the way, as to funds—I am of course instructed——"

"Thank you," I said, again cutting him short, "I am amply provided for, just at present. I shall have no need to draw more."

I could see that this decision impressed him favorably. I rather liked it myself.

I had no notion of taking money from this unknown source. Romance and grand larceny have little in common. But I felt it could do no harm to be generous, so long as I myself held my skirts clear.

"I know that your own expenses are heavy," I said grandly, "and I beg that you will regard any personal expenditures, for the present, as perfectly legitimate. Do not be niggardly with yourself, my dear count."

His face lighted up and he murmured confusedly grateful words.

For the moment I felt positively philanthropic. I was casting sunshine into this probably underpaid nobleman's dark path. And his evident thankfulness showed that the largess was not unappreciated.

"Now, sir," he resumed, "as to my expense accounts. Perhaps you would care to look——"

"My dear Sebaste!" I demurred indignantly. "Among gentlemen! Pray dismiss the idea that I shall ever call you to account for a single expenditure—personal or otherwise."

He was fairly bursting with gratitude and smiled lovingly on me. I could see he regarded me as his friend for life. Never before had the world known as trusting an auditor of accounts as I had just proven myself to be; never before so liberal a dispenser of an unknown fund.

In the glow of having robbed him of all suspicion and made him my grateful slave, I overlooked for the moment the doubtful ethics of my thus giving him permission to spend other people's money. When, later, the ethical side of the idea recurred to me I resolved, if worst came to worst, to make good any money losses Sebaste's mysterious superiors might sustain through my idiocy. If romance came high, I was ready to pay.

Sebaste, thawed far out of his usual haughtiness by my princely generosity, began to laugh softly and with intense enjoyment.

I glared suspiciously at him. He waved his hand airily.

"It is only that I recall what a glorious jest we played on the old fool!" he gasped. "With his own money, too."

He apparently referred to Ferata. Yet the duke could not be more than forty at most. Nor did his dissipated fat face betoken foolishness. And, as for money, it was a notorious fact that Ferata was a chronic bankrupt.

Perhaps my look showed my lack of appreciation. For Sebaste ceased his laughter, and leaning toward me, began apologetically:

"I fear it is in bad taste to laugh at an unfortunate. But———"

"Ah! There you are, count!" broke in a ponderous, oily voice in English. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Have you forgotten I was to have my revenge at billiards this evening?"

Sebaste, at the first words, was once more the alert, haughty diplomat. He rose to his feet and advanced to meet Amos Todd, who trotted forward from the doorway in the wake of his own smooth voice.

"I ask your pardon, Signor Todd," pleaded the count in his best English. "It was most careless of me. I will come with you at once if Signor D'Auban will excuse me."

"Certainly," I assented, noticing with curiosity that he referred to me in a coldly formal fashion as though to a comparative stranger.

"Maybe you'll join us, D'Auban?" suggested Todd, linking his arm in Sebaste's, overjoyed at the chance of showing his familiarity with a nobleman. "Come along if you like."

"Thanks," I said. "I've letters to write. Good-by."

The doorway was narrow. Todd passed out ahead. For a fractional moment Sebaste and I were side by side.

"Does *he,*" whispered the count, nodding toward Amos' broad back, "does he know that you are——"

"No," I returned in the same tone, "and I do not wish him to know. Not a word to him about me, please!"

"Not a word," he agreed, "but, to think that *he,* of all of us, should not be told!"

So Todd, as well as Sebaste, was in the secret! And, oh, what *was* the secret?

CHAPTER VI.

ASTRAY IN THE UNDERWORLD.

I PASSED a restless night, tossing about in the warm, breathless dark, my mind still buzzing with memory of that ludicrous conversation between Sebaste and myself.

My random replies, jumping as I intended they should with his own ideas, had averted suspicion. That was certain. Equally certain, my afterthought of suggesting to him that he spend money freely on himself had made him my grateful debtor.

But apart from those two insignificant advances, I was still as much as ever in ignorance as to whether or not I had made any progress on that longed-for road to romance.

Probably not. I had learned nothing more except that some important campaign hung upon the decree of "The Man from Vienna."

Yes, I had, though. I had learned (to my own satisfaction, at least) that whatever the scheme might be, Amos Todd was undoubtedly concerned in it. And now, looking back over the past week, I marveled I had not sooner bethought me of the incongruity of Todd and Sebaste being so much together.

True, Amos' slavish adoration of anything with a title readily explained *his* share of the intimacy. But Sebaste openly sneered at and avoided American tourists; and I wondered that I had seen nothing strange in his toleration and even encouragement of Todd.

One thing was evident: If Amos Todd were mixed up in it—if this were the "important business" whereof his daughter had spoken so vaguely—the scheme could have nothing honorable or worthy about it. And I felt less like an impostor for my impertinent efforts to unravel its mysteries.

With the thought returned, in a wave, all my old distrust of Doris. I had allowed myself to become too friendly with her. I must sheer off.

With this intention strong in my mind I arose early and began to dress. The heights around Naples were crystal clear in the dawning day. But above the bay hung a white mist out of which to eastward rose the somber black cone of Vesuvius beneath its ever-present fan of dingy smoke.

A rap came at my door and a bell-boy handed me a note. It was addressed in a delicate, vertical hand and was written on thin paper.

It gave me an odd sensation to open it. For I saw from the writing and stationery that it was from a woman; and I was not accustomed to receiving such. The letter ran as follows:

DEAR MR. D'AUBAN:

Forgive my waking you so early, but it occurred to father and myself that perhaps you might care to join our little party to Solfatara and the Styx to-day. We planned it yesterday morning—just Count Sebaste, Mme. de Tournon, father and I. We are going to breakfast at seven, and the diligence is ordered for eight, so that we can have a good long day. Please come, if you care to. Will you send word by the bearer?

Cordially,

DORIS TODD.

P. S.—Of course this includes Mr. Gregg. I'm sure he will enjoy giving Mme. de Tournon another lesson in up-to-date American idioms.

As I said, I had calmly and thoroughly made up my mind to avoid Doris Todd in future. But what on earth is the use in having a mind if one may not change it occasionally?

I sat down and scrawled a line of acceptance, then hurriedly continued dressing.

"Oh, Billy!" I called, suddenly remembering Gregg's existence and pounding on the door of the adjoining room, "Billy Gregg! 'Awaken, Harold, it is peep of day!'"

"Aw, cut it out, can't you?" came in querulous drowsiness through the panel. "I was just dreamin' I'd picked three winners at——"

"Hurry out of your dream then before some pickpocket steals all your winnings. We're going on a picnic. You've only just time to dress."

"Picnic?" he repeated, in slumberous stupidity. "To Coney, or——"

"No. To Solfatara. Get up!"

I heard the creaking of bed-springs and, Billy, pajama-clad and tousled of head, opened the door, standing there to regard me blinkingly, like a cross and sleepy barn-owl.

"What's it all about?" he grumbled. "What's Solf-Solf—w'atever it is—and——"

"It's the old volcanic ground beyond Posillipo. Vergil's grotto's there and lots of things—the opening of the underground river Styx that's supposed to lead to——"

"The deuce!" he growled, uncomprehending half I said.

"Exactly the very spot. Come along and see it."

I told him of Miss Todd's invitation, omitting the reference to last night's dinner and misunderstandings, and racked my memory for meager information about the mystic sulphur-lands.

At the end he was wide enough awake to gather the fact that we were going on some sort of jollification and to some unknown spot. Grasping the idea, he shuffled back into his room to prepare for the occasion.

I was smoking a cigarette on the balcony above the main stairway when he joined me. He was clad in the most exuberant of checked suits, and proudly wore the beloved carmine tie and maroon waistcoat.

"Billy," I said admiringly, "you're a fearful spectacle! You'll carry Solfatara by storm in all those clothes."

"They *are* a wee bit to the swell," he admitted modestly, preening his gaudy plumage before a hall mirror. Then, favoring me with the critical gaze of a Beau Brummel, he added:

"*You* look less like an undertaker on a holiday than usual yourself. It's that

tasty red scarab of yours that makes you seem more like the real goods."

He started down the stairs and I followed him. But what he had said of the scarab annoyed me.

When I had stuck in the pin that morning I had thought it a pretty touch of color in otherwise sober apparel. But if it really made me look like a man of Billy's taste in dress——

I furtively withdrew the pin from my stock; and, as there was no time to return to my room with it, I dropped it into an inner pocket of my coat.

We found the others just entering the breakfast-room. An hour later we were all six packed in a diligence and on our way through the half-empty morning streets to Posillipo.

The drive up the winding hill and down the farther side, past world-old shrines and ruins, amid vineyard and olive orchard; the glories of bay and mountain height, the splendor of the early day—all held me in silent adoration, and I could talk but little.

Doris, I noted, was equally quiet and her big gray eyes rested on the beauties of world and sky with a half-reverent delight.

After all, perhaps I had been hasty in deciding to avoid her. Surely there was no hint of her father's hypocritical smugness in those wonder-filled, honest eyes.

We two, alone of all the sextet, were quiet. Sebaste and Mme. de Tournon, to whom all this panorama of loveliness was an old story, chatted gaily. Billy joined in with reminiscences of the East Side and a comparison between the marvels of Luna Park and his present more commonplace surroundings.

Amos Todd, too, seized the occasion of a brief pause to point out that the Italian indolence of character alone made the country so ill-cultivated and held back Italy from keeping pace with such nations as the United States.

Mme. de Tournon had evidently awakened to the belief that Billy Gregg had been joking at her expense during the previous night's dinner, and she soon began paying him back in his own coin. He was speaking of Vesuvius and commenting on the perpetual pall of black smoke above it.

"Shall I tell you a great secret?" she said with an air of mystery. "Vesuvius is nothing but a stupendous money-maker; just as you say your Luna Park is. If it were not for Vesuvius few foreigners would come to Naples. So, by a great mechanism, controlled by a scientist named Matteucci, who lives on the mountain, a perpetual fire is kept going inside the crater. Every few years, when foreigners begin to fall off in numbers, an eruption is arranged."

"I saw a picture of it once," Billy exclaimed, glad to show his broad knowledge, "a picture of V'soovious eruptioning. It was in the *P'lice Gazette,* an'——"

"Yes. Pictures of it are sent all over the world; and that draws people here and they spend money and——"

"Gee! V'soovious must have a dandy press-agent!"

"The mechanism is marvelous," she continued, not at all understanding his allusion. "Great stones, vapor, dust and lava are hurled high in air during the eruption, and——"

"But lots of poor geezers get killed. I sh'd think——"

"That's all part of the fable. No one is really hurt. It is arranged so that that is impossible. Yet accounts are written of great loss of life, to draw people here; just as at circuses the managers call various feats perilous in order to attract notice."

I was sick at heart to hear any one—least of all a woman—jest on so terrible a thing. Had she no pity, no humanity? Not an Italian on earth could have made light of the horrors of Vesuvius as this flippant little French countess had just done.

Even Sebaste looked disapprovingly at her, and I saw Doris Todd's eyes contract as at a blow. But Billy believed it all.

"So the whole thing's a fake?" he asked in wonder.

"All a gigantic hoax," the countess replied merrily. "But never tell other Americans. It is a state secret. It is all a vast, clever machine. No one hurt, but the locality excellently advertised. Solfatara, which we are visiting to-day, is under the same management."

To my relief, the diligence just then

came to a halt near the base of Solfatara. We piled out, and while the others were busy engaging guides I drew Billy to one side.

"Say, old man," I whispered, "don't believe a word that little cat has told you. She was making fun of you—and what she said was in worse than bad taste."

Gregg favored me with a superior smile.

"I guess I know what to swallow an' what not to," he grinned. "An' I'm wise to it the minute any one tries to jolly me. An' I know when I hear the straight facts, too. I can tell you, son, Mrs. Toornong was handin' me solid truth all right. I've had my s'spicions of V'soovious ever since I see it. She's put me wise."

"But she was joking!" I protested. "She knows that the——"

"She's lived in this neck of the woods a long time," he interrupted stubbornly. "I could see she was onto all the curves. She knows about it a good deal better'n a stranger like you can know. An' she wasn't stringin' me, neither."

How could I argue with the pig-headed fellow? Yet, strangely enough, at a later day I was destined to thank God, in all reverence, for Billy's silly credulity concerning the fire-mountain's harmlessness.

Off we went, in the wake of a voluble little guide, to explore that uncanny, sulphurous crater.

This is no guide-book. Others, with better literary training than a mere ex-factory-owner can boast, have described the cracked, dead earth, whence, for acres (at touch of a lighted match to one spot on the ground) creep whitish, pungent curls of smoke; of the black mud-pool, where ever and again bubbles to the surface that mysterious black lump so horribly like the head of a man struggling to escape from the boiling slime that encompasses it.

To all this, Billy grinned condescending approval, though after a time it manifestly bored him. I could see that he did not consider it, as a spectacle, equal to many he had seen at Coney Island. Also that he thoroughly believed, thanks to madame, that it was all a clever if uninteresting bit of human ingenuity.

I was kneeling down, as near as I dared, examining with repugnant fascination the head in the mud-pool, and did not note that the others, wearying of the sight, had passed on around the curve of the hill. I looked up presently to find that Doris Todd alone had remained to share with me the ghastly spectacle.

"I wish Mme. de Tournon had not spoken as she did of Vesuvius," she said as I rose and stood beside her. "And the worst of it is, your friend seemed to believe her. Of course you'll undeceive him, but——"

"I have tried to," I answered, "but I'm afraid it's no use. He says she knows Italy better than I, and he prefers to believe her; and he always will. You see, Billy comes from a class that are always on their guard against fakes and are always suspicious of anything they can't understand. So when an explanation that struck him as plausible was made to account for Vesuvius he fell for it at once. What has become of all the others? They seem to have deserted us."

"Let's walk on to the entrance to the Styx," she suggested. "They may have gone in that direction; and if not they'll have to come back there soon for lunch."

We reached the grotto, to find we were ahead of our party.

"Shall we go back and look for them?" I asked, "or wait here till they come?"

"Neither," she decided. "Let's explore the grotto."

"But——"

"I'd rather go there now than when——"

She checked herself; but I understood. I knew she did not wish another old-world wonder spoiled for her by Billy Gregg's East Side comments.

She glanced timidly at me, as if fearful that I had guessed her unspoken thought. So I hastened to end the embarrassing pause.

"That suits me to perfection," I said. "We can hire guides to take us through, I suppose. Or rather, to *carry* us through. For I believe the water is quite deep and the underground river or grotto runs back into the mountain for miles, with all sorts of twists and

turnings. A stranger would be lost in no time. The guides carry passengers through on their backs, you know."

As we waited, three men who had been lounging about the gloomy entrance came forward, bowing and wriggling with servile eagerness — a villainous-looking, greasy, unwashed trio.

"The signore wishes to go through the Styx!" said the foremost. "We are accredited guides," and he showed me a soiled document to that effect. "I can carry the signore on my back and my two assistants will make a chair of their arms for the signorina. Only six lire apiece, signore. Great journey. Supposed river leading to the Inferno. Far inside you will see the frescoes and stairway of Marcus Agrippa."

He rattled off the speech with the monotonous glibness of a phonograph, and in the barbarous Sicilian dialect, so difficult for even a born Tuscan to understand.

I did not like the looks of the three; and I had heard queer rumors of the ways of the grotto guides. But there was not another soul in sight.

I had not the courage to back down and suggest to this fearless, tall American girl at my side that we await the arrival of our party. And, after all, I was an American and more than ordinarily strong.

At worst, I fancied I would be more than a match for these three undersized beggars.

"Oh, *do* let us go!" begged Doris, in English. "It's a real adventure—being carried off under a mountain by these comic opera brigands. Come!"

"But——" I protested feebly.

"I really believe you're afraid!" she laughed in gay scorn.

That settled it. I nodded to the leader, who stooped while I climbed, pickaback, on his broad shoulders. The other two interlaced their arms and Miss Todd seated herself in the chair thus formed.

My bearer lighted a torch and started down the narrow, low-roofed cavern, the two others following with Miss Todd.

The red glare lit up a long, tortuous tunnel before us; a roof hewn out of rock and grimed by myriad smoky torches. Beneath, the water rose above the carriers' knees.

The passage was in most places too narrow for the three men to walk abreast, and, as my guide bore the torch, the others, at such times, dropped behind. The rhythmic *splash! splash! splash!* of the three pairs of legs through the water reverberated to the low roof and along the vista-like passage. Otherwise no sound penetrated the subterranean cavern.

"Isn't this delightful?" called Doris, her sweet voice reechoing weirdly. "I feel as if I were Dante, visiting the Underworld. Oh, Mr. D'Auban, you've no idea how funny you look, perched up there on that little man's shoulders!"

No doubt I did look ridiculous. But nobody likes being told so. I did not deign to reply, and she did not speak again.

So piqued was I at her innocent jest that I no longer so much as turned my head in her direction, but henceforth peered sulkily forward into the darkness beyond the ring of torchlight.

Around corners, and through arches we plodded; now to right, now to left; following the devious turnings of the various sub-passages.

My sense of direction was soon lost. So was my sense of enjoyment. It was monotonous—this sitting on the back of a little Sicilian, and looking forward at nothingness, while a pretty girl laughed at me.

One sharp turn to the right, under an arch, and the passage widened into a sort of square room, perhaps thirty feet broad, at whose farther end a short flight of broken stone steps of incalculable age rose out of the water and terminated in a solid wall of stone or concrete ten feet beyond.

"At the top of those stairs, signore," grunted my guide, "are the frescoes of Marcus Agrippa. Will you step off and look at them?"

It was better, at all events, than looking at darkness and water and torch flare. Besides, I was tired of being carried like a child.

So, as he knelt on the first step that rose above the river's edge, I slid from his shoulders to the solid stones; stumbled, and at last found my footing. Then I turned, in order to help Doris Todd descend from her bearers' arms.

As I had stepped to the stones, my guide had quickly moved backward into the river; and now, as I looked, he was standing at the far end of the chamber, under the arch, full twenty feet of water intervening between himself and me.

Doris Todd and her bearers were nowhere in sight; nor did even the most distant splash in that world of silence give me sign of her approach.

I stood alone and helpless, a mile under the mountain, with no knowledge whatsoever of the way out; and with no one in the upper world cognizant of our whereabouts excepting the scoundrels responsible for our predicament.

And the brave girl who had relied on me to guard her and keep her safe in this uncanny pilgrimage—where was she?

(To be continued.)

MRS. MEEK'S MONEY.

BY JOHN MONTAGUE.

The blighting of a summer day's outing and the still more fearsome consequences that arose from jumping at a conclusion.

"NOW, what shall we do with all this money?"

It was the wife of the late Rev. Philander Ferguson Meek who asked the question, as she surveyed five hundred dollars lying in a heap on the table before her. Some of it was in gold, and some in bank-notes of large denominations.

It might be remarked *en passant* that the word "late" is not meant to signify that the good Philander Ferguson Meek had shuffled off this mortal coil; not at all. He was merely no longer a minister of the gospel in active practise, having handed in his resignation several weeks ago, and was now about to open an office for the cure of physical ailments instead of spiritual ones.

In other words, Mr. Meek is now a physician, the part of the alphabet after his name having merely been changed to read M.D. instead of D.D.

It was this metamorphosis which brought into the possession of his wife the five hundred dollars which she was now gazing upon with qualms of fear, and which was soon to subject her to sundry trials and tribulations and the scare of her life.

It appears that the faithful flock of the good Philander Ferguson Meek had donated this amount, and presented it to him the evening before at a reception given in honor of some one, whether for the departing minister or the new one, neither gentleman was able to decide.

However, Philander received the money, and if there was any mistake no one had as yet called attention to it and, therefore, Mrs. Meek was handling the coin in the full confidence that it was intended for them, as, undoubtedly, it was.

But as she wished to take her son Harold, aged ten, to see the interesting sights of Coney Island this Saturday afternoon, and as the good Mr. Meek was down-town on business, she was considerably concerned about leaving so much money in the house by itself. This happened to be one of the many occasions when the Meek household was without a maid.

Mrs. Meek, therefore, repeated the question: "What shall we do with all this money?"

Meek, Jr., promptly replied: "Spend it!"

His mother turned upon him a mild, reproving eye, at the same time rolling the bank-notes together and encircling them with a rubber band.

"Harold dear," she said, "I am afraid you have misconstrued my meaning. Ultimately the money will be spent, of course, but what I wish to know now is what disposition shall we make of it while away this afternoon. I am rather dubious about leaving so large a sum in the house with no one to guard it. Your Aunt Millicent will not be home until quite late."

Master Harold, impatient to be away,

suggested that she lock it in the writing-desk.

"The very first place thieves would be apt to investigate," answered his mother with conviction.

"Then stick it in the sideboard," advised Harold, his glance seeking the clock and noting the precious moments slip by.

"The next place they would be apt to pry into," objected Mrs. Meek nervously.

She was thinking of that quotation about the Lord helping those who helped themselves, but in this instance she didn't wish to be the victim of her husband's preaching.

"There isn't going to be any robbery, mother," complained Harold. "Who knows we have the money in the house?"

"Somebody might have followed your father home last night when he brought it here," replied his mother, glancing at the door nervously.

"Oh, I have it!" exclaimed the boy, after a moment's reflection. "Lock it in father's private drawer. They would never think of looking there even if they did get into the house."

The procedure appeared about as feasible as any, and Mrs. Meek acted accordingly.

"I'll put the bills in there and take the gold over to Aunt Mary's house on our way to the boat. It is a little way out of our course, but the sacrifice of time is more than balanced by the safety of our money."

Harold was willing to dispute this philosophy, but desisted, seeing his mother was firm and nothing could be gained. Accordingly, Mrs. Meek carefully locked all doors and windows, and, after taking a last glance around, and holding the small box containing the gold in her arm tightly clasped, she descended with her son to the street.

The house was of the ordinary "flat" type, and as they passed out they noticed a young man bending over as if trying to decipher the names on the row of small mail-boxes which lined the wall of the vestibule.

His back was turned toward them, but with a woman's eye for detail, Mrs. Meek noticed that his blue serge suit was split on the sides, from the bottom up, as was the fashion, and that there were two buttons on each under-flap. This little observation was afterward to cause her considerable trouble.

Had she watched the young man, she might have seen him finally decide on the correct push-button, apply his finger and await results. None came, however, and after lingering for several minutes, he took a note-book from his pocket, on one page of which he wrote a few lines.

Inserting this in the slit at the top of the gilded mail receptacle corresponding with the button he had pushed, he took his departure.

But while he was there, another man, apparently in a great hurry, rushed into the vestibule, latch-key in hand, and hastily let himself into the house. Before the young man in the blue suit had gained the next corner the second man rushed out of the house as hurriedly as he had entered, and, passing the other, boarded a surface car.

Meantime, good Mrs. Meek and her son were on their way to Aunt Mary's with their little stack of gold. Arriving there, Mrs. Meek explained the reason of her call.

"But why, if you are so frightened, didn't you bring the remaining money?" inquired Aunt Mary.

"Because Philander wishes to buy some surgical instruments Monday morning, and, as he would not have time to come over here first, I decided to leave the three hundred dollars in bills at home."

Harold's constant whisperings that the day would be over before he had a chance to see anything at Coney Island, hastened Mrs. Meek's departure. In due course they reached a Subway station and boarded the first local which came along.

Now, if Harold's mind was fixed in joyous anticipation on the delights ahead, the same could not be said of Mrs. Meek. She was thinking constantly of bold robbers entering flats in the middle of the day and carrying away everything they could lay their hands on, especially loose money. She recalled with fresh quailing Harold's boast that he could easily open the door of their apartment with a penknife.

Directly opposite her in the car sat a young man of highbred appearance and at his feet was a suit-case. When the train stopped at the next station another young man entered and, approaching the double seat where Mrs. Meek and her son were sitting, hailed the man opposite with a cordial exclamation.

"Well, of all persons!" exclaimed the first young man, grasping the hand of the new arrival. "What are you doing in New York?"

"Just arrived a short while ago," replied the other, sitting down. "Having the afternoon to myself, thought I would take in Coney Island. Join me?"

"Sorry, old man, but I get off at the Grand Central. Just heard my mother is ill. Hope to see you again before you get away. Wish you luck during your stay."

"Speaking of luck," laughed the second man, "how is that?"

"That" was a roll of money large enough to choke a camel, which he held up for the other's inspection and at the sight of which Mrs. Meek gave a suppressed cry of alarm.

The roll was encircled with a rubber band!

"Quite a bunch," remarked the first man. "Going to spend all that down at Coney?" with a laugh.

"No, indeed. Besides, it isn't mine. I have just found it."

Found it? Merciful heavens! Mrs. Meek could have sworn it was the same roll she had locked in her husband's private drawer.

"Found it!" exclaimed the other man. "Gee! How much is there?"

The other proceeded to count it and Mrs. Meek, sitting opposite and leaning slightly forward, saw with trembling lip and shaking limb that the roll contained bills of large denomination and, horrors, there was a fifty-dollar note which corresponded with the one in her roll at home.

But *was* it home? That was the question. Had this man not probably entered her flat after she and Harold had left and stolen the money?

She was sure it was the same. There were the large bills and the rubber band, and now, as the first man arose to get off, the other also stood up to shake hands, causing Mrs. Meek to make a discovery which made her nearly faint away on the spot.

The man before her wore a blue serge suit, split up at the sides, with two buttons on each under-flap. Furthermore, she heard him announce that the roll contained three hundred dollars!

She was nearly all in—but not quite.

"The man in our vestibule!" she told herself.

Had the man attempted to leave the car she would doubtless have made a scene there and then; but after bidding his friend good-by he resumed his seat and began reading a newspaper. Incidentally, he put the roll of money back into his pocket again and Mrs. Meek was wondering whether she had seen the last of it.

She was in a terrible plight. Was her money at home or not at home? That was the question. The man had all the appearance of being honest, but still, she argued to herself, appearances these days are often very deceiving, and her woman's instinct told her she wasn't mistaken in thinking that the money in this man's possession was hers.

She was debating with herself what course was best to pursue. If the man was a thief she certainly should have him arrested, and that he was a thief she was thoroughly convinced. All the evidence pointed that way.

"He says he found it," she repeated to herself, keeping her eyes on the paper in his hands. "Maybe he did find it, and then again there is the horrible possibility that he didn't. I can't get it out of my head that the money is mine."

While she was thus working herself into a fit of nervousness and wondering what she ought to do the train stopped at the next station and a large-sized police officer entered the car. He took a seat near the door at the far end.

Mrs. Meek's course was now plain. As if in answer to her prayers, the hand of the law was sent at this opportune moment to do her bidding. She hesitated no longer.

"Harold," she whispered into her son's ear, "this man across the aisle has our money. Go and tell that policeman I wish to speak to him."

Harold was too scared for a moment

to move and began to remonstrate with his mother, advising delay.

"I am not wrong, Harold. My woman's intuition tells me I am not. Go at once and bring the officer."

So Harold went. The policeman showed some surprise, but followed his young pilot to Mrs. Meek's side. This action was noticed by all in the car except the young man who was the object of the commotion which was shortly to take place. He kept on reading his paper in complete ignorance of it all.

Mrs. Meek whispered to the officer her suspicions, expecting that individual to go about his investigation quietly. Instead, he promptly snatched the paper from the young man's hands and exclaimed:

"See here, sir. I understand you have found a roll of three hundred dollars. Where is it?"

The surprised object of this interrogation looked first at the officer, then at Mrs. Meek and again at the officer.

"Come, come, speak up. Where is the money?" The policeman spoke roughly, and Mrs. Meek imagined she smelled spirits on him.

"What is that to you?" inquired the young man coolly.

The cheeks of the officer began to assume a crimson hue.

"What's that to me, you ask? Well, I'll show you what it is to me," he shouted, and every one in the car was by this time deeply interested. So much so, in fact, that one woman suddenly cried out that she wished to get off at the station just passed.

"What if I did find some money," asked the young man calmly. "Is that any reason I should give it up to you? I happen to know that I have a clear title to anything I may find, over any one but the owner. I——"

"Well, that is just the point," interposed Mrs. Meek, half frightened out of her wits at the policeman's peremptory manner of procedure and the attention they were attracting. "I think I lost the money you have."

"Oh, if that is the case, I shall be only too happy to hand it over to you," answered the young man politely. "But of course you can tell me where you probably dropped it."

Here was a poser. Mrs. Meek hated to tell the young man that she thought he had stolen the money—it went against her nature; but the policeman solved this difficulty for her.

"The lady here says she had a roll of money at home just like the one you have," he blurted out.

"Well, if she has it home, how could I have found it?" asked the young fellow with a smile, and every one in the car began to giggle.

"That's just the point. She thinks you stole the money," retorted the policeman, glad of a chance to rub it into the person who had had the impertinence to talk back to him.

"Stole it?" gasped the young man. "The idea. It's preposterous. I found the money. If she had lost it, I would willingly return it to her, but under the circumstances I think I am justified in keeping it until the rightful owner comes along."

"You do, eh?" sneered the policeman. "Well, we'll see about that. We take a woman's word against a man's in a case like this, so you just get ready to get off at the next station and come with me, sir."

There seemed to be nothing else to do. The young man knew the penalty for resisting arrest. He therefore went with the officer without further expostulations, hoping to be able to fix up matters at headquarters.

Mrs. Meek and Harold accompanied them. The station-house was near-by, and they were, therefore, spared the humiliation of having to ride in the patrol wagon.

Arriving at their destination, the prisoner was searched and the money found. His arguments proved ineffective and he was held for examination the next morning. But Mrs. Meek, suddenly remembering it would be Sunday, asked that the case be held over until Monday morning.

Accordingly, the prisoner was taken back to the cell which he was to occupy. His plight was thickened by not being able to name any one of consequence in New York who knew him, stating he had just arrived in the city that day. The sergeant in charge immediately put him down as an out-of-town crook.

Mrs. Meek decided that, under the circumstances, their trip to Coney Island would have to be postponed, much to Harold's discomfiture and annoyance. He sulked all the way home, as the only child does, and failed to see why they couldn't have gone just the same even if the three hundred was stolen.

When Mrs. Meek entered her flat, her worst fears were confirmed by seeing the private drawer in which she had put the money wide open and the roll of bills gone!

"I knew it! I just knew it. He even found the place where we hide the key! Rely on a woman's intuitive powers every time. Something told me the first time I saw him that he was a thief. Wasn't it a kind Providence that sent him across our path, Harold? Think of it, he might have got away scot free with our three hundred dollars. Consider how your poor father would have felt!"

"Here is dad now," exclaimed Harold, running to the door as a familiar footfall was heard on the steps.

"Philander!" exclaimed his wife as he entered, "the most awful thing——"

Then she suddenly stopped and surveyed her husband in alarm.

"Why, what is the matter, Philander? You are pale; you are ill. Harold, get a glass of water. Quick!"

The good man's face was indeed haggard and his knees showed a tendency to resign their occupation. A chair was hastily placed for him, into which he sank with a groan.

"Speak, Philander. What has happened? Tell me what has occurred!"

"Martha," he gulped, "I hardly know how to break the news to you. I—I——"

"The water, Harold. Give it to me. Here, Philander dear, drink this. There now. Tell us what has happened," she added sympathetically, bathing his head with what liquid was left.

"It's awful, simply awful. As you know, I intended buying some surgical instruments Monday morning. Well, as I was down-town this morning, I ran across a store where I found I could get great bargains. Therefore, it struck me as a good idea to buy the instruments today.

"Acting on the impulse, I hurried home, hoping to catch you before you left."

"Yes, yes," broke in his wife, as he paused for an instant.

"I knew you had a large amount of money in the house, but thought that possibly you might have taken it out with you. Therefore I hurried, but missed you. You had already gone."

Mrs. Meek looked anxiously from her husband's face to Harold, who was standing with his mouth wide open, staring at his father in wonderment.

"But, happily, I needed something from my private drawer and opening it, I found the roll of money you had undoubtedly left there. It——"

But Mrs. Meek interrupted him with a sharp exclamation and gripped his arm nervously.

"Then *you* took the money? *You* took it?"

"Why, yes, I took the money. What's the matter?"

But his wife had thrown up her hands and sank down on a sofa. It was Harold's opportunity, for which he had been waiting.

"Why, mama thought a fellow in the Subway had stolen our money. She saw him counting it and it looked just like the money in the drawer."

"What's this, Harold?" demanded his father.

"Yes, I've made an awful mistake, Philander. An awful mistake. It is as Harold says. I thought the man had entered our apartment and stolen the money. But worse still, I had him arrested."

"Had him *arrested?*" The good Philander jumped from his chair in his excitement. "Had him arrested?"

"Yes. I fear I have made an awful mistake. You say you took the money from the private drawer. Then, of course, it must be all right and he didn't steal it after all. You doubtless purchased your instruments and——"

"Not at all, not at all," answered her husband, sinking dejectedly into his chair. "This is the awful part of it. I lost the whole amount."

Had a bomb been thrown into the room it could not have caused greater consternation and horror than did this statement.

"You lost it?" exclaimed Mrs. Meek, springing up from the sofa. "Why, then the young man I have had arrested was right after all. He claimed he found the money, and it *was* our money he had, too."

"Undoubtedly," assented her husband. "But we are now in a worse plight than before."

"Why?" asked his wife, who imagined she saw the money back in their coffers Monday morning.

"Why?" repeated her husband. "Why, Martha, because instead of losing three hundred dollars we are liable to lose three thousand, and possibly more. Don't you see that this young man has the best of grounds to bring suit against us?"

Mrs. Meek lost her breath and again sank to the sofa.

"I never thought of that," she gasped. "Harold, bring me a glass of water. This is awful."

Here was a situation which caused the good Philander to pace up and down his dining-room after the fashion of a caged animal, his brows contracted and his hands clasping each other nervously behind his back. Mrs. Meek was likewise giving the matter deep, dejected thought, while Harold was Sherlock Holmesing the drawer from which the cash was taken.

"How I could have lost that money is a mystery to me," muttered Mr. Meek, half to himself. "I cannot understand it at all."

"I have it!" suddenly exploded Harold, wheeling round from his investigations.

"The money?" gasped his parents in one breath.

"No, not the money, but how you lost it, dad. That fellow didn't find it, after all. He picked your pocket!"

Both Mr. and Mrs. Meek gazed at their brilliant son in an enlightened and admiring manner. He had solved the mystery.

"Philander, that clears everything, and it turns out that I have acted rightly after all."

It was upon this scene that Millicent, the younger sister of Mrs. Meek entered. She was visiting in New York after graduating from boarding-school.

Millicent had been to a matinée with a girl friend and on her way up-stairs had opened the mail-box and found a note addressed to her, stating that Jim Caldwell would call upon her that evening.

She was about to speak of the note when she noticed the looks of anxiety on the faces of her sister and brother-in-law.

"Why, what has happened?" she inquired. "What is wrong?"

Harold would have furnished the necessary information had not Mrs. Meek commanded him to be quiet. She then told what had occurred.

Millicent, girl-like, thought it was very funny, especially for the fellow who had been arrested on suspicion. She vowed her determination of accompanying her sister to the police court the following Monday morning to get a look at the unfortunate.

During the excitement dinner had been entirely forgotten and now Millicent busied herself in that direction. Mrs. Meek was too much exhausted by the numerous happenings to lend her any aid. It was half past seven before they had finished and Millicent ran to her room to prepare for her friend Jim's arrival.

She thought little more about the affair of the money. Her thoughts were all on Jim Caldwell, whom she had learned to know while at boarding-school, and of whom she had said nothing to her sister. Their meeting had come about in quite exciting fashion.

One day she had been rowing in a small skiff on the little river which flowed through the grounds of the school. Without knowing her danger, she rounded a sharp bend in the stream and to her dismay heard the roar of water at no great distance from her. She afterward learned that it was a falls of some ten to fifteen feet drop, above which the water flowed with a strong current.

She hastily turned her boat to get out of danger, but in so doing was swept nearer the brink of the cataract. Her efforts on the oars against the strong current seemed to prove futile. Her strength was rapidly giving out and fear of the falls was overpowering her.

Still she struggled bravely against the rushing water, but, seeing that she was making no headway and was being swept nearer and nearer the fateful spot, she cried aloud for help.

It was all she could do now to keep the boat in one place and not allow it to gain against her. She called again and again and, suddenly, her cries were rewarded.

A young man, sketching pad and pencil in hand, came running to a slight elevation which had hidden her from him. He took in the situation at a glance. Throwing aside his book, hat and coat, he plunged into the water, and with strong over-hand strokes rapidly approached the hapless maiden.

"Stick to it!" he yelled encouragingly.

She watched him approach with a fast-beating heart, and succeeded in turning the boat in his direction.

At last he reached the boat and grasped the bow with a firm hold. Something seemed to tell her instantly that she was safe. She rested on the oars and looked at her preserver questioningly.

"Pretty near gone?" he inquired with a smile.

"Pretty near," she answered, surprised to see that in his hold the boat moved not an inch. "But it was an awfully close call. You arrived just in time, for my arms had entirely given out. But you are awfully wet, aren't you?"

"I think so," he smiled, "seeing that I entered the water with my clothes on. I wonder if the boat would tip if I tried to get into it?"

"Oh, it certainly would," exclaimed Millicent, alarmed. "You had better not try."

The man ran his eye over the boat's dimensions and then replied calmly.

"I don't think it would tip, and besides, I can't tread water here all day."

The truth of the matter is that he was standing on bottom and it was no exertion at all for him to hold the boat. But he didn't see any use in telling the girl the circumstances.

And without further words, he swung one leg over the gunwale of the skiff and, executing some careful and clever balancing, he succeeded in climbing in, not, however, without tipping the boat to such an angle as to cause Millicent to cry out in alarm.

"Don't be frightened," he said, calmly. "You are all right now, and so am I; that is, I will be when I get dried out. Suppose you move back to the stern and let me take your seat. I may be able to make a little more progress against the current than you."

He smiled as he spoke and all her fears vanished.

And that was her meeting with Jim Caldwell, the man she was expecting this evening. She stayed a considerable while before her mirror, arranging and rearranging her toilet until entirely satisfied with herself.

But, strange to say, eight o'clock came and half past eight and Millicent sat in all her finery awaiting a phantom. Jim appeared not, and when nine o'clock had passed, she jumped up in a huff and hurriedly divested herself of that which she had so carefully put on.

She never thought that her Jim might have been run down by an automobile, dropped off the ferry-boat, broken a leg or met with a thousand and one possible accidents in a big city like New York. She thought only of the broken engagement, and as she went to bed vowed to herself never to speak to him again as long as she lived.

Happily she hadn't said anything to her sister about his calling, and so she was not distressed in that quarter.

Sunday passed and still no word of Jim. Then Millicent began to grow worried. Possibly something had happened to him, some accident or other. He would surely have come had he been able to do so.

A man who will jump into a stream and rescue a girl from impending danger is not the man to be overcome by an ordinary obstacle.

Therefore it was with an anxious mind that she rested her head on her pillow Sunday night and prayed that nothing serious was the matter with Jim Caldwell. After all, she guessed she would speak to him if the broken engagement had been unavoidable.

Monday morning saw Mr. Meek and his wife on their way to appear against the hapless stranger who had been the victim of woman's intuition.

Millicent, still worrying about Jim, decided to remain at home.

The ex-minister and his wife, trembling as though they had a joint attack of the ague, nervously presented themselves at the police court. They had not long to wait.

The police officer who had made the arrest soon entered with his prisoner. As the latter caught sight of Mrs. Meek his face set in hard, firm lines, and his eyes flashed in a threatening manner. Two nights in a cell hadn't improved his temper any.

The officer stated the facts so far as he knew them.

"What have you to say for yourself?" asked the magistrate.

"All I can say is that this woman has made a mistake which will cost her dear," answered the prisoner. "I will bring suit against her for the indignities I have suffered."

"Not so fast," interrupted the court. "What have you to say, sir?" he continued, turning to Mr. Meek.

The ex-minister told how he had taken the money from the drawer and proceeded down-town. Arriving at his destination, he had found the money missing.

"Well, then, if you found the money at home," broke in the prisoner angrily, "why do you accuse me of stealing it from your house?"

"We—er—don't accuse you of stealing it from the—er—house," answered Mr. Meek, glancing at his wife and remembering Harold's suggestion. "I admit that I took it out with me, but whether I lost it—or——"

"Or whether you had your pocket picked," finished the police officer. "That's the point. We have nabbed a good many light-fingered boys lately, your honor, and I am inclined to believe we have another one here. We found the money on him and undoubtedly it is the same which this gentleman had with him when he started down-town."

The case was looking pretty bad for the accused man.

"It will be satisfactory to me, your honor," said Mrs. Meek, a feeling of compassion stirring her, "to let the young man go with the lesson he has learned."

The judge smiled.

"That would hardly be consistent, madam. Unless this man can get some one to vouch for his character I shall have to——"

But at this point he was interrupted by the hurried entrance of a young girl, flushed and excited. All eyes were turned upon her, and Mr. and Mrs. Meek uttered horrified exclamations as they saw her rush up to the prisoner and allow herself to be folded to his bosom.

"Jim!" she cried. "What an unfortunate occurrence! I received your second note this morning, telling me why you had not kept your appointment, and the plight you were in. I hastened here immediately."

By this time Mrs. Meek had regained her equanimity.

"Millicent, what does this mean?" she demanded.

"Why, sister, this young man is not guilty. You have made a terrible mistake. Little did I think when you told me about losing your money that the accused man was Mr. Caldwell. Even when he failed to appear Saturday night, I never dreamed of his being the victim of your 'intuition.' He wrote me a note this morning, telling me what had occurred, and I hastened here immediately. Of course it's all a mistake. I have known Mr. Caldwell for over a year."

This latter declaration was accompanied by a deep blush.

She then introduced the happy prisoner to Mr. and Mrs. Meek.

"I suppose it's all right now, your honor, isn't it?" asked Caldwell eagerly.

"No, sir, it isn't," replied the judge. "You will have to get some one who is well known to attest your character."

"Is the district attorney sufficiently well known?" asked Millicent, trying to hide a smile.

The judge opened his eyes wider than usual.

"Yes, indeed, but——"

"Well, he will be here in a few minutes. I stopped in on my way here and explained matters to him. He happens to live within three doors of our house, and I know him quite well."

The judge's manner changed immediately, and a warmer feeling of friendship seemed to permeate the atmosphere. Caldwell and the others laughed over the

mix-up and the outcome of woman's intuitive powers.

"But," said Caldwell, "although I forgive you, Mrs. Meek, and take back all the hard things I said about you and cancel that proposed suit for damages, I still intend to exact a big concession from you."

The minister's wife looked a little anxiously at her husband, and, forcing a smile, asked what the concession was.

"For some years you have acted as guardian to a certain young lady, and it is that guardianship which I now ask you to relinquish to me. Nay, I demand it. It was for this purpose that I came to New York, and, incidentally, got so terribly entangled. In other words, I wish to marry Millicent."

"Why, Milly dear, you never told me anything about this——"

"I know, sister, but we have been engaged for quite a while——"

"Well, then, I don't see why you shouldn't be married as soon as you wish," said a jovial voice from the rear, and looking up they beheld the district attorney.

Matters were soon straightened out through his presence, and as the party filed out into the street, a hand-organ was playing "Here Comes the Bride."

A CUE FROM CHANCE.*

BY JAMES F. DEMERIT,

Author of "The Puzzle at the Alberon," "A Turn of the Wheel," "All in a Name," etc.

A glimpse behind the scenes at the making of a musical comedy, together with an account of some exciting incidents in the careers of the men who hatched it out.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THROUGH a series of misfortunes, Clay Hopworthy is unable to obtain a position, the promise of which has brought him to New York.

Reduced to his last dollar he runs across Brent, a good-hearted, Bohemian sort, engaged in demonstrating the possibilities in a hand-to-mouth existence. Later he has occasion to assist a lady, who gives him her address, saying she has some work for him.

On the way thither he is mistaken for a thief, and in escaping from the pursuing mob, finds himself at her very door.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK."

BUT the higher up Clay Hopworthy climbed, the less he heard of the crowd's shouts. Still, he was not at all sure that his retreat had not been marked, and that the people were not merely waiting for the police to lead the charge into the building.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned, panting on the last flight, "I feel like a pup with a tin can tied to my tail, and a lot of boys after me.

"Suppose they get in here and hunt for me through the various offices? Heavens! I hope that woman is here. I'll tell her about it and throw myself on her mercy, if need be. After last night she'll surely believe I am no thief."

He certainly did feel anxious when he reached the top floor. The rear doors near the head of the stairs had no signs on them; but the door of the front room stood ajar and Clay observed a plain tin sign tacked on the center panel with "S. Kendrickson" painted on it.

No suggestion of the business carried on here. Nothing to prove who or what the occupant was.

Clay, still disheveled from his sprawl in the street and his hasty mounting of the stairs, rapped lightly on this door. Instantly a neat colored maid appeared.

"I—I was to see a lady here this morning at ten," he said. "She gave me

**This story began in the August issue of* THE ARGOSY, *which will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 10 *cents.*

this card," and he held out the tiny bit of pasteboard.

The girl seemed to take his visit quite as a matter of course, and asked him in. The room was a large and rather bizarre reception-room, with all manner of artistic draperies, vases, urns, a suit of armor, barbarous implements of war on the wall, and handsome rugs underfoot.

"Sit down," said the maid. "I will tell Miss Kendrickson you are here."

"Sure! An old maid," muttered Clay. "And she runs this ranch, eh? Well, it's mighty fine to look at, but what does she *do* here?"

He did not sit down when the girl left the room, but went to a window and craned his neck to look down into the street. There was still a crowd there, but he hoped that his trail had been lost.

"By Jove! I'll stay up here as long as I can, and then when I *do* go down I'll see if there isn't some back way out of the place."

The maid returned.

"You can go right in," she announced.

Taking this as permission for him to enter the doorway through which she had just come, Clay passed her and found himself in a dimly lighted passage extending toward the rear of the loft. At its end he came abruptly into a huge room which, at first glance, seemed as bare as a barn.

The farther end of the apartment was lighted from above. There were draped figures both in plaster and (the smaller ones) in marble.

Directly under the great skylight was a huge unfinished cast of a winged figure holding a crown just beyond the grasp of a man who, fallen to one knee and straining every muscle, seemed to have expanded his last ounce of strength in endeavoring to clutch the bauble—to lose it!

It was a masterly conception and was what held Clay enthralled for fully a minute before he observed that he was not alone in the room.

Pottering about the cast was a figure in a suit of brown overall stuff, and with a huge apron like a skirt. The brown cap on the head gave an extremely mannish air to the wearer, and it was not until Clay saw the face of this person that he recognized the woman with whom he had had the adventure the night before.

"Ha! so you're here?" she snapped, vouchsafing him but a single glance. "And on time. Come here and let me see your hand again."

She had been wrapping wet clothes about parts of the model, and now pulled off her rubber gloves. Clay came to her in some amazement. It struck him now that he had heard the name of Kendrickson before!

"Ha!" she said again, seizing his hand and eying it as though it were some specimen of strange fauna, or flora. "Just as I thought. Strong—slender; the hand of a nervous yet forceful character."

Clay felt rather foolish, but said nothing and so successfully hid it. She turned his hand about, glancing now and again from it to that of the kneeling figure.

"You see what I want?" she said, at last. "That hand doesn't suit me—never has," and she pointed to the man reaching for the crown. "These models are so uncertain. Men especially.

"The man who has the torso seldom has the head. An actor posed for that head—and I hate actors! They're neither manly nor womanly—neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring. But I have to use 'em sometimes.

"Well, you can see—or you would see if you had my eyes—that the hand isn't strong enough. Bah! if *that* hand had the chance it couldn't grasp the crown of success," and she nodded at the statue.

"I don't wish to suggest the idea that the man's failure lay within his own shortcomings, but that circumstances were against him. He must have the hand to seize the crown, as well as the mind to grasp it; but it is beyond his reach."

"I see! I see!" muttered Clay, his soul in his eyes as he gazed upon the group. "It is beautiful!"

She looked at him in some surprise, and her tone softened a bit.

"Oh, well, it may do. But you're not here as a critic. I want you for a model."

This brought the young man up short, and he flushed.

"I—I am at your service, madam."

"Humph! You are not working?"

"I have no situation at present."

"You haven't been long in town?"

"I arrived only yesterday."

"Huh! Another fool searching for his fortune. You'd better have remained in the country and driven oxen. Now, what do you want an hour for your hand?"

"I—I am not familiar with such work, madam," he said. "You will have to pay me what you think it is worth."

"I'll give you a dollar for two hours," she said briskly, taking advantage of his verdancy without the first compunction of conscience. "Strip up your sleeve and sit down there. No! bare to the elbow. That's it. Now let me look at it."

She again gazed at the hand long and earnestly, changing its pose from time to time, finally getting it into a position that suited her. Then she paced the floor a bit.

Suddenly wheeling a heavy table near the model she threw a lump of clay upon it and began to mold rapidly a hand and forearm, following the lines of Clay's own with a cunning that was marvelous.

Meanwhile Clay had plenty of time to consider his situation here, and grew nervous wondering what he should do, or what would become of him, if the police came to Miss Kendrickson's studio to look for him.

He would have told her of his adventure, but she did not look in a receptive mood for small talk. All the time she modeled and remodeled the hand she muttered to herself, and looked so unapproachable that he thought it better to keep still.

Suddenly there was a burst of voices from the reception-room, and they approached the studio. The maid was evidently trying mildly to head off some visitor, and when the latter's voice became clearer Clay started.

"Sit still!" commanded Miss Kendrickson sharply.

Clay dropped back into his seat. But he actually trembled. His back was to the entrance of the studio, so he could not see the man who entered, but he was perfectly sure of the newcomer's identity without looking around.

"*Con*-found these stairs!" wheezed the voice. "Why do you work in this old shanty where there isn't the sign of an elevator?"

"So that people won't come here to bother me," returned Miss Kendrickson, with scarcely a glance at the speaker.

"Huh! I see I'm quite as welcome as usual."

"Quite," observed the lady dryly.

"And if I lost my life as well as my breath, you'd show no more interest," snarled the visitor.

"You won't lose your life, Uncle Dan," said Miss Kendrickson. "You are too careful of yourself."

"I dunno—I dunno," groaned the other. "Never know what minute'll be your last nowadays. A man's likely to lose more'n his breath—or his life—without trying very hard."

"I see you haven't lost your cheerful disposition, Uncle Dan," she said, still at her work. ("Keep that hand still, will you?" in an aside to Clay.)

"Heh? What's the matter with my hand?"

"I spoke to my model," returned Miss Kendrickson.

"Your model, eh?" Clay heard the heavy tread of Uncle Dan behind him. "Another man to pose for you, heh?"

"Yes," said his niece in her same dry tone. "I find men necessary at times—only at times. Then I prefer them dumb—like this one."

But Clay was too nervous and excited to be troubled by this slap at his diffidence. He tried to turn his face farther from observation.

"*Will* you sit still?" exclaimed Miss Kendrickson, rising to look at him.

At that her visitor came around to the front and stared at the model. Instantly he let out a yell like a Comanche and, raising his stick threateningly, ran at Clay.

The latter tumbled over his chair backward in rising, kicked the piece of furniture out of the way, and dodged the blow which he saw descending. "Uncle Dan" was the old gentleman of the white vest and spats who had been robbed of his scarf-pin by the eye-doctor.

"For pity's sake!" was Miss Kendrickson's thoroughly feminine exclamation. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I—I want that young man. I've been chasing him!" he sputtered.

"Be still!" commanded his niece, and she was evidently used to being obeyed in that quarter as well as in all others.

To Clay she said: "Explain this, sir. I cannot imagine your being anything worse than a simpleton. So whatever the trouble is, it probably rises from that fact."

"You are right, Miss Kendrickson!" gasped the young man. "And after your advice to me last night, too. I am a perfect ass, I believe."

"I cannot agree with the adjective," she interposed dryly.

Clay explained the trouble.

"And you *would* interfere in what did not concern you again, eh?" was the lady's comment.

Then she turned on the old gentleman.

"Don't you see that if he had robbed you, or was in anyway connected with the robbery, he would not have accosted you?"

"Well—well—*who* did take it, then?" sputtered the old gentleman, still glaring wrathfully at Clay.

"The scamp who took the cinder out of your eye, I suppose. That pin was too handsome to wear on the street, anyway. It cost you enough; I should think you would have known better."

"It cost me two hundred and fifty dollars," groaned the old gentleman.

"Put it down to the debit side—so much to experience. You need a guardian, Uncle Dan."

"Oh, you'd all like to put me under one," snarled the old fellow. "I know you all."

"You don't know *me,* if you think I care anything about your money," declared his niece quite coolly. "But you should have a companion, just the same."

"Huh!"

"Let me suggest this young friend of mine," she said, going on with her modeling now. "He seems to have an interest in you—and gets no thanks for it. He is out of work, too."

"Ha!"

"You are an old man now, you know."

"Hum!"

"If you keep on starting riots in the public streets the police will lock you up, sir."

"Damn it!" exclaimed Uncle Dan, finally, and stamped away.

"Where are you going, uncle?" she called after him sweetly.

"I'm going to the police station to have them look for that eye-doctor," he growled, and departed.

"What you would better have done before coming here to disturb me," was Miss Kendrickson's comment, and went on with her work.

And Clay Hopworthy was very tired before she was through with him and had paid him his promised dollar.

"You come around again the last of the week. I'll see how this goes," she told him. "I might be able to use you again; though your hand may be all right the first time. You are an athlete?"

"I've got good muscles."

"And yet that little fellow last night toppled you over so easily. Don't be so sure of yourself," she observed. "It's like all men. Think themselves so much the superior to us women. Pah!"

Clay did not know which of the two was the more unpleasant—Miss Kendrickson or her uncle. But he was glad of the dollar and promised to call again as advised, providing he did not in the meantime obtain steady employment.

It was not quite noon when Clay left the sculptor's studio. He had earned a dollar and felt encouraged. But his desire was for steady employment, and he set about finding that in a thoroughly earnest if not altogether wise way.

Indeed, a job is the most elusive bird known to the natural history of Hard Luck. Many hunters of the creature seem to prefer sitting down and waiting for it to fly into their game-bags.

Not so Clay Hopworthy. Feeling that Broadway and neighboring thoroughfares would be overrun with applicants, he started west and missed no store or factory on the south side of Thirty-Fourth Street which in any degree promised employment for a young fellow with two strong arms.

He was pretty thoroughly convinced of the uselessness of this method, however, by the time he came to the river-front. It was then nearing one o'clock and he was hungry.

He wandered down the street nearest the docks until he came to a big restaurant evidently patronized by wharf work-

men and others engaged in business near by. The windows were covered with decorative signs written with soap, extolling the "specialties" to be had within. And as the prices were extremely reasonable, he ventured into the place.

It was evidently popular, for Clay could scarcely find a seat, and wandered down to the extreme end of the room before he observed an empty chair.

This was beside one of the flapping doors leading into the kitchen, and the smells and noises of that department were too evident to be agreeable. He was not fastidious, however; he was too hungry for that.

But it seemed as though he was not to satisfy that appetite so easily. He had given his order and was leaning back waiting for the food to be served, and meantime enjoying the various studies of humanity there before him, when a sudden explosion of sound in the kitchen at his back brought him and half the other diners to their feet.

Several women—the dishwashers, it was likely—screamed; but above all the shouting came the shrill, terrified shriek of a man:

"Murder! murder! murder!"

It was animal-like in tone—beastly; yet so shrill and agonized that Clay remembered the sound, waking and sleeping, for weeks afterward.

He whirled about as he got out of his chair and burst through the swinging door beside him. In one glance he took in the steaming room and the scene being enacted there.

Down one side of the place, under the windows, was a row of chairs occupied by men and boys who, the moment before, had been busy peeling vegetables. The overturned vegetable baskets, scattered potatoes, and huddled and frightened parers, revealed what the situation had been before the row began.

Two men—a big, brutal fellow, and a little, sharp-visaged chap—were the principal actors. The big fellow, knife in hand, was coming up the room like a tornado, striking at the shrieking little ape who scurried before him.

At every leap it seemed as though that glistening blade must smite the small fellow between the shoulders. There was not a bystander with pluck or presence of mind enough to trip the big man's foot and send him sprawling.

The pursued wretch was aiming for the door at which Clay stood. The latter leaped to one side; but he knew the small man could not get through, for already there was a crowd of diners behind him.

If ever murder shone out of a wild beast's eye, it shone now from the sparkling orbs of the man with the knife. It was taking one's life in one's hand to oppose him; yet Clay could not stand idle to see the little fellow stricken to the ground with that knife between his shoulder-blades.

He uttered a shout, whirled the little chap out of the way with one hand, and dived at the bully himself like a ram, head down and shoulders humped.

CHAPTER VIII.

A REWARD OF MERIT.

CLAY did not enter into the arena of conflict without thought. An idea had flashed into his mind, born of his own recent experience.

He plunged at the fellow with the knife, stooping low, and brought his left shoulder in forceful contact with the pit of the man's stomach. His left arm shot up across the other's throat, he pinioned the other's left arm while his own right fist smote terribly upon the small of the villain's back, and——

Down he went in a heap, the knife flying from his hand, groaning and writhing on the floor, while Clay stood over him almost stupidly, astonished at the ease with which he had done it. So much for jiu-jitsu.

The man had gone down breathlessly, with a savage grunt that showed how the wind had been expelled from his lungs by the contact of Clay's shoulder; but that was not to end it.

Lucky it was for the young man that the knife had flown from the murderous villain's hand. Like an India-rubber man he bounded to his feet again and fell upon the young athlete.

The fellow was little above a brute in intelligence, anyway. He had been a butt in the kitchen for all manner of rough jokes since coming to work as a vegetable-parer.

The eternal dropping had worn away the stone. At last the little chap with that devilish ingenuity to nag which seems the inspiration of women and little men—in common with small dogs—had found the big fellow's sore spot.

He had probed it deep. The brute had snarled. He went deeper. The brute threatened in look more than word.

The third time the fellow had flown like a madman with the knife, and the nagger came nearer ending his life then and there than he likely would again before being measured for his coffin.

So now, with his brute instinct uppermost, the big fellow threw himself at Clay quite as savagely as he had at his former antagonist.

He brought Clay to the floor. They rolled about a minute, and nobody dared interfere. A policeman who had been called, broke through the throng of excited patrons and waiters and undertook to separate them in the usual way—i.e., with his club.

But Clay had a strangle hold on his adversary now and he gasped: "Don't you strike him with that, you brute!"

The officer hesitated. With the usual good sense of his class he had been about to deliver his favors impartially on both men.

Clay almost instantly choked the bully into submission and then turned him over to the officer. The latter wanted to arrest *him* likewise, but the manager of the restaurant would not hear of that.

The little fellow who had come so near being knifed had escaped in the confusion, so the policeman had to take the big chap away alone.

"Now you fellows get back to work!" exclaimed the manager, driving the patrons out of the kitchen.

A dozen customers had run out without paying their scores, and he was sore.

"This is a pretty mess. Two men gone—you need 'em, too, I suppose, Mac?" he went on, speaking to the man who seemed in charge of the kitchen.

"I do, sir."

Then up spoke Clay Hopworthy with a promptness that he flattered himself would have done John Vivian Brent credit.

"Can I be of any use?" he asked.

"Heh?"

"I'm looking for a job, sir. What do you want done?"

"Huh! you don't look it."

"I feel it!" declared Clay with gravity.

"Well, by Jove! that's an answer. If you really want a job?" said the manager, still doubtfully.

"I do."

"Can you peel potatoes?"

"I can."

"Huh! not so easy unless you know how. Here, Mac! Try this man. I hope he's all right, for he certainly deserves something for saving bloodshed."

And this was how Clay obtained a job—as a reward of merit.

But not so easy as it seemed, after all. He had to prove himself able to perform the task set him, and although to peel a potato seemed a simple matter, it did not prove so upon trial.

"Sit down here," said Mac, pointing to the chair formerly occupied by the fellow who had nearly committed murder. "Take a knife out of the rack behind you."

Clay saw the knives, their handles wound with cord to keep from slipping, and each blade keen and sharp. Mac came with a pail of potatoes weighing about ten pounds—big, gnarly ones they were.

"Now let's see what you can do," he said. "And remember there's speed as well as good work in this. The faster you work the more money ye'll git."

Clay looked first at the man next to him and saw how he held his potato against his bended knee and sliced toward him as he peeled. No fancy peeling was this, and no scraping. But Mac would evidently have a sharp eye for wasted material.

He was pretty awkward at first, but he did better with each potato; and he was quick. He asked some questions of his neighbor.

"Sure. Oi've paled 'em all over th' city," said this fellow, a little Irishman with a hook for a left hand, with which he speared each vegetable out of the basket beside him.

"'Tis an ar-rt, me son. But youse kin do it. Ye're quick, Oi see thot. A good paler will lave no eyes or blemishes and will finish up sixty to ninety pounds

of p'raties the hour. Other vige*t*bles air not so hard to work on."

When the pail of potatoes was empty Mac came back, looked over the peeled vegetables and nodded.

"I'll give ye five dollars the week, and your dinner and supper. Come in at eight o'clock."

"I can work for you till four to-day," suggested Clay eagerly.

"Had your dinner?"

"I had ordered it, but didn't get a chance to finish."

"Go and eat and come back. I'll give you breakfast to-morrow instead of supper to-night, if you like, seein' that you're willing to work a while and help us out to-day."

And Clay stuck to his task cheerfully and, when four o'clock came, left the place with an assured job and smoking a five-cent cigar which the manager had given him to bind the contract.

Mac had lent him an apron to save his clothing from the stains of potato-juice. But nothing had saved his hands. They were stained as though with walnut oil.

But he drew on his gloves and, with his long coat hiding the wrinkles in his other garments, he was not ashamed to meet Brent. Somehow that young man's perfect get-up made Clay feel wofully shabby by comparison.

To make the corner at which he had promised to meet his strangely acquired acquaintance by half past four, he was obliged to hasten his steps. On approaching the block on Thirty-Fourth Street along which he had been chased as a thief that morning, he shrank from the vicinity and went up Seventh Avenue to Thirty-Fifth, so as to dodge the place.

It was on the corner of this last named street and Broadway that he had promised to meet Brent, and his watch—the one Brent had scorned—told Clay that it was already that hour when he came in sight of the entrance to the theater.

Now, as he approached, he noticed quite a crowd collected near the corner, and in front of the big store across from the playhouse. He likewise heard one of the popular tunes of the day being played most atrociously by a street piano.

It was one of those simple little tunes, with lots of *go* to them, that are utterly ruined if not played fast enough. And the grinder of this instrument was doing his very best to murder the piece.

Suddenly Clay saw a movement in the crowd. A man had turned the corner and broke through the group about the street piano.

The piece had just come to its unfortunate conclusion. The newcomer stepped into the street, said something seemingly in anger to the man at the crank, and pushed the latter away from the machine.

Then, with the brisk flourish that introduced the theme, the hurdy-gurdy broke forth into the jolly melody again. But how different this time! The tempo was exact; it set one's foot to tapping the sidewalk to hear the cheerful ditty.

And then Clay, who had come nearer, stopped aghast. The man turning the crank of the machine wore a coat and cape—the sure indication of evening dress beneath; and on his head a glossy silk hat!

The crowd was increasing momentarily. Shouts of laughter greeted the eccentricity. A man in dress-suit and top hat playing a street piano!

Clay stood where he could see the face of the individual who was creating such amusement for the public, and he exclaimed aloud himself—but not with laughter—when he recognized John Vivian Brent!

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH A TRUNK.

And now Clay's conscience sorely punished him. He moved toward the group about the street piano, scarcely knowing what to say to Brent.

"Here I have been too selfish all this day to remember that he practically impoverished himself last night so as to increase my capital. He only had a few cents in change.

"Can it be possible that he has fallen to *this?* To play an organ in the public street——"

And just here the merry little tune came to an end. The crowd applauded. Brent seemed as cool as a cucumber—just off the ice as cucumbers *should* be served.

He bowed with a flourish in appreciation of the applause. But he said to the staring and grinning Italian:

"*That's* the way to play it, you villain! And you a son of Italy! Have you no ear for music at all? Are you dead to all shame that you would strangle an inoffensive piece of music that never did you any harm——

"Why, hullo, old man!" and he came up on the walk and shook Clay by the hand. "I'm tickled to death to see you—I sure am!"

"For pity's sake, what are you doing?" gasped Clay, drawing him away from the laughing group.

"Showing that dago how to play 'Indian Corn.' Oh! let 'em laugh. I couldn't stand to see my own child murdered in that torturing way."

"'Your own child'?" repeated Clay doubtfully.

"I wrote it," Brent declared. "The music, I mean."

"But—but your name isn't on the printed sheet. I've seen it in the store windows. It's by Giggs & Merharp."

"Huh!" grunted Brent. "It's like most of their songs. Giggs couldn't write an original bar of music to save his hide. I don't know where Merharp gets his words—steals them, I suppose."

"Why—why——they have written so many popular songs," Clay cried.

"The same way as this, I suppose. I was hard up last spring. I had the song in my head. Giggs heard me play it one night and gave me fifty dollars cash for it. I was glad to get the fifty. They've made two or three thousand on it already."

"My! my!" murmured Clay with admiration. "I had no idea you were a composer."

"Wait till you hear my opera," grunted Brent. "Now tell me what you've been doing? Got a job yet?"

Clay related his experiences—matters in which there had been very little fun for him, but which Brent saw in an exceedingly amusing light, for he cackled all the way up Broadway to Forty-Second Street.

"Dear, dear!" he said at last, wiping his eyes. "You certainly *are* a greenhorn, Mr. Hopworthy. In two fights, taken for a thief once, posing as a sculptor's model, and finally ending as roustabout in a hash kitchen; and all within the twenty-four hours!"

At that Clay had a cunning thought and he looked at his friend suddenly.

"See here," said he. "What have *you* been doing? Have you had any dinner?"

"Humph!" said Brent. "It isn't dinner-time yet."

"But what have you accomplished? I have played the ass, I suppose; but I made a dollar clear out of that Miss Kendrickson, had my dinner given me and the promise of breakfast to-morrow, and obtained a steady job, such as it is."

"My gracious! you've got me there, after all, haven't you?" exclaimed Brent in some surprise. "I didn't look at it from that standpoint. But surely, old man, you can't be in earnest in this potato-paring business?"

"It's five dollars a week, and two meals a day. I can live on that, I believe."

"No; you can exist on it," Brent returned with a sigh. Then he recovered his energy. "And we are wasting our time. You must get a room. You can't go on paying half a dollar a night for a bad bed. Your trunk is still at the station? You'll have to pay a quarter storage on that."

"Yes, I must get settled," Clay agreed, turning grave again. "You must show me where to find a cheap hotel or lodging-house. With the money you gave me last night—and which I should give you back—or, part at least——"

"Nonsense!" was Brent's interruption.

"We won't fight over that. While I have a penny, it is yours. You are not fit to carry the bag, however; I see that plainly."

Brent only laughed at the last sentence, but shook hands warmly over Clay's expression of good fellowship.

"Now, where shall I find a room within my means?"

"Not in New York," replied the city man at once. "Don't think it. I have a miserable hole myself, and pay three and a quarter a week for it. You'll see."

"Then what shall I do?" gasped Clay, at once in a state of funk.

"Do you think I would allow you to throw away what little money you have?" demanded Brent with monstrous seriousness. "What! go to a cheap

house and pay cash in advance for your room—and you owning a trunk? Never!"

"But how——"

"Leave it to me. You think me a spendthrift. You don't know the first principle of economy yet."

"I am afraid," returned Clay doubtfully, "that you confound 'economy' with some method of escaping the payment of honest debts."

"Fudge! Likewise, pooh, pooh!" exclaimed Brent airily. "I never contract a debt that I do not expect to pay—in time. And it is an imposition of landladies to demand rent in advance."

"We shall never agree on that score," said Clay, with a sigh. "But if your scheme is not actually dishonest——"

"My boy, you wrong me! Your trunk, which you say is full of clothes, we will take to the house. That is security for the first week's rent, isn't it?"

"But suppose I cannot pay that first week's rent when it is due?"

"Then hock some of your clothes."

"That will do away with the security."

"Ah, but, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Brent, "you mustn't let the dear landlady know *that*. It would pain her. Always take your articles out at night to pawn. Ah! here is the very house."

While conversing Brent had turned his friend through Forty-Second Street toward the west, and on the block beyond the new theaters they halted suddenly before a house with a tin sign on the doorpost: "Rooms and Board."

"Very neat place; get your meals if you like. No! you don't want 'em while you are a potato-peeler," Brent added with a grin.

"I believe I had a friend boarding here once. But the woman won't remember me. Anyway, she may be a different woman now. Landladies are migratory like their patrons. Only the houses remain lodging-houses till torn down."

He marched up the steps, and Clay must perforce follow, although the house looked a deal more respectable than he really thought he could afford. Brent, however, rang the bell before the other could utter any objection.

"Now, my son, leave all to me. I'll show you what can be done with the capital of a trunk," he said.

He settled his coat, flicked a speck of dust from his lapel, and the door opened. It was held ajar by a tall, angular female in black silk—the shabby black silk out of which so many landladies seem to have had dresses made somewhere about the year one.

"We wish to see Mrs. Lemmon," Brent began, lifting his tile. He had noticed the name on the door.

"That's me," said the female grimly.

"I beg pardon!" exclaimed the wily fellow, with charming confusion. "I—I mistook you for—for another person."

Now this implied that either she was not old enough to be the landlady, or that she did not look like a landlady; either supposition was welcome. The grim lips relaxed.

"Won't you step into the parlor—you and your friend?" said Mrs. Lemmon. "You come to see about rooms, sir?"

"For my friend—Mr. Hopworthy, madam," said Brent, introducing Clay. "He is a stranger; only arrived yesterday. I feel it necessary to get him settled in this wicked city," and he laughed lightly.

All this seemed to make an exceedingly good impression on Mrs. Lemmon. Landladies have a penchant for young men from the country. They are not apt to be too "wise," nor too critical. Besides, Clay's face was a good recommendation.

"I don't know as I have anything just now that will suit you gentlemen," she said, with some flutter. "I have only a back hall room empty; but I may have a nice square room on the second floor in a few days. I think the occupants will go."

The way she compressed her lips assured Brent that those particular occupants were very near "going," indeed—even though they might not know it yet.

"My friend wishes to get settled at once," Brent explained. "His trunk is still at the station and he cannot live in one suit for the rest of his natural life."

"There is a room," she began, and suddenly broke off to dart to the parlor door and look into the hall.

It was evidently a false alarm. She came back.

"There is a room which I *wish* was empty now. Your friend would like it.

Five dollars for a single gentleman; seven for two."

"The square room of which you spoke?" queried Brent.

"Yes. And it *will* be empty," she repeated. "But I sha'n't let them take their trunk out—the scamps!—and them owing me three weeks."

With this she whisked to the door again. There really was a step on the stairs. Brent looked over her shoulder into the hall and beckoned Clay.

The latter saw a young man, most remarkably dressed, it seemed, tiptoing down the stairway. He had not even glanced at the open parlor door, and so he did not see the landlady and her two visitors standing there.

But when she got her breath—well! He jumped from the third step at her exclamation.

"You little whiffet!" she cried, striding after him like a grenadier. "Are you going to pay me as you promised?"

The fellow was, without doubt, afraid. With a startled yell, he seized the doorknob, yanked the door open, and fled.

"Did you see?" whispered Brent, looking knowingly at Clay.

"What?"

"Didn't you notice how he was dressed?"

"He looked funny," replied Clay, likewise whispering.

"Funny? Huh!"

"Here comes the other."

It was almost dusk and the lower hall was dark. Evidently the second occupant of the room which Mrs. Lemmon wished to relet had not heard his comrade's shout. He came tiptoing down the stairs, too.

But she was ready for him, with her back to the street door, which had slammed behind the other.

"Mr. Gubbins!" she began sternly. Then she broke off with an excited scream. "I *never* in all my days!" she shrieked, and seizing the perturbed Mr. Gubbins, "ran" him into the lighter parlor.

"What *is* the matter with you?" she cried. "You—you are stuffed!"

Brent, meanwhile, was in a paroxysm of laughter, while Clay was too amazed at the fellow's appearance to do anything but stare.

"You are a sight, sir!" gasped the mistress of the house.

"Well, ma'am—yes, ma'am," stammered the man, who seemed a rather simple fellow, and he smiled foolishly.

"I *do* look a bit bloated, don't I, ma'am? I was afraid so," and he sighed.

"What you got on?" she demanded.

"Only my own, ma'am. Fred said it was the only thing for us to do. You wouldn't let us take out the trunk——"

"So you put all your clothes on you, eh? You're a nice one—a nice one!" she exclaimed. "Take 'em off, sir!"

She stood with arms akimbo, her back to the parlor door. There was no escape. Indeed, the fellow, who was naturally very thin, had so bundled himself with wearing apparel that he could hardly have waddled away, let alone run. Nothing but fear of the good lady had sent his mate off at such speed.

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Gubbins meekly, and began peeling off at once.

An overcoat, which Mrs. Lemmon seized and put on a chair. A second overcoat followed, and was likewise pounced upon.

Then followed a frock coat and two undercoats; then a cardigan jacket; next, three vests. He began to breathe more freely, but Mrs. Lemmon looked grimly on.

"You've got your best shirts on," she snapped. "I paid for that laundry myself when it came in yesterday."

Off came the outer shirt, revealing another beneath; that came off, too, and at last Mr. Gubbins seemed to have reached his proper size. There was a vest, which was evidently the one he had on when he began to prepare for his flitting from the house.

"Pants!" commanded the landlady briefly.

Two pair of nether garments came off. The suspenders were buttoned to the third pair.

"Really, ma'am, I can't in decency take off anything more," said the abject Gubbins. "We had to leave our extra hats and shoes up-stairs, anyway."

"Very well. I'll let you go. Here," she tossed him the coat that matched the vest and trousers he now wore. "These 'll be locked up. Three months, remember. Then if you don't come for 'em, I

sell 'em—and the trunk. An' if I ketch that chum of yours, I'll wallop him!"

"Yes, ma'am," murmured Gubbins, and made for the hall.

She followed him, to "see the last of his back," as she expressed it. Clay turned to the gasping Brent.

"My goodness! I don't believe I want to take her room. She's an Amazon."

"She's all right. You leave her to me. They deserved all they got—sneaking out in this way. And only three weeks!"

"What would *you* have done?" queried Clay curiously.

"Owed her six, at least," whispered Brent, with a grin, and then sobered his features for the return of Mrs. Lemmon.

And that poor lady returned in no Amazonian mood. She was in tears. Now, when a pretty woman cries she attracts sympathy—because she is pretty! But Brent was sympathetic—and honestly so, Clay saw—at once.

"He's a good-hearted fellow, as I supposed," he thought. "And a gentleman."

"You see what we landladies have to put up with," she observed. "And then, I have been ugly to that Gubbins. You won't want to come here to live, Mr. Hopworthy."

"Don't you worry about that," said Brent, with an open wink at her. "Let's see the room. He that hath cash can defy the devil!"

"Well, that's mebbe a compliment," she said doubtfully, and laughed and took them up-stairs.

"Isn't five dollars a week more than I can afford?" whispered Clay, who felt himself helpless in Brent's hands.

But when he saw the room he did not really see how he could get on with a worse one. It had one attraction. It was clean.

"Take it! take it!" Brent advised cheerfully. "We can send your trunk over to-night and you can sleep here."

"Of course he can!" declared Mrs. Lemmon, her heart warming to two such comforting young gentlemen. "And I'll send the girl up to change the sheets."

"You are a jewel!" declared Brent boldly. "Don't let her escape you, Clay. A lady who will offer clean linen in the middle of the week!"

And Mrs. Lemmon handed over a latch-key and went off to see about fulfilling her promise without once thinking of asking for either references or the money in advance.

"It's a cinch!" declared Brent, lugging Clay away instantly. "See what can be done with merely the promise of the trunk. If we'd brought it with us she'd have offered to lend money."

"It wasn't the trunk, but your silk hat, that impressed her," laughed Clay.

But secretly he knew that it was Brent's manner, his open-heartedness, and withal, his shrewd adaptability. And he admired him for these qualities hugely.

CHAPTER X.

A PARTNERSHIP.

THE trunk was reclaimed, an expressman found, and Clay's possessions sent to his boarding place. Then it was dinner-time and Brent confessed that his luncheon had been most unsatisfactory.

"Come on," he said. "You shall treat me to-night," and he winked. "Return for last night's spree."

But Clay would not laugh.

"Where shall we go?" he asked. "You know I haven't three dollars left now."

"Pshaw! why be so sordid? Three dollars will pay for a nice little dinner."

"Half of what I have is yours," Clay said quietly. "But I'm going to disburse your half as well as my own, just the same. Now, find a cheap restaurant."

"But, man alive, I can't go to a cheap restaurant—not this way!"

"And yet you could play a street organ!"

"Well—er—that's different."

But he found a little French place where they were served a table d'hôte, with "red ink," for sixty cents apiece, and a ten-cent tip to the waiter.

Clay groaned over this. "I hope you get your other clothes out of the pawnshop pretty soon, Brent," he said. "To wear a silk hat and evening dress costs too much."

It was while they lingered at table, however, that these two young men, who

had taken such a violent liking to each other, really became acquainted. Clay learned that his friend's hope was to get a comic opera, or musical comedy, produced.

"Some pretty good critics have heard the music, and they encourage me," he said, throwing aside his haphazard air. "But there's something to such a piece besides the music."

"You mean the libretto?"

"Yes. I know a man who writes librettos; but, like the music publishers, he wants to 'hog' it all. He has a reputation for being a humorist, and he considers his name worth about eleven-tenths of the profits—if profits there be!"

"And you look at it just the other way 'round, eh?" suggested Clay slyly.

"Nay, nay, Pearline! I have tried to grind out doggerel myself, so I know that it is not the easiest grist in the world. And, besides, I want good song words and smart dialogue. I know I can't do 'em. I have no rhyming faculty."

"Tell me about it," urged Clay, vastly interested.

"Why, I've got the thing all planned. What it needs is a fellow to roll up his sleeves, take the situations as I've planned 'em, and turn out the rhymes and the humor. I believe I've got a good thing in 'The Arrow of Fortune.'"

"That sounds good."

"It *is* good. You know, there's an old story about a little Spanish prince who shot an arrow into the air, and it flew out of sight. So he began to wonder what had become of it—where it had gone, and what was at the place where the arrow had fallen.

"This idea worries him so that he sets out to find the lost arrow. And *that* is the theme of the piece, and lends itself to all manner of complications, both funny and sentimental."

"Great!" exclaimed Clay, with eyes like saucers.

"I've a deal of the music written. And, to tell the truth, I've tried to grind out some of the libretto. It's poor stuff, though."

His friend hesitated.

"Do you think—that is, if I could see your words and hear the music——"

"Sure you shall! I'll take you to a place to-night where you can hear some of it."

"Perhaps I might help you a little on the rhymes," stammered Clay. "I was always good at doggerel, and with a rhyming dictionary a fellow can do a lot."

"You don't mean it!" gasped Brent.

"Oh, don't look like *that* at me! I couldn't turn out an original verse of any value, I don't suppose. But just for fun, you know——"

"I believe you are cursed with modesty!" exclaimed Brent, in horror.

"No-o. I don't really believe it amounts to a curse."

"Let's hear you make a jingle!" commanded Brent solemnly.

"What—offhand? Oh! I don't believe I could. Er—er—they're like *this*—only I'm not sure that it's entirely original," and he rolled up his eyes, thought a moment, and began:

"There was an old man from Nantasket,
Who went to sea in a basket;
When up came a shark—
Swallowed him and his bark—
Now, wasn't that a fine funeral casket?"

"Clay," Brent declared solemnly, "why do you hide your light under a bushel? You are a born poet—I can see that.

"But, horrors!" he suddenly exclaimed, clasping his hands. "How *can* a man be a librettist with such a name as yours?—'Claypole Hopworthy!' Ye gods and little fishes! It might better be 'Hoppole Clayworthy!'"

"Oh, I've always signed my name 'Clay Worth' in the papers," declared the other, with a blush.

"And he's written for the papers!" gasped Brent. "See here, old man, Fate has thrown us together. I'll put you to the test. Here are the words of one of my sentimental songs in 'The Arrow of Fortune.' See what you can do with the idea."

He pushed the coffee cups aside and spread the manuscript on the table. For half an hour they pored over the lines and Clay showed him how to trim up the feet and changed some of the rhymes.

"I could do better if I heard the music," he declared.

And this would not be difficult, Brent declared. Along Broadway almost every manner of shop is open at night—there is even an all-night shoe store. So it was easy to find piano rooms open to the public.

Brent was known and welcomed here, too. He led his friend to the rear of the shop, chose a well-toned instrument, and softly began the overture of his composition.

There were not many people in the place; the clerks gathered around. Brent was a fine instrumentalist, and seemingly untiring. He went through the music of the first act, as he had arranged it, without a break, explaining to Clay as he went along the nature of the different numbers.

The latter was charmed. He was a lover of good music, although he was no musician. But he recognized in the work a quality so seldom found in like compositions—it was of even merit.

There was not merely one or two good things in this act; but each song, and each chorus was vivid, possessed abundant color, and had the value of being easily learned by ear. Indeed, if it had a fault at all, it was that there was so much really *good* music in the act the hearers would be unable to take away any *one* tune.

Clay was fired with energy. It was wonderful! He could scarcely wait to see and read Brent's attempts at versification and dialogue.

Indeed, the shopman's desire to close up at midnight was all that drove Clay out of the place. He could have sat there and heard Brent play all night.

They agreed that Brent should bring his manuscript, both words and music, to Mrs. Lemmon's the next evening. Clay would be back from the restaurant soon after six, and Brent was to get his dinner alone somewhere and come prepared to put a long evening into the "rehashing" of his libretto.

"And you'll take a dollar of this money," Clay said firmly, as they parted on the street corner. "My meals are assured for to-morrow; yours are not."

Brent was ready with objections; but Clay was the stronger, both physically and in argument, and carried his point.

In truth Hopworthy went to his new lodgings a great deal more excited than did Brent. The former believed that all the composer needed was *push* to get his work heard by some good manager, and have it presented. On the other hand, Brent was inclined to believe it was *pull!*

However, the interest Clay had acquired in the composition kept his mind off the very disagreeable work which he set his hand to the next morning at eight o'clock. That steaming, greasy kitchen behind the restaurant was nauseous to Clay before noon.

How he cursed his lack of promptness that had shut him out of his promised situation with the Slocum Manufacturing Company. And now he hated Borrow, whose enmity had really cost him the situation he had come from Springfield to secure.

If he had that chance *now*, with twenty-five per week, he and Brent could be sure of food and shelter until the musical comedy was produced. The budding librettist had a great deal to learn, you see.

However, he was sure of enough to eat while he remained in the restaurant, and the five dollars a week would keep him out of debt to Mrs. Lemmon. But he went home at night with his hands in a much worse condition than they had been the day before.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Brent, when he saw them. "You mustn't work any longer in that place. You're ruining your hands."

"Don't be an ass," grunted Clay. "What do you suppose I care about my hands? *I* don't play the piano, and a dirty hand can hold a pen as well as a clean one."

And he proved to Brent's delight that he could hold the pen to some purpose. He had a talent for versifying, and his command of English was good.

Taking the sentimental song which he had looked over the night before he worked at it half the evening, and when he was through it was really a song, boasting smoothly flowing lines and more than a little grammatical sense.

"Old man!" Brent exclaimed, shaking hands over it, "we are partners. We'll make name and fame——"

"And some money, let us hope," Clay added coolly.

"That reminds me; I am rich," Brent declared. "I invite you out to supper. Loraine wants to meet you again——"

"Oh!" and Clay blushed all over. "You didn't tell him——"

"About *my* being bit the other night? I—guess—not! But he liked you. And then, he heard about your he-ro-ic action on the stage—ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's not. You save your money," advised Clay, holding back.

"Come on! Besides, Burt Loraine is a fellow who can help us. He's heard part of this music; he can sing the tenor beautifully—you should hear him do 'If Love Be Only True'—that is the title of the sentimental song in the first act. You'd fall in love with him yourself."

This captured Clay. But he asked: "How much money you got?"

"Fifteen dollars."

"What!"

"Big sum, isn't it?"

"And you tell me you only paid fifty cents for your dinner?"

"Well, I hadn't the fifteen then," admitted Brent, with a laugh. "Giggs only paid me as I was coming up here."

"You've sold another song!" gasped Clay, in horror.

"Oh, only a little thing. Giggs will find words to it—or Merharp will. Fifteen isn't bad for it."

"But your name won't be to it," Clay said, in sorrow.

"Don't cry about that. A fellow's got to live."

"But think what they make, and how little you get."

"Oh, well—perhaps the thing won't take. And it costs a lot to print songs. If I had it accepted by a decent publisher I wouldn't get more than two or three cents on a copy, and have to wait his pleasure to publish it."

Clay dropped the matter; but he determined to find out for his own satisfaction what it cost to print an ordinary song sheet. He did not drop the matter of the fifteen dollars, however.

"No such foolishness as the other night, Brent," he declared. "That fifteen dollars ought to last you some time. Don't you owe room rent?"

"My goodness! Mrs. Cushing might have heart trouble if I paid her."

"Risk it. Pay her something on account and promise me not to spend more than two dollars to-night?"

"What! two dollars for three men? Nonsense!"

"Make it a dollar apiece, then."

"Dear, dear," sighed Brent. "I've saddled myself with an Old Man of the Sea, sure enough. Here!" He thrust a ten-dollar bill into Clay's hand. "You take this and pay for the feast. You can order, too."

"Have we positively got to take this Loraine to supper?"

"Oh, that's business. I want him to be interested in 'The Arrow of Fortune.' He might have a lot of influence with a manager—when we're lucky enough to get hold of one."

They went down to the stage entrance of the theater and waited for Loraine to come out. They were not alone at the spot. Fools gravitate naturally toward a stage door when a musical comedy is on.

There was a boisterous party of three young men who evidently had no real business on the spot. They were discussing the piece, and had evidently just seen it from the front.

"The Craymore girl is the one for *me*—she's a peach," one of them remarked rather loudly, and as he spoke a lady came out of the swinging door.

"Sh!" exclaimed another of the trio, *sotto voce*. "Here she is. Now, Borry, old boy, I dare you!"

Both remarks had been audible to Clay and Brent. The latter paid little attention, but to Clay it was irritating. He glanced at the figure of the lady as the light from the hall shone upon her—before the door swung to.

There was something familiar in her carriage; not in her facial appearance, for she was veiled. The first of the boisterous trio of loiterers advanced a step toward her.

The girl appeared not to notice, although some of their words must have reached her ear. With a perfect air of ignoring them she crossed the wide walk and then suddenly halted before Brent and Clay.

The former raised his hat quickly and spoke. "This is Miss Craymore? I am Mr. Brent. Burt Loraine introduced me to you once——"

"I believe I remember you, Mr. Brent," she said. But her gaze was evidently fixed on Clay.

"Your friend?" she suggested. "Haven't I seen *him* before?"

"Mr. Hopworthy," said Brent, good-humoredly. "I guess you've never met him, but I know he'll be delighted to think——"

"Yes! I know him!" she exclaimed, interrupting. "Last night, sir," and now she spoke directly to the confused Clay. "You saved me when that scenery fell."

"I—I pray you don't mention it," Clay said. "It—it was nothing."

This sent Brent off into laughter again.

"Jove! you're complimentary to Miss Craymore, Clay," he chuckled. "'It—it was nothing!'"

"Then I am deeply grateful to your friend for nothing," she said, smiling, and tactfully speaking to Brent that Clay might recover himself.

But the latter was doomed to get deeper into difficulty, and because of his sharp hearing. The three behind him were openly commenting upon Miss Craymore.

"Nipped in the bud, Borry!" exclaimed one.

"Borry wasn't quick enough. She's got too many on the string for him," said the second.

"Confound her! And I sent her flowers, too," sputtered the fellow whom they chaffed. "They are all alike—common as dishwater!"

Clay wheeled on them like lightning. One stride took him directly before the last speaker and put his blazing face close into the line of the other's vision.

"You dirty mouthed scoundrel!" he whispered. "You and your friends get out of here instantly, or I'll roll you in the mud! Do you hear?"

The three started back. Clay's evident brawn and more evident temper quelled any spark of courage they may have had.

The two who had been urging on their mate, started away at once, muttering. The other fellow hesitated half a minute, and Clay saw a devilish rage rise in his little eyes.

"Ha! I know you, you bully!" he gasped. "This is another count against you. I settled the other. I won't forget this."

He followed his friends. Clay stood a moment, his rage cooling while his amazement rose. The fellow was Borrow, the manager for the Slocum Manufacturing Company in the absence of the president of that concern.

CHAPTER XI.

A STREAK OF LUCK.

"WHO are your friends, Clay?" drawled Brent's voice behind him.

Thus aroused, that young man came back to Brent and Miss Craymore. He muttered something about their being no friends of his.

"But you spoke to them?" Miss Craymore said, and Clay thought she looked at him suspiciously.

"Oh, one fellow I knew by name. He's not my friend. My enemy, rather."

"Never had one," Brent declared.

"Except yourself," his comrade responded, rather tartly.

Miss Craymore laughed.

"I understand from Mr. Loraine that you are too easy-going to make enemies," she said. "Ah! here comes Burt."

The tenor joined them. He shook hands warmly with Clay.

"Then you found him out, Miss Craymore?" he asked.

"I knew him at once," she said, and Clay blushed again.

"I've asked Miss Craymore to take potluck with us," Brent said, in his easy manner.

"Only providing that it *be* potluck," she said. "A quiet place, a little bite, then one of you can put me on the car."

Clay had his doubts about the propriety of all this, for he was terribly insular. He was not used to seeing men and women *friendly* in the better sense of the word.

But he had not been half an hour in Miss Craymore's company before he saw that both Brent and Loraine thoroughly respected her; and yet she could be familiar with them, calling the man she worked with every night by his first name, and speaking as freely to her other companions as though she were one with them.

And when her veil was laid aside and he could see her face, Clay was really charmed with it. The eyes looked tired, and there was a pathetic little droop to the mouth when in repose.

But that same mouth smiled in the frankest possible way when she spoke, and there was a light in the eyes that made other people smile. He forgot the woman as she appeared on the stage, but saw her as she really was.

Most of their conversation at table was upon a subject that entirely held Clay's attention, too. That was Brent's composition.

Loraine had heard much of the music played; he had told Miss Craymore about it, and, having a good memory, had whistled some of the songs. Now out came "If Love Be Only True," and Brent sang it in a low tone.

"You've improved the words," Loraine said, at once.

"You mean Clay has. I tell you, he's going to make my silly stuff *live!*" Brent was enthusiastic—over another's work.

"And that is the soprano's song?" asked Miss Craymore.

"That would hit *you*," Loraine said to her.

"I'll give you a copy of the words, and when I get the music down on paper I'll show it to you," Brent declared. "If we should only interest you in it, too, Miss Craymore."

"That isn't hard," and she laughed.

And before they separated that night Loraine and she were almost as enthusiastic over "The Arrow of Fortune" as its composer and librettist. It was agreed that the three men should call at Miss Craymore's home on Sunday and run through such of the piece as was in shape.

That supper (it was only a bite and a mug of ale in a little place Brent knew about) marked the real opening of this new world to Clay Hopworthy. Miss Craymore selected him to take her to the car, too; he had got over his bashfulness by that time and was delighted.

"I want you for a friend," she said to him, with a frank handclasp, as the car came along. "You're a bright man—I can see that."

"Not much, I'm not!"

"Yes, you are. It took a bright man to think of cutting that canvas border the other night when it fell on us."

"You weren't going to talk about that," he objected.

"I won't. And don't you appear behind the scenes at the Herald Square for a while, either. They've got it in for you for that!" and she laughed again and went away.

Brent was at Clay's lodgings every evening, almost as soon as the "potato-parer" reached home, and they worked like Trojans on the opera. There was an old piano, dumb as an oyster, in Mrs. Lemmon's parlor. There had been a music teacher in the house once; he had struck hard times and—well, Mrs. Lemmon was "keeping it for him."

Brent prevailed upon the good lady to unlock the instrument, and after she had heard him play once she handed Clay the key and told him he and his friend were welcome to open the piano at any time they pleased.

When Brent wanted to run over a part and they'd go down to the parlor for that purpose, Mrs. Lemmon would open the folding doors a crack (she occupied the back parlor herself) and listen.

"He plays like an angel!" she told Clay warmly.

"Oh, pshaw!" Brent exclaimed, when he heard this. "You won't ever have to pay your room rent, old man. It's a cinch."

But Clay had many a bad hour—especially while at work in the restaurant kitchen—thinking over his situation. To earn just enough to pay his rent, and no more, was fearfully galling.

Brent's light banter could not raise his spirits in that direction. He must find something to do that would add materially to his income.

He had not forgotten Miss Kendrickson and her invitation to him to call on her again. She had told him to come the last of the week, and getting off earlier than usual on Friday he stopped at the studio.

The colored maid told him at once that Miss Kendrickson desired to see him; but he had to wait some time until the sculptor finished with a female model. Then she called him in.

"Why haven't you been here before?"

she demanded. "And why come at this time of day? Come in the morning. I can't work now; I am exhausted."

"I am working and cannot come in the morning," Clay told her.

"Then you must come on Sunday. You don't work then, do you?"

"No, madam."

"Well; it's too bad I shouldn't have *one* day of rest," she complained. Then suddenly she darted at him. "What's this?" she almost shrieked. "What have you been doing with your hands?"

"I—I—madam——"

"They're black as a negro's, and cut, and marred—*what* have you been doing, child?"

Clay told her with some confusion. He was not used to having plain-spoken ladies take an interest in his personal affairs.

"A potato-parer in a restaurant kitchen!" she exclaimed. "Of all the occupations for a man of your intelligence and education."

"It is honest," growled Clay, not a little angry.

"Honest! Pah! What sort of tommyrot do you call that? It sounds like 'Rollo Learning to Talk,' or 'Sanford and Merton!' And let me tell you it *isn't* honest—no, sir! It is the biggest kind of a sham."

"I'd be pleased to know what you mean, Miss Kendrickson?" Clay demanded, with real anger now.

It was bad enough to have to do the dirty work in the restaurant kitchen without being talked to in this way.

"Do you mean to say you think it *honest* for a man of your ability to be contented to do such work as you are doing for a mere pittance——"

"It pays my room rent and keeps me in food."

"That's no more than a tramp gets."

"But a hobo doesn't work."

"He doesn't? You try begging and stealing for a living. You'll find it work, my man. As for you, there are a dozen ways for you to get your livelihood as a gentleman should. You ought to be ashamed to settle back as you are and depend upon potato-paring for a living."

"I would like for you to point out some other way by means of which I can keep a shelter over my head," stammered Clay.

"That I will. I had it in my mind the other day, and I have not forgotten it, or you. I don't scold people without offering them advice," and she smiled.

"Then please come to the advice part," he observed stiffly.

"Ha, ha, ha! I see you are not so poor spirited after all. Now, listen to me: You saw the old gentleman in here the other day?"

"The one who lost his pin?"

"Yes. He's taken a fancy to you."

"What!" gasped Clay. "And he wanted to arrest me?"

"Oh, you mustn't mind a little thing like that in Uncle Dan," Miss Kendrickson said, with another of her severe smiles.

"Besides, he has got back the pin. The police found the thief from the description you gave Uncle Dan. He came in here yesterday quite intent on seeing you again."

"How is that to help me?" Clay inquired gloomily.

"It may help you a good deal if you will allow it," she said. "You must not be too proud, however."

"So you think I am proud; yet I am a potato-parer?" and he laughed harshly.

"'The Proud Potato Parer'—yes!" and her laugh made Clay's very ears glow. "Uncle Dan wants a man about him. You would fill the demand, I believe. I told him so."

"I heard you say something of the kind when I was here before. He did not seem to take kindly to the idea."

"But the suggestion stuck in his mind—I knew it would."

Then she told him that the old gentleman was a widower, who insisted on going his own gait in spite of his relatives, and that his health was not all it should be.

"We all—his family, I mean—appear afraid that something will happen to him if he hasn't somebody trustworthy with him. What we are really afraid of is that he will do something foolish with his money. Old fellows like him are so often taken with a pretty face, and are influenced by designing women."

Clay shuddered; then he caught a glimpse of her face and saw that she was

"talking one way, but thinking another."

"Her bark's a deal worse than her bite," he said to himself. "I knew that before."

"With your pride, would you be willing to be half valet and half a private secretary?" she asked.

"For how much?"

"I believe he would pay you ten dollars a week and your board and lodging. So he talked yesterday."

Clay opened his eyes wide.

"You are not playing with me, Miss Kendrickson?"

"Bah! why should I? Am I one of the joking kind?"

"I would be delighted at such a chance."

"You won't be so delighted after you've tried the old man a while. I never could bear him about me—money and all. For that reason, I guess, I'm the only one of the family whose judgment he trusts. Now, will you come Monday to meet him?"

"Not until after four o'clock. I won't give up one job before I'm sure of another," declared the canny Hopworthy.

"Your verdancy is getting rubbed off," was Miss Kendrickson's dry response.

But Clay was secretly delighted, though he took the matter with a grain of salt, as the saying is, after his first flush of joy. Ten dollars a week and "found"—well! say!

But as he bowed himself out and passed through the reception-room, after leaving the sculptor, a man stood there, hat in hand, speaking to the servant.

"She's in, then?" this person asked, and the tone of his voice made Clay whisk around to look at the speaker sharply.

But instantly he turned his face away again and stepped into the hall.

"By Jove! that was Borrow," he muttered. "I always seem to be running up against him."

CHAPTER XII.

"THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION."

THE composer and librettist of "The Arrow of Fortune" spent each evening together until eleven or twelve o'clock, and the musical comedy really began to take on form and substance. Brent needed just such a man as Clay Hopworthy to keep him to the work; and the inspiration of Brent's sanguine spirits countered Clay's pessimism.

Although he could not have written a note of music to save his life, and could scarcely read music at all in fact, Clay's ear for harmony was quite extraordinary. It was on his advice that Brent finally made a sweeping change in the character of the composition.

In a score of this character one theme, or thread of music—usually a song or march that the composer believes will "take" with the public—runs through the entire orchestration of the piece.

This is prominent in the overture, crops up several times in the action and colors the final strains of music as the curtain descends on the last scene. And it is not always the good luck of the composer to hit upon the bars in his score best suited for giving the piece its "theme."

In the case of "The Arrow of Fortune" Brent had selected a march—a sort of Sousaesque piece, with plenty of brass and odd harmonies in it—as the thread on which to hang the pendants of songs, dances, marches, etc., in his composition.

"That'll bring the house!" he exclaimed, after playing it to Clay. "The show will end with a 'hurrah!' That's what we want. They'll go out talking about that march."

"Humph!" muttered the librettist.

"Don't you think so?" queried Brent, watching him closely.

"I do."

"Then why do you grunt?" asked the other impatiently.

"I was thinking—say! do you *want* them to go out talking about *any* part of the show?"

"Great Peter! He prophesies a frost already!" groaned Brent.

"Listen to me. When we were coming out of the 'Will-o'-the-Wisp' the other night, what was everybody whistling and humming?"

"Oh, that silly little thing, 'W'en de Lights Am Blinkin'.' It doesn't even belong to the piece. It's an interpolated song."

"Yes. And it wasn't even written by the composer of the musical comedy itself. His theme, as you call it, was that soft shoe dance in the second act. But the public wouldn't have it."

"Oh—I—see!"

"Humph! you don't want them to pick up the music of some second-rate coon song stuck in by a manager, or comedienne, and go out of *your* show whistling that, do you?"

"No."

"Then select a simpler, easier harmony for your theme—something that every one can whistle, that every one can sing. And, I believe, it should be something a little on the pathetic line. A little haunting melody sticks in the mind longer, and wears better, than a piece that needs six slide trombones to bring it out."

"Gee! but you're a critic."

"I'm not. I know so little about music that I can safely represent the great American public. What you want to use is 'If Love Be Only True.' That'll hit 'em."

Brent looked at him thoughtfully. Clay sang the song through—he had learned to love it by this time, and he sang it well.

"Fifty dollars a week—in the chorus!" snapped Brent. Then he laughed and sighed.

"You're right, old man. I see it. The march is the big thing; but 'If Love Be Only True' we'll fetch 'em."

And with that in view he rewrote his overture and had the new arrangement ready by Sunday afternoon when they went up-town to Miss Craymore's flat.

Loraine was there, and so was Miss Craymore's chum, who played in a stock company on the East Side—Miss Sadie Halburton. Her black, straight eyebrows and delightfully turned-up nose prepared Clay to learn that her real name was Haggerty.

But she was a delightful little creature (she played ingénue parts) and shone forth brilliantly later in the evening when she presided over the chafing dish, apropos of which she told of once capturing a well-known critic who had been to see the play in which she acted, and getting him home to supper after the show.

"But all the mention the horrid thing made of me was 'Miss Sadie Halburton is a better cook than she is actress.'"

With the two young women there lived a maiden aunt of Miss Halburton (that's how Clay learned the ingénue's real name), who played chaperon. Clay's opinion regarding people of the stage mounted by leaps and bounds, and he found himself steadily attracted by Miss Craymore's charm of manner.

The musical comedy was the all important topic, however. Brent and Clay went through the entire first act, singing some of the songs together, and Clay reading his dialogue which Brent had whipped into shape with the "business" interpolated.

Miss Craymore surprised them both by singing "If Love Be Only True," having learned it since the night at the restaurant. The performers were enthusiastic, and the firm of "Brent & Worth" were vastly encouraged.

"It will be more of an opera than a musical comedy," Loraine said, "and New Yorkers have perverted tastes when it comes to the latter composition. You want to make up your minds, you fellows, that when the thing gets into a manager's hands it will be torn all to pieces."

"How?" queried Clay.

"For the sake of introducing specialties, and to make the goods fit the performers. You wait till you see a rehearsal."

"If it ever gets that far," groaned Brent.

But Clay would not let his partner lose heart. Personally he banked a great deal on his obtaining the post with Miss Kendrickson's uncle.

He felt sure that he would have more time to himself, and the ten dollars a week would further another idea he had in his mind. Brent had a song, the words of which he had found in a paper; the music was dainty and sweet. Clay had begged him not to sell it offhand, as he had others.

"Let us see if we can't publish it ourselves," he said.

"But we'll have to pay the writer for the verses, or get permission, or something," objected Brent, who hated trouble of any kind.

"Leave that to me," Clay declared, and he wrote to the author of the lines, in care of the editor of the paper in which they had appeared, offering ten dollars for the use of them as a song.

"How'll we ever scratch together money enough to publish the song ourselves?" complained Brent. "And then there's the selling of the thing afterward. You don't know anything about it."

"And you don't seem to know much yourself," replied Clay laughing. "You've never gone into the matter very deeply."

Clay obtained an extra hour on Monday afternoon from Mac, the kitchen boss, and went over to Miss Kendrickson's studio earlier than he had given her reason to expect him. It was thus he ran into a storm-belt.

Miss Kendrickson had doffed her mannish working suit and met him in the reception-room.

"Uncle Dan is here," she said in a low voice. "I give you one warning, and only one. Begin as you intend to go on!

"You don't know what I mean? Then I'll tell you. Uncle Dan is a child in many things. His health is uncertain. He once had a slight apoplectic stroke. Make things go easy for him; but put your foot down, and put it down hard, when you have to."

"But, my dear madam, am I to be his keeper?" whispered Clay, greatly disturbed.

"You'll find out you are that, as well as other things. You are going to mix into a family affair, and will be cursed by both sides before you get through."

"Why, you must think me a fool!" gasped the young man.

"Exactly. Otherwise I would not have suggested you to him."

"Thank you!" exclaimed Clay hotly, picking up his hat.

Then he remembered that he could not afford to throw away the chance, no matter how it might hurt his pride.

"Go in and see him," she said, giving him a little push, and Clay walked down the hall and entered the studio, or workshop, where Uncle Dan was walking about squinting at the statues through a double barreled eye-glass.

"Ha! hum!" he grunted, turning the glass on Clay. "You are the young man, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do the terms suit you?"

"Will you repeat them, please?"

"Ten dollars a week. I will secure your board and lodging at my expense, also. And I suppose you will rob me some; I'm used to that."

"But I should not know how to go about it," Clay responded, boiling inside, but speaking as sweetly as though being called a thief was quite familiar to him.

"Then you are either a fool, or you'll soon learn how," grunted the old gentleman.

"Your niece says the former," Clay observed dryly.

"She's a good judge. Well?"

"I will try it. After a week I can tell whether I think your salary is enough for the work—and insults."

"Come, come! that's not so bad," exclaimed Uncle Dan, and began to cackle.

Just then there were voices in the reception-room. Then there burst in first a young man whose appearance quite startled Clay, and following him Miss Kendrickson, quite as grim looking as usual.

It was Borrow. Clay had not been mistaken on Friday evening. This young man had really been a visitor to the sculptor's studio.

"I thought so!" Borrow exclaimed, eying Clay coldly. "I am seldom mistaken in a man's face and figure. This is the fellow, Hopworthy, to whom Mr. Slocum refused to give a situation before he left for Europe."

Clay sprang forward like a horse that feels the whiplash. Then he caught Miss Kendrickson's eye, and quailed.

"What's that? What's that?" queried the old gentleman testily. "What do you say, Nephew George?"

"The fellow is not trustworthy," Borrow declared. "I don't claim to know what the matter was, but he had to leave the town where he lived under cover, and came begging for work to Mr. Slocum——"

"Liar!" burst from Clay's throat. But he did not move this time.

"Remember you are in the presence of a lady, sir," was the remark that chilled him from the lady herself.

"I don't know how Cousin Sade came across him," Borrow began.

"It isn't necessary for you to know," interposed Miss Kendrickson coolly.

"Well, he's not honest. There is something wrong with him. I won't allow Uncle Dan to be hoodwinked——"

"Excepting by yourself," suggested the cousin in question, in her expressionless voice.

"You don't want the fellow about you," pursued Borrow, ignoring Miss Kendrickson.

By this time the old gentleman had recovered his breath.

"What do you mean, breaking in on my business in this way?" he demanded sternly of Borrow.

"I'm saying this for your own good, Uncle——"

"Go away!" cried Uncle Dan. "You bother me—I hate you—you are an abominable toad!"

His vituperation was like a woman's, his tone like a child's.

"But you haven't engaged this fellow, uncle?" cried Borrow.

"I hadn't decided before; but I will now."

"I beg of you——"

The old man waved him away and walked up to Clay, the astounded.

"You're engaged!" he exclaimed. "Terms as we agreed. You begin work *now*."

"I tell you the fellow——"

"I don't hear you!" grunted Uncle Dan, starting on a nervous trot about the room.

Borrow followed him; he laid his hand on the old gentleman's sleeve. He began to cajole him.

Clay stood undecided, tempted to run and leave them all, to throw up his new job, to get out of the way of the vindictive Borrow.

Then he happened to look at Miss Kendrickson. Her lips moved and he read the words which she did not utter aloud.

"Is—is that true?" Clay gasped.

She nodded. "All his life. That puppy George Borrow knows it well. He is trying to bring about your discharge in that way."

"I don't care about *that*," muttered Clay, undecided. "It's the poor old man. It's too bad——"

She sneered at him.

"It's in your power to stop it," she said, and turned her back.

For a moment longer Clay hesitated. Borrow had followed the old gentleman to the other end of the room.

"I won't listen to you—I won't! I won't!" Uncle Dan was crying.

Clay strode across to them. He did not look at the old man, but he glared at Borrow.

"You come with me," he said in a low voice.

"What do you mean—you dog?" gasped Borrow; but then Clay had him and, whirling him around with one hand on his collar and the other grasping the slack of his trousers, he propelled the bully out of the studio.

(*To be continued.*)

HIS OLD TRICK.

CUPID, wicked little rascal,
One day cast aside his dart;
Crept up when I wasn't looking,
And he deftly stole my heart.

Told him that he was a sneak thief,
But he simply turned and fled,
And instead of rightful owner
Gave it to a girl instead.

McLandburgh Wilson.

THE HATLESS HORROR.

BY FRANK EDWARDS.

The devastating havoc wrought by a fad in man's attire and the unexpected source from which help came.

SOME slight idea of the manner in which this amazing fad grew from nothing to something and from something to everything may be gleaned from that unhappy initial lunch-time conversation between Felter, Crane, and Bottsford.

Of course you are acquainted, directly or otherwise, with Felter, Crane, and Bottsford.

They represent everything that is big and powerful and fashionable in men's head-gear around New York. They manufacture men's hats and they have some dozens of stores where they are retailed.

In addition, they control some dozens more of minor establishments about the city, from Battery Park to the uttermost limits of the Bronx. What any or all of them say about the gentleman's hat market is authoritative in the extreme. Therefore the significance of that fateful first conference on the subject.

"I see," smiled Felter, "that the entire structure of our business is in grave danger."

Crane squinted at him over his cigar.

"Why?"

"Why?" Felter reached for the sugar and dropped his two lumps into the coffee before replying. "Simply because that paragon of wealthy and fashionable eccentricity, Mr. Berriford Van der Schuyden, was observed to walk down Fifth Avenue yesterday without his hat!"

"Blow off?"

"According to the ever sycophantic morning newspaper, no! The—the *Chronicle,* I think it was, announced that one of their special reporters had started hot-foot after the aforesaid Berriford and had interviewed him. He announced, with his customary haughty dignity, that the public were doubtless not in the slightest interested; but since there was a faint chance that some of the vulgar masses might like to know the reason, he would state that it is no longer correct for a perfect gentleman to wear a hat. Indeed, he ventured to predict that within a year or two the common or garden variety of hat would disappear, and the upper extremity of mankind would be wandering around *au naturel* exclusively."

"Bosh!" said Bottsford.

"Several kinds of it," chuckled Felter. "Probably by this time the exalted Berriford is sneezing, cornering the handkerchief market and having divers prescriptions filled rush fashion. It's March just now!" he ended dryly.

Crane grinned thoughtfully at his cigar.

"And even if it was January," he said slowly, "there are several hundred fools in town who would follow this chap's absurd example."

"Yes, I recall the time that Van der Schuyden began to wear his scarf-pin on his vest instead of on his tie. There was something like seventy thousand congenital idiots imitating him for a few months."

"Well—we needn't blame 'em," Crane said, with contemptuous tolerance. "There is a certain class of human animal that must imitate something or blow up. Let's be thankful that Van der Schuyden's latest will wipe out victims about as fast as they're made."

"Or better still," added Felter, "let's be thankful that it won't. The head that will go without a hat in New York has nothing inside it to catch cold."

The conference ended in a roar of laughter.

There was another conference, toward the end of April. It was not quite so cheerful a gathering as the first at which the subject had been discussed.

Felter looked vaguely annoyed and Crane seemed angry; Bottsford wore an expression of extreme tartness.

"This is perfect deuced rot!" the former announced. "That chump of a Van der Schuyden is actually almost hurting the hat business!"

"Almost!" Bottsford smiled acidly. "It's more than almost! Why, I'd guarantee that our sales, from the factory and the different stores, have fallen off all of ten per cent in the last month! Pah!"

"Do you suppose it's his fault?" Crane asked thoughtfully. "Maybe it's a late season, or something similarly unaccountable. You know our line has its good years and its off years, the same as any other."

"I'm inclined to think that Van der Schuyden's partly to blame, at any rate," Felter said slowly. "Yesterday, just out of curiosity, I walked up the Avenue. In twenty blocks, I suppose there were a hundred or so mighty well-dressed men strolling along calmly without the sign of a hat!"

"And I'll gamble that people were looking at them with profound admiration, too!" Bottsford murmured.

"Yes, that was a thing that struck me, as well. I suppose ten men and youths looked after every one of those fools, and, from the expression of their faces, a good half were contemplating the same absurd trick."

He pursed his lips and scowled at the coffee-cup. Bottsford banged the table with an angry fist.

"Drat it! It *can't* amount to anything!" he cried. "Why, it's perfect poppycock! People have been wearing hats for centuries—for dozens of centuries. Do you mean to say that in an enlightened town like New York, the men are going to drop it all at once—and merely because a supposed society leader takes a notion to go bareheaded?"

"Hardly." Felter smiled a little. "Oh, I'm not altogether sure that the poor business can be traced down to it at all. But whatever's causing the slump. I wish most sincerely that it would pass and be quick about it. I've got a pile tied up in the spring and summer stock."

"And I've got another pile!" Crane sighed.

"And I've got as big a pile as the two of you together!" Bottsford snapped. "I've enough of a pile tied up, here, there and the other place, that it'll cripple me if we have a bad year!"

Whereupon Crane, probably the most optimistic of the trio, diverted the conversation to more cheerful lines; and if the subject was not forgotten, it was not further discussed—just then.

One of the earliest days of June found all three around the same table once more.

Felter, usually imperturbable, looked distinctly worried. Bottsford wore an expression of unmitigated gloom and pessimism. Even Crane's round countenance had lost much of its hopefulness and good cheer.

For matters were in a bad way—in a distinctly bad way for the hat business! They knew it now; every dealer in New York knew it.

The latter half of May had not been warm—it had dragged to the end of the month distinctly hot. The rush for straw hats and for other lighter varieties should have been sudden and enormous. Instead, the stores from one end of town to the other were standing empty.

Clerks yawned over the newspapers from morning until night, and were wearied to death from sheer idleness when the business day came finally to a close.

"Why, it's getting worse every hour!" Crane sighed. "I suppose that to-day there are twenty or thirty thousand men and boys wandering around bareheaded in New York—and some of our former best customers among them at that, I've observed."

"It's not only the better class," Felter said earnestly. "The infernal thing is spreading everywhere. Why, downtown you can see every sort of male human—office boys, bill clerks, messengers, bookkeepers, managers, every one—going about without the sign of a hat."

"And the thing's growing like sixty, too! Lots of the out-of-town manufacturers have simply dropped New York from their salesmen's routes. They say there's nothing in it any more—and that it's growing in other cities!"

"Let it grow wherever it wants to, Crane," groaned Felter. "Anywhere—long as it'll die out in New York. We

three, you know, have confined ourselves pretty closely to the little old town. What the others lose won't be a marker to what we lose, unless a stop is put to the thing!"

"But what on earth is the cause of the insane business?"

"Novelty, I presume, and—Van der Schuyden. Very likely it feels good at first to go around without a hat, particularly when *the* society fashion-plate decrees it to be the correct thing."

Felter rubbed his chin in sad thought.

"It isn't only the people who have adopted it that are hurting it—it's everybody in town," he went on. "The men have stopped buying hats altogether. I suppose I've questioned a hundred who didn't know me, as to why they were wandering around in head-gear that should legitimately be in the ragbag. One and all gave the same answer: they were considering taking up the new freak; if they made up their minds to that effect, what would be the good of having a hat they couldn't use?"

Bottsford came out of a black study.

"Hang the cause!" he rasped. "We're not concerned with the cause. What we want to know is: what are we going to *do?*"

"I've done all I can think of now," Felter sighed. "I've worked the newspapers with all sorts of articles. They're bound to be friendly to us as advertisers. I've managed to run in all sorts of articles, showing that the new fad is the most dangerous thing that ever hit New York. I even paid so eminent a man as Dr. Ferdinand McFestor five hundred in cold cash to write an analysis of the situation, showing that unless New Yorkers took to wearing their hats again the whole human race was bound to deteriorate within one generation. I had sketches made of cave men with long hair and prehistoric clubs, and so on—and the story appeared in every magazine section last Sunday."

"And what good did it do?" Bottsford inquired.

"None," Felter confessed frankly. "I've heard a dozen people laughing at it in the Elevated trains and the Subway. Last night I caught McFestor himself in his machine, bareheaded, and taxed him with it. He said he's changed his mind and decided that the fad was thoroughly hygienic, and that he was advising some of his patients to use it!"

"Bah!"

"Bah as much as you please," Crane muttered. "The fad has taken hold of New York as nothing ever did before, and unless we find some way of killing it, we're——" he stopped.

"Killed off ourselves!" Bottsford said bluntly.

"Well, it amounts to that in my case," Crane admitted. "If the hundreds of thousands of hats I have on hand aren't sold—I think I'm done for. We've all been running on a pretty narrow margin this last year or two."

"Same here," murmured Felter. "I mortgaged the whole plant after that minor slump last year. If this goes on for another three months, I'm out of the hat business and—smashed!"

"And as for me——" Bottsford snarled. "Oh—damn!" He glared at the other two as if the matter were directly a fault of theirs. "What are we going to *do?*"

"I don't know!" Felter admitted. "We'll have to wait and hope and think, I suppose. Let's take a month to it. By that time, if conditions haven't improved—well, we'll be ready for any sort of drastic measures that appear at all promising."

It was a bad month. It was the worst month, indeed, in all the history of hats and hatters.

Senseless, purposeless though it might be, the bareheaded propaganda went forward with great, blood-curdling strides, with strides that struck sickening terror to every person in New York who was financially interested in the business of selling men's hats.

Had the insidious thing shown even a sign of early death, it would at least have been something. It did nothing of the sort; it gathered strength, it showed new disciples with every day of every week!

Where just a year before the sight of a bareheaded man would have excited amused comment, the sight of a hat now stamped the wearer as a relic of former times!

People enthused openly and reveled in unwonted tan. People told each

other how their chronic headaches and backaches and toothaches and every other variety of aches had disappeared since they left off the silly habit of hat-wearing. People who had been accustomed to thin and carefully tended hair found that the genial influence of sun and air was working a change; people whose hirsute adornment had always been ample began to assume the appearance of the football-player type.

This latter wrought a queer little change, too. Where it had been a sad necessity for many a proprietor to discharge his store force, earlier in the craze, clerks now deserted by hundreds! Many of them had saved a little money and were keen-eyed for investment. With diligence, the barber trade could be learned in a short space.

They hurried forth and studied the art of the snipping shears and flourishing bay rum bottle. They opened little shops, here, there, and everywhere, uptown and down-town; and they literally coined money, for hair, all over New York, was growing faster and faster and the ordinary barber shops were losing men daily through sheer exhaustion.

Smaller hat shops, too, were transmuted into tonsorial establishments; and sad-eyed little dealers who had once frolicked before the mirrors and assured the customer that the hat he wore was the most becoming thing possible, now labored over the matted hair of the same customer, combing out tangles and clipping off inches at a time.

Before the month was out, it became apparent to the trio of leading hat men that some sort of prompt action was necessary; and it was at another luncheon assembly that Felter gave voice to the need.

"There's no use in waiting!" he said positively. "We're dead up against it. We've got to kill this thing in the matter of a few weeks or give up!"

"And you're ready to tell us how it's to be done?" Bottsford asked acidly.

Felter shook his head with sorrow. Crane sat up.

"See here!" he remarked. "I've been thinking and thinking hard. Is this fool Van der Schuyden still in town?"

"Yes, later than usual this year. I've had an eye on him. He's black as a Cuban now, and he parades up and down Fifth Avenue with the admiring eyes of thousands on him. He seems to be proud of his work—and the blamed thing's become so world-famous now that every last clinger to old habits who sees him immediately tears off his hat and throws it into the street!"

"He hasn't anything much more than his name, has he?"

"Van der Schuyden? No. What little his father left, he's managed to dispose of himself. Van der Schuyden's all blue blood and nothing else; he's chronically hard up. Why?"

"Because that's just what I thought. Now why, since he started the craze, shouldn't he undo his own work?"

"You mean that if he began to wear a hat again, the rest of the sheep would fall into line once more?"

"Beginning at the top, yes! I believe that there's still trade to be saved if he can be persuaded to return to his senses—for a consideration!"

Felter thought hard for a minute or two; Bottsford, rather doubtful, looked brighter nevertheless than he had for months. The trio were silent; then Felter spoke up:

"See what you can do, Crane! I'll drop in a third of whatever amount in reason he'll take to quit!"

"Count me in!" Bottsford added briefly.

"I'll send a messenger to him this afternoon!" cried Crane. "Good-by! Never mind the coffee! This thing can't be started any too quickly. Bottsford—Felter—both of you come to my office to-morrow!"

He dashed out of the restaurant, and the others breathed a slight sigh of relief. *If it did work!* If the situation could only be saved, even at this late date! It might cost a pretty penny, but—it was well worth it if the hat business could be revived!

They passed the night, Bottsford and Felter, in anxious expectancy. They were at Crane's office long before eleven on the following morning.

That gentleman was not present. Indeed, he did not appear until noon, and when finally he walked in his face was a study. He motioned them into his private office and locked the door.

"It's all off!" he announced sadly.

"Eh?" Bottsford started up. "Wouldn't listen to it?"

"He wanted to listen to too much!" Crane threw his hat, one of the few thousand active survivors in the city, to the desk and groaned. Then he shrugged his shoulders and plunged into the yarn.

"Well, I received no answer whatever from Van der Schuyden yesterday. The boy came back and said that he had waited an hour for it, and that the gentleman wasn't home. This morning I had an urgent note from a law firm downtown, asking me to call at once upon a most important matter intimately connected with present unfortunate conditions in the hat trade!"

"Who were they?"

"Blake &—somebody. The letter's there somewhere. Well, I went down and was hurried in to the senior partner. He's a very suave and grave person, and he smiled all over at the sight of me. He asked me to sit right down—and then he informed me that while, to all intents and purposes, I was dealing with him alone, in reality I was talking to Mr. Reginald Van der Schuyden's official and secret mouthpiece, for this occasion only!"

"Aha!"

"Then he went on, in that purring way of his. He said that Mr. Van der Schuyden, in the first place, had not primarily thought of any personal gain to be won by going hatless. He had merely thought of starting a new fad—he being admitted to be the star fad-starter of the universe.

"Later, he saw precisely what effect the thing was having on our business. He also saw himself getting harder up and harder up every blessed day. Then it was that, realizing his own importance, he began to expect to hear from some of us!"

"So he *did* expect that!" Felter ejaculated. "And we only thought of it yesterday!"

"Yes, he expected it, and laid his plans accordingly. Gentlemen, that young, beautifully dressed hound is prepared to guarantee to stop the business in a month by regaining his hat and persuading his immediate associates to follow suit!"

"Well, what on earth more do you want!" Bottsford cried joyfully.

"The price!" groaned Crane.

"But how much does he want?"

"One—million—dollars!" said Crane breathlessly.

The others stared at him open mouthed.

"One — one — what?" Bottsford mouthed.

"One million, crisp and cold!" Crane repeated. "What's more, unless we take up with him very shortly he proposes to do all in his power to push the craze, which he justly points out has assumed huge proportions. He means to start a magazine and circulate it throughout the country—*Healthy Hatlessness,* he's going to call it—and he intends to form little societies here and there for furthering the cult! If it's as successful elsewhere as here, it means that the hat business in America is dead!"

"But a million!" Bottsford cried. "Why, if we could raise it I wouldn't give it to him!"

"And if we were to appeal to hatters through the country to raise a fund, we'd simply be the laughing stock of the United States!" Felter muttered.

"Of course we would—and I'd see him hanged, anyway, before I'd even think of attempting it. Confound him!" Bottsford arose and stalked back and forth, his face flaming angrily. "I'll expose that cur! We'll all expose him! We'll have him written up and muck-raked and——"

"Oh, no, you won't," Crane said sadly. "This Blake pointed out the futility of that sort of thing. In the first place, no one knows or could prove any earthly connection between him and Van der Schuyden. If they both denied it, we've only this letter to show—and Blake could easily enough explain that by any one of a dozen kind of lies. There were no witnesses."

"But is it possible—is it even conceivable?" Bottsford fumed. "Is it thinkable that one—one blackguard is going to smash the millions we three alone have dropped into hats—not to mention the thousands of other people all over America?"

"It's possible, unless——" Crane's voice trailed away.

Save for Bottsford's heavy breathing, the room was mournfully still.

"If we——" Felter hesitated after a long pause.

There came upon the office door a timid tap. Crane stepped over and unlocked it, and the boy presented a card.

"Gentleman wants to see you on a very urgent matter," he explained. "Shall I send him in?"

Crane looked about uncertainly.

"Yes—yes—send him in. I don't know who the devil 'H. Peck' is," he explained. "We'll get rid of him in a hurry, anyway."

He had no more than ceased speaking when a dapper person of some thirty-five years appeared. He was trim from head to foot, as smart and well-groomed a being as fastidious eye might wish to see. More than all, however, he found a way to their hearts at once: he was wearing a new straw hat!

It appeared to them in the light of an omen.

"I had hoped to see you alone, Mr. Crane." He glanced at the other two and his face brightened. "Ah, yes, quite so! Mr. Felter and Mr. Bottsford! So much the better. I may sit down? Thank you! Cigarette?"

They shook their heads in some bewilderment at the human breeze. H. Peck propelled a cloud of more or less enjoyable smoke through the open window: he looked at the ceiling for an instant, then at the waiting trio.

"Hat business is in a very bad way!" he announced briefly.

"Very!" agreed Crane. "But you——"

"I've come to redeem it. What's it worth, gentlemen?"

"Look here, you!" Bottsford's eyes glared suspicion. "If you're another from that condemned Van der Schuyden, and——"

"No connection with any other firm or individual, I assure you," Peck pursued. "Furnish proofs later if you like. What's it worth?"

"Well—you—you shoot in here like a cyclone," Crane smiled, "and put a question that—that we can hardly answer."

"Answer it for you," said the visitor, with obliging briskness. "Would you invest three hundred thousand dollars, provided it returned doubled within three months, to see the hat business return to its old condition?"

"Would we!" Bottsford started up.

"Could we raise it, even for three months?" Crane asked.

"Easily." Felter, whose interest in the visitor had suddenly deepened, nodded confidently.

"Good!" Peck crossed his legs in the other direction. "Would you, when the job was all done, pay me twenty thousand dollars for my work?"

"Emphatically, if you succeeded."

"Good. Deal's closed. When can I have the first hundred thousand of the three? To-morrow morning?"

"Well—good gracious, man, I'm—I'm sure I don't know."

"And anyway," Bottsford interrupted, "what sort of fool trio do you think you're dealing with? Do you suppose that any man with brass enough can stalk in here and cart away a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Not at all."

The visitor flipped out a note-book, gold mounted, and a pen, also gold-mounted. Calmly as if ordering a sandwich, he jotted down the names of the city's five highest financial firms and passed them to Bottsford.

"Not connected with any of them just at present: they all know me, nevertheless," he remarked, with that rather disconcerting swiftness of speech. "If they O. K. me as a reliable and responsible person to be trusted with money, can I have the first hundred thousand in the morning?"

"It's a big matter," Felter, grave of expression, was standing erect now. "Nevertheless, if your people give you the name you claim, I'll guarantee that the money will be on hand—providing that you satisfy us as to what you mean to do."

The galvanized mystery arose and picked up his hat.

"It's simply an idea that occurred to me this morning—stopped off here, you know, just when it struck me, on the car. I need the twenty thousand—that's about all. I shall earn it."

"But how?"

Peck snapped his fingers impatiently.

"First corner the umbrella market," he said. "Then convince a city full of

idiots that they need hats. Once this thing's over, it won't come to life again!"

"And can you do it?"

"Sure thing!" The visitor bowed—an economical bow, which included all three at once. "Morning!"

"Well, *what* d'ye think of that!" Bottsford inquired dazedly.

"I think," Crane said slowly, rubbing his eyes, "that that—that person was sent here directly from heaven or—the other place!"

"And we'll have to wait to see which." Felter assented soberly.

It was as early as that evening that the papers began to pass out a new variety of items in connection with the fad. Several articles appeared, from several noted authorities, showing that the ordinary umbrella, quite as useless and as harmful as the hat, had also passed into disuse.

To be sure, the season had been phenomenally dry; but the day of the umbrella would be found to have passed. It was as well; the community were returning partly to the natural state; the elimination of the umbrella would prove another great forward step in the move.

Healthful rain, when it came, would further advance the great cause of open-air healthfulness and heartiness. The umbrella, once regarded as necessary, would slowly pass away, an unneeded curse!

They were good articles. They were written, apparently, from a heart full of good-will toward mankind. They were written by a master hand, too, and the trio had a strong suspicion that they emanated from one H. Peck.

The trio were quite right.

Following that, day after day for a week, came others. The same unhappy fate which had struck the hat business was now working over the umbrella trade.

Dull the season had been; now it was dead. The unhappy hatters, carrying umbrellas also, were selling the latter job lot by the carload or returning them to their manufacturers. The cigar stores, the department stores, the little stores, were following the example.

The umbrella was passing—and how the papers seemed to rejoice! It was hard on the industry; but when the great cause of health was concerned, what mattered a single line of trade?.

The three hat men saw little of Peck; they learned less when they did see him. His references were more than satisfactory. He turned up at Crane's office three times, and removed one hundred thousand dollars at each visit.

He would give no details, save to guarantee that every dollar was eminently safe. At the end, he would report.

Two weeks passed. The papers had been telling of men who traveled about and bought individual umbrellas from individual people. They were going to the Central and South American countries, where the wet season was preparing to open up. Well might they go! New York needed them not; she waited pantingly and hatlessly for the rain which would promote health even further.

At the end of the two weeks, the little collectors ceased to travel. There had been, although the papers failed to mention it, two hundred of them, and in their quiet way they had bought up every umbrella in the city which its owner would sell for a trifle—and under existing conditions the majority went for a trifle.

Then came the great day!

It was just about five when several dull explosions caused people to look upward. There, in the sky, were some four or five clouds of smoke! There was no apparent explanation of the phenomenon. Some hazarded the belief that the Fourth was being rushed; some laid it to Italian festivities of various sorts.

Whatever the cause, the effect was almost immediate. Raindrops, long unseen, began to trickle down upon New York!

They gathered force! They poured down in torrents! They drenched the streets and the home-going thousands—and for the first time the misguided New Yorker realized that rain-drops are unpleasant on a bare head!

They tried to buy umbrellas: there was not an umbrella to be had! Empty glass cases and stands confronted the would-be purchasers. The umbrella industry was far deader than the hat industry, for the last one had been returned or sold at a sacrifice!

Toward seven the matter became tiresome, and the act of standing in a door-

way, waiting for the drops to cease, grew unbearable. From one end of town to the other some three or four thousand men stepped grudgingly into hat stores and invested in hats!

After dark the rain stopped. The still-hatless laughed and went about blithely as usual.

But there is always a morning after. The worst of the following morning came between eight and nine o'clock, when traffic was the heaviest everywhere. More explosions were heard far above, and the rain descended in torrents again!

Men swore; men wondered why they hadn't looked up some sort of umbrella last night or rooted out any old hat that happened to be around. Men wondered just how they were going to get to business in the downpour. Men tied handkerchiefs over their heads and prowled about in the rain for hat-stores.

There was not an umbrella in one of them.

Some fifteen thousand men bought hats that morning!

* * * *

It was on the eighth day of this sort of thing that a jubilant gathering took place in Crane's office.

"He's a wonder! He's a wonder!" that gentleman chortled. "I'm going to tack on an extra five thousand out of my own pocket when he turns up!"

"And I!" Felter assented.

"And me!" Bottsford added. "It's been worth it!"

"Thirty-five thousand's almost too cheap!" Crane crowed. "And—here he is!"

H. Peck, dapper, calm, brisk as ever, flitted through the door and closed it behind him.

The trio advanced *en masse*. They slapped his back! They wrung his hand! They patted him and fairly crooned over him.

And when the demonstration had ceased, H. Peck posed calmly, leaning on his cane, and said merely:

"Satisfied, gentlemen?"

"Satisfied!" shouted Crane. "Man, you're the best——"

"Wait!" Crane held up a hand. "Check ready for me? All right. I'll report in full and skip—got another little job on hand."

He perched on the edge of a chair and his racing tongue recited as follows:

"First place, got the idea. Then came here and got the money. Then hired men to go around quietly and buy up every umbrella in sight. Went myself to the stores and bought most of them out for cash at a big discount—it's been a fearfully dry season, you know.

"As for the newspapers, I've a pull with most of them. Worked them to the limit, and sugared the way when I had to. You've noticed that they haven't commented much on the recent showers?

"Good! Well, I filled up a storage warehouse—part of it—with eighty-five per cent of the umbrellas in New York. Then hired three professional rainmakers and proceeded to drench people back to their senses. That's all. Check?"

Crane was writing it. Peck received it placidly.

"Thirty-five thousand? Bonus, eh? Thanks. All sold out in the hat line?"

"Man, there aren't a thousand hats left for sale in New York this morning!" Felter cried. "We've got every factory running overtime, and more coming in with every freight. But the umbrellas?"

"Here are all the papers in connection with that. You've got about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of umbrellas in the warehouse. They're worth about a million—and people have got to have 'em! Congratulate you, I'm sure. Well, that's all, I think. *Good* morning, gentlemen!"

He executed another bow and disappeared.

The trio sat back and gasped. Felter looked in bewilderment at the papers in his hand.

There were receipts for heaven only knew how many hundred thousand umbrellas, valued at every conceivable figure. There was an assignment in full of the whole lot, from H. Peck to himself. He stared at them uncomprehendingly until Crane's voice, almost solemn in its joy, aroused him:

"Gentlemen, it must have been a dream. We were struck by a bolt of demented lightning; we've been saved by a human electric shock; but—but the Hatless Horror is over!"

IN THE WAKE OF THE SIMITAR.*

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK,

Author of "An Innocent Outlaw," "The Gold Gleaners," "The Spur of Necessity," etc.

An unexpected inheritance which landed its recipient in a not particularly pretty kettle of very lively fish.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

WHEN the news reached Max Broderick that his Uncle Jasper had been obliged to quit town suddenly for the West and had left him the proprietorship of the Sharon *Weekly Simitar*, Max gave up his position on the Fargo *Plaindealer* and started for Sharon.

Arriving here, he finds his uncle's relation to the townspeople has been such that his nephew barely reaches the office alive. On looking over the books it seems that Uncle Jasper's chief occupation has been claim-jumping, with the aid of some one who figures under the pseudonym of "Paramore." He also discovers that his uncle's departure, which he made through a window, closely followed by a bullet, was connected with the death of one Cully. In Cully's violent taking-off Jasper had managed to implicate Lee Marvin, whose claim Cully had jumped. By the books, Cully had had dealings with Jasper, as also had Nathan Phillips, a real estate agent.

With the aid of Cy Larkin and Rose Marvin, Lee's sister, Max prepares his first edition of the *Simitar*. Proceedings are interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Pasco, the bad man of the town, who, having a grudge against Uncle Jasper, also wishes to take it out on Max.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNDOING OF MR. PASCO.

"YOU say your name is Pasco?" said Max tentatively, his black eyes traveling over the ungainly figure confronting him.

"You heard me!" growled the other.

"What particular business have you got her?" Max's voice was low, but every word was sharply distinct.

"I'm goin' to git right down to that," came Pasco's menacing assurance.

Dropping the butt of his rifle on the floor, he leaned over against the door-casing, his left hand resting carelessly upon a powder-horn that swung from his shoulder.

A sidewise glance through the doorway made him certain that the crowd was watching his every movement with breathless interest. In talking, he raised his voice so it would travel easily to the ears below.

"Your uncle," he said, in a deliberate attempt to be insulting, "was a robber!"

"Well?" queried Max. "What then?"

"This town hasn't got any use for him, an' he knows it."

"And I know it," returned Max. "Is that all?"

Pasco was plainly surprised that the nephew failed to take the uncle's part. Presuming on the young man's restraint he grew more insolent.

"It's the opinion of everybody in town that you're no better than your uncle. He slips away from here by the skin of his teeth, and along comes you to continue his business at the same old stand.

"Now, us reputable citizens ain't goin' to stand for any sech layout, not for a minute. You gotter hike. I been app'inted a committee o' one to show you the way to Carrin'ton, an' I'm goin' to conduct you personally to the town line and set you on the right trail."

"Oh, you are!" said Max. "When are you going to do all this, Mr. Pasco?"

"Right *now!*"

Over in one corner of the room, Cy was watching affairs with wide and apprehensive eyes. He looked for something to happen, but had much fear as to the outcome.

**This story began in the August issue of* THE ARGOSY, *which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents.*

"That is your business here, is it?" queried Max.

"You bet it is. Snap around and git your hat an' coat. I'll allow you that much time, but not a second more. I ain't a feller that's accustomed to havin' any one say 'No' to him."

"Then you might just as well begin to get accustomed to it, Pasco. I'm on my own premises, and I'm just a little bit particular as to the sort of people I have around me. The quicker you take yourself out of here the better I'll be pleased."

"Are you goin?" demanded Pasco.

"Certainly not—but you are. Clear out, I tell you."

Pasco reached forward with one hand, intending to grasp the young man by the collar. Max leaped nimbly back and evaded the hostile movement.

Enraged at his initial failure, Pasco attempted to raise his gun. At the same moment the mallet flew from Max's grasp, striking the bravo's arm with such force that the rifle dropped clattering to the floor.

In a twinkling Max followed up his advantage. His fist shot out and Pasco pitched through the doorway upon the platform at the head of the stairs.

While making a furious attempt to save himself, Pasco lost his footing and tumbled down the flight to the ground below. Besides his gun, he left behind him a buckskin bullet pouch, which had been shaken from one of his pockets during the brief clash.

Picking up the pouch, Max tossed it back into the room; then, possessing himself of the gun, he returned to the landing. The crowd was busy setting the chagrined and bewildered Pasco on his feet.

"I don't like this sort of work, gentlemen," called Max. "I came here to run a paper for respectable citizens and not to mix himself up in brawls with men like Pasco. But whenever I find it necessary to protect myself I think you will find that I can do so."

Lifting the gun to his shoulder, he emptied its contents into the air.

"There is Pasco's rifle," he went on, dropping the weapon over the railing. "I have his bullet pouch, so it will be safe to trust him with the gun. But let him have a care what he does in the future."

By that time Pasco had recovered his wits. He made no attempt to climb the stairs again, but satisfied himself with shaking his fist and vowing his undying enmity.

Max laughed at his threats, went back into the workroom and closed the door.

"There's not much to this Pasco after all, Cy," was his quiet comment.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Cy. "You done it, by jinks, if you didn't."

There was a wondering look in Larkin's faded eyes as he picked up the roller.

"Did Cully do it as well as that?" inquired Max, proceeding with his work.

But Cy didn't seem to hear. Under a sudden impulse he reached over the bed of the press and caught Max's hand.

"You'll do," he remarked. "A few samples like that and the town will come over to your side."

"I don't care to make friends in that way. What I want is to do the fair thing by everybody; then, if public sentiment comes my way, I'll be glad of it."

By noon the work connected with getting out the paper was finished. The edition was folded, the copies to be delivered from the Sharon post-office were addressed, and the out-of-town orders were wrapped and made ready for the mails.

Max had not failed to address one copy to the Fargo *Plaindealer*, or to mark a particularly bold "X" on the wrapper. He wanted Robinson to read his announcement and to know that he was at the helm.

Cy gathered the papers into a canvas bag and started off with them.

"What you goin' to do with that, Max?" he asked, halting to kick the bullet pouch out of his path.

"I'll keep it here until Pasco calls for it," laughed Max.

"I see him callin'!" muttered Cy. Going on to the door, he paused a moment to add: "If I was you, I'd move that office desk away from the window."

"Why?"

But Cy was gone without an explanation. In kicking the bag he had released some of the bullets from the pouch and they had rolled about the floor.

Max started to pick them up and replace them in the pouch when a curious circumstance claimed his attention. The leaden balls were bright, as though recently cast, and there was a peculiar zigzag mark across the surface of each one. Evidently they had been cast in a cracked mold.

Cy Larkin's last words had started a train of thought in Max's mind. The discovery of the mold-marks on the bullets lent a startling significance to the conclusion at which the young man had arrived.

Putting the bullet pouch aside, he went to the partition separating the sanctum from the workroom and examined the perforation which Cy had brought to his notice the day before. From the partition the bullet had ranged upward into the matched boards that formed the ceiling.

Bringing empty boxes from the hall, Max piled up a trestlework that enabled him to use the point of his knife on the particular board that had caught the bullet. This board was nailed to a rafter, and the leaden sphere had penetrated so deeply into the rafter that he was some time in recovering it.

When at last the missile dropped into his hands, although much battered by the obstacles encountered in its flight, he had no difficulty in discovering the zigzag mark. It was faint but unmistakable.

Max decided that he would move the desk.

CHAPTER VIII.

RIGHTING A WRONG.

On Sunday morning Max went to church. His grips had arrived by the mail-wagon the day before and he was enabled to make himself presentable for the occasion.

He was not slow to observe that the people he met showed symptoms of awakening respect and consideration. Just how much his manly announcement in the *Simitar,* or his vigorous treatment of Pasco, had to do with it, he was at a loss to know.

Probably one had as much to do with it as the other. He had outlined a conscientious policy and had proven that he was not lacking in the courage to enforce it.

Turning from the main street, Max became one of the straggling throng bound for the church. A few paces ahead of him was Rose Marvin, walking with a man in a top hat and a frock suit.

Miss Marvin seemed in better spirits than she had the last time Max had seen her. Catching sight of him she halted and smiled.

"Mr. Broderick, my friend, Mr. Phillips."

Max was glad to be presented to Mr. Phillips, and took in his hearty grasp the cold, limp hand the other stretched out to him. Mr. Phillips, however, held himself in haughty reserve, and was far from being amiable.

He was smooth-shaven, sharp featured, and keen eyed, and reminded Max of a stranded tragedian. The fact that he wore his hair rather long, and was "stagy" in voice and manner, further heightened the impression.

"Ah," said Mr. Phillips, "the successor to Mr. Jasper Broderick. I owe you a quarter, I believe. Allow me——"

One of his hands sought his trousers' pocket.

"I make it a point never to do business on Sunday, Mr. Phillips," said Max.

The lawyer's lip curled ever so slightly, and Max bowed to Miss Marvin and dropped behind to walk with Cy.

"Ain't he cute in them clothes?" chuckled Cy, who was himself laboring along in his "Sunday best." "It's the only plug-hat in Wells County. He went to Carrin'ton with Hank and daughter Rose yesterday."

"What was that for? Is he going to look after Lee Marvin's interests in that Cully shooting affair?"

"That's the idee, Max. Betwixt you and me and the gate post, the quickest way to land Lee in the penitentiary is by lettin' Phillips mix up in it."

"Doesn't he amount to much as a lawyer?"

"Not as anybody knows of. That ad about the lost steer is a sample of Nate Phillips. Always gettin' the cart in front of the horse. What Rose Marvin sees in him is too many for me." And Cy wagged his head disconsolately.

It was too many for Max, as well, although he did not so express himself.

Max's editorial had made a great hit with the minister. When the service was over, and the congregation filed out, the reverend gentleman squeezed Max's hand cordially.

"There was room for improvement over at the *Simitar* office," he whispered. "My dear young man, I like the way you begin, and you may count upon my active support. Hope we shall see you here often."

Apart from the encomiums of the inconsequental Cy, this was the first cheering word Max had received since reaching Sharon. He felt that he was making friends, and the future brightened.

The remainder of the day Max spent in his office, looking over files of the *Simitar*. There were many items about the claim-jumping, all cunningly worded to hide Uncle Jasper's culpability.

Max could readily understand how, when the mask had finally fallen and Uncle Jasper was found to be the mainspring of the despicable work, the wrath of the citizens had burst all restraint. Uncle Jasper had reaped as he had sown, and was fortunate to escape with his life.

Max had already moved the desk to the opposite wall of the sanctum, where he could still have light from the window but not be directly in front of it. He had also searched the pigeon-holes and drawers, but had failed to find anything of an incriminating nature.

Monday morning, bright and early, Miss Marvin presented herself to begin work. The hopeful mood of the day before was still in evidence and Max was glad to see it.

"Here is that mining stock you asked me to bring, Mr. Broderick," said she, pausing beside the desk on her way to the workroom.

"Thank you," rejoined Max, taking the folded certificates. "I am very sorry my uncle ever had that transaction with your father."

"We must let bygones be bygones," she said, with a half sigh. "What shall I do first?"

"The type from last week's issue will have to be distributed. While you are busy at that, I must settle into the editorial harness, I suppose, and grind out some copy. You are familiar with the office, Miss Marvin, and are better qualified to give instruction than receive it. Just go ahead as you did when my uncle was here."

"Very well," she answered, and passed out into the workroom.

Max examined the certificates. There were four, each representing twenty-five shares.

They were highly artistic, and bore in one corner a flaming red seal. To Max they formed an indictment of his uncle's business integrity and he thrust them into a pigeon-hole with a sad heart.

Then, after a little reflection, he wrote for a few minutes on a pad of paper, tore off the sheet, folded it, and laid it to one side. Presently callers began to drop in.

Mr. Minnick, a florid gentleman, small of stature but very broad, puffed up the stairs with a copy for a new ad. He owned the building whose top floor was given over to the printing plant, and had a bill for rent for the ensuing month, charges for the ad to be taken out of it.

Max had brought some ready money with him, with an eye to such contingencies, and settled the account straightway. Mr. Minnick was visibly pleased.

"Friday afternoon," he confided, "I was asked by some of the influential citizens to serve notice on you. I had the matter under advisement when the same citizens came to me and suggested that I let you stay for a while—until they could find out whether that editorial was moonshine or the real thing."

"I'll prove it's the real thing before I am done," answered Max.

"I believe you will," said Mr. Minnick, as he took his departure.

A man with one eye and a beery atmosphere insinuated himself into the sanctum after the storekeeper was gone. He introduced himself as Lige Bulger, owner of the only sample-room in Sharon.

"Got an ad," said he huskily, thrusting a scrap of dirty paper into Max's hand. "Want it to run by the year, and I'll pay in advance. How much'll it be?"

Maxed glanced at the copy.

"There's gambling at your place, isn't there, Mr. Bulger?" the young man inquired.

"There may be a game of penny ante now and then," said Mr. Bulger, with a sly wink. "Call around if you're fond of a little diversion."

"Diversion of that kind never appealed to me," replied Max. "I don't think I want your ad, Mr. Bulger."

He handed back the copy.

"What!" exclaimed the astounded saloon-keeper.

Max repeated his words.

"I said I intended to pay in advance," went on Bulger.

"I don't care about that."

"Jass always run an ad for me."

"Jass is out and his nephew is in," said Max shortly, whirling around to his desk. "The *Simitar's* policy has undergone a change."

"Goin' to run a Sunday-school paper, eh?" sneered Bulger, cramming his copy into his pocket and striding to the door. "If you try that in this country the sheriff'll have a sign on your door before you're many weeks older."

"I hope he will," was the serene response, "if I can't get along without advertising whisky mills and gambling resorts."

"Stop my paper!" cried the irate Bulger.

"Cheerfully," answered the unruffled Max, reaching for his subscription list.

"You can trim Pasco, and old man Marvin, but you can't trim *me!*" The door slammed and Bulger was gone.

Rose looked into the office, a strange expression on her fair face.

"I couldn't help but overhear," she said. "Shall I take out Bulger's ad?"

"If you please," answered Max. "It's the poorest use type can be put to; I'd rather have mine in the cases."

He went on with his scribbling. Possibly he would have been elated if he had seen the look those bright blue eyes gave him.

A man with one black eye and his red face plentifully covered with court-plaster slouched in. After introducing himself as Chet Martin, he aired a lengthy grievance that mainly concerned Jed Pasco.

The fact developed that Pasco was clever with the cards, that he used Bulger's place as a rendezvous for fleecing victims, that Martin was tricked, had resented it, and had been used roughly by Pasco. Max was glad he had refused Bulger's money.

Others called, some with suggestions and a few to pay up their back subscriptions. One man borrowed a quarter.

Between them all, Max found little time to grind out copy. When the noon whistle blew, Miss Marvin came through the office on her way home.

"Just a moment, Miss Marvin," called Max, picking up the paper he had written earlier in the day. "I have been conducting affairs, this morning, just as though I was sole proprietor of the *Simitar*."

"Why," she exclaimed, with a puzzled look, "I thought you were."

"I was," he smiled, "but I have just disposed of a half interest. Will you please look at this?"

He handed her the paper, and amazement deepened in her face as she read:

> In consideration of one hundred shares of Blackfoot Mining stock, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I herewith grant, sell, and convey unto Henry Marvin a one-half interest in all the appurtenances, stock, and Good Will of *The Sharon Weekly Simitar*.
>
> MAXFIELD BRODERICK.

The paper trembled in the girl's hand. Her blue eyes wandered from the written words to the young man's face.

"I presume your father would rather have a half interest in the paper than that stock, wouldn't he?" smiled Max.

"But the stock is worthless!" exclaimed Miss Marvin.

"That is why I am taking it."

"I can't allow you to do this," went on the girl, her cheeks flushing. "When my father accepted the stock in part payment for the paper, he knew that he ran a risk——"

"The risk, I think, was greater than he imagined," broke in Max gravely.

Drawing the journal out of the desk-drawer, he opened it at the first item.

"Please read that, Miss Marvin," he added, indicating the entry. "It was written by my uncle, nearly two years ago."

Miss Marvin took the book in her hands and read the item very carefully.

"From what Lee learned while he was in Butte," said she, returning the book to

Max, "we felt sure that Jasper Broderick knew the stock was worthless at the time he turned it over to my father in part payment for the paper. But we had no proof as we have—now."

"I can right this wrong," said Max, "and I hope you will allow me to do it."

"You are righting it at your own expense."

"Hardly. The *Simitar* came to me as a gift from my uncle, who had no moral right to present me with more than a half interest in it. I am sure you understand that I cannot profit by my uncle's chicanery."

"I will leave it to my father," said she. "After all, it is his affair and he must do as he thinks best."

"Is Mr. Phillips a notary public?"

"I believe so," she answered, with a quick look. "Why do you ask?"

"If your father will meet me at Mr. Phillips' office, directly after dinner, we will have the document acknowledged."

"Do not go to that trouble, Mr. Broderick. I will bring my father here, and he will talk with you. Speaking for myself," she added slowly, "I can only say that I appreciate your fairness—perhaps I should say your generosity."

"Say, rather, my desire to be just," he returned, as she left the room.

"A little sun is beginning to drift into this nest of dishonor," he thought, as he closed the desk and prepared to start for his boarding place. "I'm going to do the right thing here even if it means my financial ruin. The *Simitar's* new policy has been inaugurated, and I shall hew steadily to the line."

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVIDENCE AGAINST LEE.

WHEN Rose came back to the office at one o'clock her father accompanied her. It was necessary for the girl to support the bowed form up the stairs and into the room.

The hand of sorrow had fallen heavily on Henry Marvin. Max could hardly believe that three days had wrought such a change.

The spirit that had prompted Marvin to keep armed watch at the door leading to the printing office was completely broken. He could make any desperate attempt to retrieve his pecuniary fortunes, but the deadly coil in which his son had become involved was sapping the very marrow of his life.

Why was the girl so courageous and the father so miserably disheartened? It could not be that she entertained a hope that was not freely his.

"My father," said Rose simply, "has come to thank you for your kindness. He did not feel able to walk, and Cy Larkin brought us in his buckboard. When you are through with your talk, Mr. Broderick, please call me."

She went out into the workroom. As soon as they were left alone, Mr. Marvin lifted his head and held out his hand to Max.

"You have done what was honorable, Mr. Broderick," said Marvin, in a low tone, "and something that was entirely unexpected. I can hardly believe that you and Jasper Broderick are of the same blood."

"I don't like to think about that," replied Max. "My Uncle Jasper has caused his people a good deal of worry, but we all thought he had turned over a new leaf when he came to Sharon and embarked in the newspaper business.

"Like the rest of us, he has always been a printer, but a tramp printer. I suppose his notions of right and wrong were picked up during his wanderings."

"I am very sorry," said Marvin, after a brief silence, "that I was so beside myself as to take the stand I did when you first came to Sharon."

"That's all right, Mr. Marvin," returned Max hastily. "Now that I understand the matter, I fully appreciate your situation. You are willing that I should make the *amende honorable*, are you not?"

"I am willing to give up the stock and take back a half interest in the paper; not for myself, but for Rose. I have nothing, and I am well beyond middle-age and caught in a web of difficulties.

"The girl must be provided for, and your generous action opens the way. She is thoroughly capable, Mr. Broderick."

"I am certain of that," said Max, highly pleased, "and I am sure we can

go ahead and make the *Similar* a big success."

"I hope so. It is not necessary to call in Mr. Phillips and have that document witnessed. The matter is satisfactory to me just as it stands."

"Then we may consider it settled?"

"So far as Rose and I are concerned."

"Then, now that that is out of the way, I should like to talk with you about your son."

An expression of pain crossed Marvin's face.

"Everything is against Lee," he said in a broken voice. "If Cully should die——" He could not finish, but bowed his face in his hands.

Max drew his chair closer.

"Mr. Marvin," he went on, in a low voice, "chance threw something in my way Saturday that might possibly develop into a proof of your son's innocence."

Marvin lifted his head quickly.

"I don't wish to arouse false hopes," Max proceeded, "and so I will tell you no more, at present, about what I have discovered. It will help me, however, if you will recite the circumstances attending the shooting of Cully."

"Circumstantial evidence," answered Marvin sadly, "is all there is against Lee, but it is strong. Lee got back from Butte Tuesday, and in the afternoon of that day learned that his claim had been 'jumped' by Cully.

"A good many people in town heard him threaten Cully's life. About nine o'clock Tuesday night he took his rifle and horse and slipped away into the country.

"Wednesday morning Cully was brought to Sharon, dangerously wounded. Lee was in his own room at home, at the time, and his horse was in the barn. Neither Rose nor I heard him when he came back.

"He was terribly surprised at the news. I asked him pointblank if he had had anything to do with the shooting, and he indignantly protested his innocence.

"He admitted that he had made threats, in the heat of anger, and had started from town with the intention of driving Cully from his claim; but during his ride his lawless temper cooled. He went near enough to the shack on the claim to make sure the usurper was in possession, then quietly rode back home, put up his horse and went to bed.

"That is Lee's story, and no one but Rose and I appear to believe it. Lee had a motive, and every circumstance points to him.

"The boy, however, has always borne a good character, and I sincerely hoped that this fact would help him out of his trouble. Wednesday he went out to the claim and took possession; and Friday forenoon the sheriff called there and arrested him.

"The note you brought us, we have since learned from his own lips, he wrote in the shack, after the sheriff had handcuffed him and had refused his request to let him stop in Sharon for a final word with Rose and me."

"Let's see," mused Max, looking at a calendar on the office wall. "Tuesday night was June tenth." Again he faced around and addressed Marvin. "You have engaged Mr. Phillips to defend Lee?"

"Yes, although Lee is bitterly hostile to Phillips. I don't know why, but nevertheless that is the case. Out of deference to his sister's wishes, he has consented to retain Phillips as his counsel."

"Does Phillips hold out any hope?"

Marvin sunk his voice to a whisper and cast an apprehensive glance in the direction of the workroom. "Not to me, although he is doing his best to encourage Rose."

Max thought this a mistaken policy, although he did not say so. There was much the young man still wanted to learn, but he had not the heart to press the matter further with Marvin.

Calling Rose, he took Marvin's arm and helped him down the stairs to where Cy was waiting with his buckboard.

"You had better go home with your father, Miss Marvin," said Max. "I'd like to see you this afternoon some time, Cy," he added.

He paused for a few final words with Rose and her father, and then returned slowly to the office. The door had been left ajar when he went out a few minutes before, and just as he was on the point of stepping across the threshold he came to an astonished halt.

A visitor had entered during his absence, and had escaped attention by entering at the rear door and through the workroom. The visitor, at that moment, was making a hurried search through the drawers of Max's desk.

"If you will tell me what you want, Mr. Phillips," said Max dryly, "perhaps I can help you find it."

With a startled exclamation, Phillips whirled around and faced the young editor.

CHAPTER X.

ATTORNEY FOR DEFENDANT.

THE lawyer's haughty reserve was gone. After an embarrassed silence, he faltered:

"I—I was looking for an important document belonging to me which was in your uncle's possession at the time he—he left."

"There isn't anything of much importance in that desk," said Max, "but it would have been proper for you to ask me for the document rather than go hunting for it yourself. You came by the back door, didn't you?"

"I came by the most convenient way," answered Phillips, getting control of himself.

"Was it convenient because you saw me engaged in talking with Mr. Marvin, in front?"

"Young man," was the dignified response, "your allusions are a trifle obscure. Here is the quarter I owe you."

He drew the coin from his pocket as he spoke.

"Lay it on the desk," said Max, "and then sit down. I should like a few words with you."

"I'm pretty busy to-day——"

"The matter is of some importance, and I will not detain you long."

Phillips sat down.

"Just what is the legal situation with regard to Lee Marvin?" inquired Max. "I understand that you are his attorney."

"I do not know that I should discuss the topic with you," answered the lawyer stiffly.

"I desire merely such facts as the public is bound to learn, sooner or later. I do not think you will prejudice your case any by giving them to me. Did Colwell have a warrant for Lee Marvin's arrest?"

"Most certainly. He would not have dared to proceed as he did without it."

"Where was it made returnable?"

"Before a Sharon justice who went to Carrington to hold the examination."

"Your legal machinery, out here, seems to be rather complicated. One county uses the jail of another, makes warrants returnable in places other than that in which they were issued, and so on. How is this?"

"There is an arrangement with the other county. We have no jail here, as yet. The prosecutor thought it best to hold young Marvin's examination in Carrington on account of the excited state of public opinion in Sharon."

"When was Lee Marvin's examination held?"

"Saturday afternoon."

"With what result?"

"He was remanded to jail to await action by the Circuit Court."

"The evidence was strong against him?"

"Exceptionally."

"What is your own opinion?"

"I think we can save young Marvin on the ground of self-defense. But this is not for publication," Phillips added hastily.

"I understand that," said Max. "Lee Marvin, I am told, claims that he is innocent—that he had nothing to do with the shooting. How will you reconcile that with your line of defense?"

Phillips shrugged his shoulders.

"Young Marvin must tell the truth," said he.

"Then you really think——"

"I have told you already too much of what I think," said Phillips, rising. "Now that I have performed the errand that brought me here, I will leave."

"What was the errand?" asked Max suavely.

"Why," was the sharp retort, "to pay you for that ad I sent to the office by Larkin."

"I thought it was to secure an important document, concerning yourself, which happened to be in the possession of my uncle at the time of his somewhat hurried departure."

Phillips mumbled something and

strode to the door. There he paused to observe:

"If you are going to start in antagonizing some of the best people of this town, Broderick, you will find that the days of the *Sinnar* are numbered."

"So far," said Max, "I have antagonized only Mr. Bulger. Is he ranked among the best people?"

"I was not thinking of Bulger. I can see the finish of your paper, sir, if——"

"Not *my* paper," cut in Max; "I have a partner in the enterprise."

"Your Uncle Jasper?"

"No, Miss Marvin."

The lawyer stiffened in his tracks and stared blankly.

"You don't mean to say that Rose——"

He did not finish. The surprise in his face gave way to suspicion, and he turned abruptly and left.

"What Rose Marvin sees in him is too many for me." This comment by Cy Larkin recurred forcibly to Max as he seated himself at his desk.

What important document could it be that Phillips was looking for? The very fact that the lawyer was making a surreptitious search branded him as a trickster in Max's eyes.

Rose returned shortly. Max followed her into the workroom.

"Now that we are partners, Miss Marvin," said the young man, "I should like to learn your desires as to a division of the work."

"You have begun so well, Mr. Broderick," she answered, a tinge of color rising in her cheeks, "that I do not want to interfere with your plans in any way."

"You are familiar with Sharon; I, of course, am little more than a stranger. If you could do the local column——"

"I prefer to leave the editorial work entirely with you. Nothing happens in Sharon that Cy Larkin doesn't know. He is reliable, in a way, too. All you will have to do will be to edit his copy."

"Very well," said Max. "I want you to consider yourself free to make suggestions—your interests here give you that right."

"If I can think of anything that might prove of value, I shall not hesitate to tell you about it."

"Thank you." He returned to the office and found Cy Larkin awaiting him.

"Back ag'in," grinned Cy. "What do you want, Max?"

Max closed the workroom door carefully and stepped to the youth's side.

"Can I get you to take a ride with me to-night?" he inquired, *sotto voce*.

"Sure."

"Then have the buckboard ready about eight o'clock this evening," continued Max. "Call for me here and drive quietly up to the back door. If possible, don't show yourself on the main street."

Cy was thrown into a flutter forthwith.

"Bring your shotgun," added Max.

Cy's perturbation increased.

"We can't do no huntin' at night, Max," he protested.

"Yes, we can—the kind of hunting we're going to do."

"How far we goin'?"

"To Pasco's claim. Keep it to yourself, though."

"What you goin' to do at Pasco's?"

"You'll discover that later. I can depend on you, can I?"

"Clean from the drop o' the hat!" averred Cy.

He dearly loved a mystery, and here was one that appealed to him as no other mystery could. Besides, its solution embraced all the accessories of an exciting time, and Cy had much secret enjoyment over the prospect.

CHAPTER XI.

THE QUEST AT PASCO'S.

"No use goin'," muttered Cy, who, punctual to the minute, had drawn his rig to a halt at the rear of Minnick's store.

"Why not?" asked Max, climbing into the buckboard.

"Pasco is gamblin' at Bulger's place. If you want to get him, all you got to do is to step over there."

"I don't want to get him; at least, not in the way you mean. If Pasco is at Bulger's, it suits my purpose to a T. Had he been out at his claim, the mission we have embarked on could not have been accomplished."

Cy's expectations had been running high. They now sank to lowest ebb.

"Gee! I thought you was goin' out there to arrest Pasco, or somethin' like that."

"Why should I arrest him? The thought was farthest from my mind."

"Blamed if I can understand you, Max," said Cy.

"You will some time," Max laughed.

The buckboard had been wheeling rapidly through the outskirts of Sharon. Presently the twinkling lights faded away behind them.

"How is Cully to-night?" Max aroused himself to inquire.

In the character of boarder at the Larkin home Max could hardly help hearing more or less about the wounded man. But up to now he had been too busy with the *Simitar* to give much attention to Cully.

Recent events intensified his interest in the claim-jumper. As his sympathies warmed toward the unfortunate Lee Marvin, it was only natural that Cully should command an increased share of his attention.

"Doc Jenkins thinks he's some worse," said Cy. "Blood poisonin' has took holt. Looks to me as though Cully was gettin' ready to quit."

"Is he delirious?"

"He's out of his head, if that's what you mean. If he passes out o' the game things'll gloom up a considerable for Lee."

"Didn't any one in town ever think some one else might have done the shooting?"

"No one else had the same cause to shoot Cully that Lee did. And then, too, Cully thinks it was Lee that done it."

"Cully had his senses after he was brought to Sharon?"

"For a while. Whoever it was done it, stood outside in the dark and shot through the window, good deal like your Uncle Jasper was shot at."

"Cully said my uncle had hired him to jump Lee's claim, did he?"

"That's what. Lots o' folks think that Jass wasn't the only man who was puttin' up for this claim-jumpin'."

"Who else do they suspect?"

"Ain't never heard. Don't know as they suspicion anybody in partic'ler. It's jest an idee that's got into people's heads."

The tangle of disastrous events all grouped about the claim-jumping. Lee's trip to Butte had afforded Cully an opportunity. He had taken advantage of it and, as a result, Lee Marvin was in the Carrrington jail and Uncle Jasper had fled, never to return.

"How far is it to Pasco's, Cy?" queried Max.

"Six mile. The road's good and we'll get there by a little after nine."

They passed many settlers' shacks and great fields of growing grain—the "Number One Hard" so much sought after by Northwestern millers. At that time it was the country's one crop, and if shriveled by early frost or scorched by hot winds bankruptcy took the farmers by the throat.

The night was still, and moon and stars were bright. From all around came a chirp and croak of night voices. Max, undisturbed by the usually voluble Cy, dropped into a train of thought that occupied him until Pasco's shack loomed dimly into sight.

"That's the place, Max," volunteered Cy, pointing ahead. "Darned if I know what you wanted the shotgun for."

"It is just as well to be prepared for trouble even if you don't expect it," said Max.

Pasco's shack, like other structures of the kind, was small and built of the flimsiest material. Rough boards formed the roof and sides, the whole covered with tar-paper held in place with strips of lath.

There were two windows and a door. The door was locked, but one of the windows was minus a pane of glass, the opening closed with a roll of wearing apparel.

Sitting in the buckboard, Cy held the horse and watched Max's movements with curious eyes. He saw him try the door, then move to the window with the broken pane and pull out the roll of clothing.

Pushing his hand through the opening, Max unlocked the lower sash and raised it. After which he crawled inside.

"Use your ears, Cy," Max called in a low voice. "If you hear any one coming let me know on the instant."

"That's me," replied Cy.

Max struck a match and made a quick survey of the interior of the shack. A table, two chairs, a bunk, and a stove met his eyes.

On the table was a bottle with half a candle thrust into its mouth. He lighted the candle and threw the burned match out of the window.

He was an intruder, and it was part of his plan carefully to remove all traces of his intrusion. Candle in hand, he now gave more leisurely attention to the meager furnishings of the room.

A cheap clock stood upon a shelf near the bunk. A shadowy object lay near the clock. Investigation proved it to be a cob-pipe.

Replacing the pipe carefully in its original position, Max carried his search elsewhere. Suspended from the wall near the stove was a cracker box, masked with a dirty calico curtain.

This was found to be a primitive cupboard, containing a number of tin dishes. Max looked under the stove and, finally, under the bunk.

The first thing he drew into sight was a yard of old lead pipe, haggled at one end as though a piece had been chopped from it. The search was getting "warm."

Next he brought out an iron cup with a long handle and a flaring brim for pouring. Then came the object of his quest, a bullet mold.

Holding the mold close to the candle, he examined it and found a zigzag crack in the matrix.

"Eureka!" he murmured exultantly, and dropped the mold into his pocket. "Exhibit A," he added ominously as he replaced the rest of the plunder.

Then he set the candle on the table, extinguished it, and climbed back through the window. It was easy to reverse operations, lower the sash from the outside and arrange the roll of clothing.

"All right, Cy," said Max, mounting to his seat in the buckboard.

"Did you get what you wanted?" inquired Cy as they started off.

"I did."

"It couldn't have been very hefty, whatever it was," said Cy insinuatingly.

"Not very."

Cy was vexed.

"You're the blamedest feller!" he grumbled petulantly.

"How would you like to make five dollars, Cy?" asked Max.

"Wouldn't like it. If I got that much, all in a heap, like as not it 'u'd ruin me. Why?"

"If you will find out where Jed Pasco was on the night of Tuesday, June tenth, I'll give you a five."

"I'll have a try at it, anyhow," said Cy. "When do you want me to begin?"

"At once. And while you're at work, keep your own counsel. Don't let anybody find out what you're up to."

"Tryin' to find out who shot at Uncle Jasper, eh?" bubbled Cy. "You're cunnin', Max, but you ain't cunnin' enough to fool me. I'll help you—and I'll do my purtiest, too."

Cy was charmed with his own astuteness, and his good humor was most pronounced all the way back to town.

CHAPTER XII.

A BIG DISCOVERY.

SLOWLY but surely the *Similar* was regaining its lost prestige. Every day it made its peace with old friends and gained new ones.

The more Sharon learned of Max the brighter grew the contrast between his character and that of his Uncle Jasper. Some were slow to believe that the iniquity exemplified by Uncle Jasper was not bred in the Broderick bone, and hence, sooner or later, sure to manifest itself in the younger representative of the name.

Max's rebuff to Bulger won hearty commendation from the Rev. Mr. Hackberry and others; but the widest swath cut by the new management lay back of that transfer of a half interest to the Marvins. Such magnanimity, following on the heels of Max's announcement of the paper's future policy, was in the nature of corroborative detail and valued accordingly.

Callers were frequent, and they came not only from Sharon proper but from all over the county. The subscription list grew and Max had to increase his standing order with the news company for "patents."

A cheery letter arrived from Robinson. In it was no mention of Judge Kelly, no reference to troubles that had darkened the skies of Wells County journalism, simply a "More power to your elbow, Max; you are doing nobly; keep on."

Among the callers was Neb Colwell, sheriff of Wells. He brought congratulations, too, and a request that the Cully shooting affair be handled carefully.

It was a sad case, with Jass Broderick at the root of it. Sharon sentiment was all with Lee Marvin; but, as so often happened, the sentiment was blind and running amuck. It was up to Max to handle it with gloves.

"Did you examine the rifle Lee Marvin took with him to the claim on that fateful Tuesday night?" Max asked.

"Of course. It was a Winchester and the magazine was full with the exception of one empty shell. A fresh cartridge had not been 'pumped' into position."

"What do you think of Phillips?"

The sheriff seemed undecided whether to be frank or evasive. Finally he leaned forward with the words:

"Between the two of us, Phillips is a false alarm. He never yet took hold of anything important that he didn't make a bubble of it. He can't hurt this case, though. The end is a foregone conclusion."

Cy Larkin was gone from Sharon most of the time that week. He presented himself at the office Saturday morning, however, ready to do his part in running off the paper.

During Cy's absence, Rose had been looking after the locals. She was out then gathering items.

"What luck?" asked Max.

"You might as well drop purceedin's, Max," answered Cy dejectedly. "Pasco wasn't anywhere near this buildin' on the night of Tuesday, June tenth."

"Where was he?"

"He had supper at Larrimore's shack about six that night. Told Larrimore he was huntin' for Phillips' missin' steer."

"Where is Larrimore's, Cy?"

"Larrimore's hundred-and-sixty corners with Lee Marvin's."

Max went over to where his vest was hanging, took a five-dollar bill from the pocket and handed it to Cy.

"Ain't a-goin' to take it," demurred Cy. "Didn't find out what you wanted me to and you can't pay me."

"You found out just exactly what I wanted you to," and Max pushed the money into Cy's hand.

"See here," said Cy, "Uncle Jasper was shot at durin' the evenin' about seven or seven-thirty. Pasco was at Larrimore's till eight."

"Was it Tuesday evening, June tenth, that the bullet came into Uncle Jasper's office?"

"I don't recollect that, but I supposed you had figgered it out."

"I am glad to learn that Pasco was at Larrimore's," went on Max. "Your information, Cy, is worth all I paid for it."

Cy Larkin stared.

"Gosh!" he muttered dubiously, "you're a conundrum, Max."

In the afternoon, when the edition was in the mails, the forms washed, and the workroom put in some sort of order, Max had leisure to talk with Rose. He invited her into the front room and requested her to take a chair.

"Miss Marvin," said he, "for some time I have been wanting to talk with you about your brother. I don't want to inspire hopes that will ultimately prove without foundation, but I have learned something which you ought to know."

She was all attention on the instant.

"Has it anything to do with the shooting of Cully?" she asked.

"It has everything to do with that. They say that Lee had a motive, and that appears to be the principal link in the circumstantial evidence against him. But did you not think there might be some one else with a motive?"

She looked at him blankly.

"I have trusted everything to Mr. Phillips," she answered. "He has not mentioned anything about any one else having a motive. Will you explain, Mr. Broderick?"

Max was not surprised that Phillips should be so dense; but the prosecutor who had entered the complaint against Lee, and Colwell who had served the warrant—why had their wits been woolgathering at such a critical time?

Max had his facts arranged in logical sequence in his mind and began setting them forth one by one.

"As you perhaps are aware," he pursued, "Jed Pasco's claim was jumped by Oliver Meigs. Under intimidation, Meigs admitted to Pasco that my uncle was paying him for jumping the claim.

"Pasco, being a man of violent temper, although something of a coward, sought to revenge himself on my uncle, and met rough treatment at the hands of Cully. From what I have heard of Pasco, it is his nature to harbor resentment.

"In a spirit of braggadocio, he called at this office a week ago to-day. There was a clash. When it was over, Pasco was out of the way, but had left behind him a pouch of bullets. There is the pouch, Miss Marvin, and I wish you would look at the contents."

Max fished the pouch out of a drawer in his desk and handed it to her. She began taking the bullets out, one by one.

"Why," she exclaimed, her eyes brightening, "each of these bullets is marked!"

"Exactly!" smiled Max. "Pasco's gun is an old-fashioned muzzle-loader. Pasco casts his own bullets. Here is his bullet mold, the matrix cracked in a zig-zag line that corresponds with the mark on the bullets."

The girl breathed quickly. Vague ideas of the importance of the theory Max was unfolding were growing in her mind.

"Where did you get that mold, Mr. Broderick?" she asked.

"I went out to Pasco's, at night——"

"To Pasco's!"

"He was not there," explained Max briefly. "You know, do you not, that my uncle was shot at, one evening, while he sat at his desk in this office?"

"I was working here," answered Rose, her eyes seeking the partition. "The bullet broke a pane of glass, passed through the partition and buried itself in the workroom ceiling."

"I dug the bullet out," continued Max. "Here it is. What do you observe about it that is peculiar?"

He took the spent ball carefully from the drawer of the desk and dropped it into her trembling hand.

"Why," she returned after a moment, "it is marked like those in the pouch!"

"And what would you infer from that?"

"But one thing—that Jed Pasco was the man who made the attempt on your uncle's life."

"Which proves," said Max deliberately, "that he harbored deadly resentment against my uncle on account of the claim-jumping. Why should he not cherish the same resentment against Cully?"

Rose started to her feet, her hands groping for the back of the chair to steady herself.

"None of them thought of this!" she cried. "Oh, if they had, if they had, what might not my brother have been spared!"

Her voice faded into a choking sob and she reeled unsteadily. Max sprang to her and forced her gently back into the chair.

"Don't put too much reliance on my theory, Miss Marvin," he implored. "I may be wrong——"

"Something tells me that you are not," she answered with tearful vehemence, instinctively clasping one of his hands in both her own. "It is you who have thought of all this, have made it so plain. How shall I ever repay this debt that——"

"There," interrupted Max, gently withdrawing his hand, "you must control yourself, Miss Marvin. Although I have learned that Pasco was at Larrimore's shack, close to your brother's claim, up to eight o'clock in the evening of Tuesday, June tenth, yet the only way we can prove that he did the shooting is by a call on Dr. Jenkins.

"If he has the bullet that wounded Cully, and it is marked with the cracked mold——"

"A bullet from a Winchester shell is different from these!" exclaimed the girl. "The lead from a cartridge is elongated. If the doctor has a *round* bullet, it is strange he made no mention of the fact."

"Shall we lock the office and go over and see the doctor?" Max asked.

"Let us go first to Mr. Phillips," the girl answered.

"No," said Max firmly. "Neither Mr. Phillips, nor any one else, must know anything about this, for the present."

"Not even my father?" she begged.

"Not even your father. Were we to

arouse a false hope in his mind, the shattering of it might prove more than he could bear."

"Let us go to the doctor, then," Rose answered.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STARTLING SITUATION.

DR. JENKINS was a diamond in the rough. Gruff and uncompromising in his manner though he appeared on the surface, at heart he was known to be one of the most sympathetic and mildest of men.

His skill and ability were beyond dispute. From Devil's Lake, Carrington, and Jamestown he was often sent for when consultations with other medical men were deemed necessary and the matter of expense was of minor importance.

Why he hid his light in Sharon no one ever knew. But he was not the first man of parts to settle in the West, leaving the buried cause in the place from whence he came.

Miss Marvin and Max found him in his shabby little office, deep in the contents of a medical journal.

"Miss Marvin, your most obedient," he rumbled, laying aside the paper and floundering to his feet. "And the new editor," he added, his eyes twinkling under their shaggy brows. "Have you come here to tell me my ad is to be discontinued? You threw out Bulger's, and I've been expecting this blow."

"The *Simitar* is honored by an ad like yours, doctor," answered Max.

"Is that so? Well, I've been known to prescribe whisky in certain cases. I can't understand who the joint proprietors of the *Simitar* are paying me this visit."

"It is rather a peculiar errand that calls us here, doctor," went on Max, observing that Rose intended to let him do the talking. "Will you tell us how Cully is?"

"At present we are fighting a bad case of septicæmia, but, on the whole, chances are brighter for the patient's recovery." He turned to Rose with sudden gentleness. "I am doing the best I can for that brother of yours, Miss Marvin. Personally, I have no sympathy with this claim-jumper."

"If any one can save Mr. Cully, doctor," answered the girl, "I am sure that you can."

"Did you notice whether the bullet that wounded Cully," put in Max, "was an ordinary round bullet, or an elongated missile such as——"

"I did not notice that," cut in the doctor.

"Was there anything peculiar about the bullet?"

"I did not notice that, either."

"May I look at it?" inquired Max, perplexed.

"Hardly."

"Why not?" he demanded.

"For the reason that it is still in the patient."

Max dropped back in the chair. The doctor smiled sarcastically.

"That bullet," he proceeded, "entered at the left side, pierced the thoracic cavity, just missing the base of the left lung posterior to the heart, and lodged in the muscles of the spine, right side, and not far from the surface.

"From this," expanded Dr. Jenkins, "you will understand that the shock was terrific. To probe for the bullet was seen to be out of the question. If the bullet becomes encysted, and does no harm, it may be best to leave it where it is. We cannot take chances with the patient's life.

"This blood-poisoning, that now engages our attention, is directly caused by the bullet. Sorry I cannot gratify your morbid curiosity by exhibiting the missile. Was there anything else?"

"You mean," returned Max, "that it is impossible to get that bullet?"

"If the patient dies it will be easy enough. But we don't want the patient to die. Eh, Miss Marvin?"

If the patient died, and the bullet was not found to be marked with the defective mold, fate lowered darkly on Lee Marvin's fortunes. If he lived, and carried through life the proof that would convict another, Lee must still suffer, but in less degree.

The paradoxical situation was more than Rose could bear. She buried her face in her handkerchief and sobbed.

(To be continued.)

With the Blizzard Came Peace.

BY UNA HUDSON.

A story of winter in Wyoming that makes good hot weather reading.

MR. FERGUSON helped his wife into the wagon and took his place beside her. As he gathered up the lines he squinted at the sky and spoke to the girl standing in the doorway.

"If it snows," he said, "we'll maybe spend the night in town. Or would you be afraid to be left alone?"

"Afraid!" said Mollie Ferguson scornfully. "Why, what is there to be afraid of?"

Her uncle chuckled delightedly.

"I've always said," he declared, "it was a mistake your belonging to Nelson. You ought to have been my daughter. You belong to the West."

He turned up his coat collar, for the wind was blowing cuttingly, and drove off.

His wife turned in her seat to wave a mittened hand at Mollie, still watching from the doorway.

"It doesn't seem just right," she said, "to leave her all alone. Maybe we'd better stop and ask Dan Norton to look in on her. There are all the chickens to feed, you know, and the cow to see to."

"Mother," said Mr. Ferguson, "I'm surprised at you. Do you suppose Mollie would let Dan in if he showed up there? She gave him back his ring last week."

"But it's only a lovers' quarrel," Mrs. Ferguson insisted stoutly. "They just need to be brought together in some such way as that to make it up."

"Well," said Mr. Ferguson determinedly, "I am not going to be the one to bring them together. Think I want to get Mollie down on me and have her going back home in a huff?"

Mrs. Ferguson said no more, but when they drove past the Norton ranch she was secretly a little disappointed that Dan was nowhere in sight. She had meant to give him a hint.

Meanwhile Mollie, left alone, attended to the few household tasks that were still undone and attacked her aunt's mending basket.

It was past noon when she stuck her needle into the card of darning cotton, and rolled the last of her uncle's neatly mended socks into a tight little ball.

As she ate her solitary luncheon she saw a sudden flurry of snowflakes past the kitchen window. By mid afternoon the wind had risen to a gale and the air was white and thick with snow.

Mollie went to the door, and, opening it, looked out. Barn, outbuildings, and boundary fences were all hidden behind the curtain of the drifting white mass.

Mollie shivered and turned back into the warm kitchen. After a little she lighted the lamp, for the snowflakes, massing on the window panes, were rapidly shutting out what light yet remained of the short winter day.

The wind wailed about the house and whistled eerily down the chimney. Several times during the next hour Mollie told herself with quite unnecessary emphasis and repetition that she did not mind being alone, that there was nothing to be afraid of, and that she was not afraid of it.

But every noise made her start, and when there came a thundering knock at the door, she leaped from her chair with a half-suppressed scream.

While she was yet but half-way to the door it was pushed open to admit a figure white with snow from head to heel. A woolen-gloved hand cleared the snow from its eyes, and Dan Norton stood blinking at her.

"Oh!" Mollie cried. "Oh!"

She was angry and dismayed at the little rush of gladness that filled her heart at sight of him. She drew herself up, and for the saving of her pride froze him with a look.

"I thought——" she began coldly.

"I hope," Dan cut in in a tone that for iciness matched hers and some to spare, "I hope you don't think I came here on purpose. My horse fell against one of your fences and I saw the light

shining from your window. But I give you my word I didn't know where I was. I was lost."

"A likely story," Mollie sneered.

"It's true," Dan insisted. "There's not a landmark left. See for yourself."

He flung open the door, and Mollie looked out. It was as he said. Everywhere was snow and nothing but snow. The air was so thick with it that one could almost have cut it with a knife.

"A Wyoming blizzard," Dan explained grimly.

Mollie shivered. Never before had she seen anything like it. Objects ten feet away were quite invisible. Dan Norton's horse standing within reach of her hand was only an indistinct blur.

"It is rather a bad storm," Mollie admitted guardedly. Then she added sharply. "Why don't you put your poor horse in the stable? I should think you'd be ashamed to leave him there."

"I was merely waiting for your permission," Dan explained politely.

"Well, you have it now," Molly snapped.

Dan stepped out and seized the horse's bridle. Mollie watched until the white blanket of snow had closed about them. Then she shut the door and replenished the fire.

Presently she went to the window. Dan was certainly staying a most unconscionable time. And the storm was a terrible one.

Perhaps he had not reached the barn at all. Mollie remembered a story her uncle had told her of a man lost in a blizzard while going from his house to his stable—a man who, when search could be made, was found frozen to death half a mile away in an opposite direction.

Or perhaps even — Dan's pride matched Mollie's own, and she had not asked him to stay—he had essayed to return to his own ranch. Mollie was not weatherwise, but such an attempt, she very well knew, could result only in one way.

Her face went white and she felt that she could bear the suspense no longer. She snatched up a shawl, and, wrapping it about her, stepped out into the storm.

"Dan!" she called. "O—oh, Dan!"

The wind tore at her shawl and snatched the words from her lips. The snow blinded her, but as best she could she picked up her skirts and floundered bravely on.

"Dan!" she shouted again. "Dan!"

And then suddenly a hand shot from out the storm and seized hers. It was icy cold, and Mollie shrieked in terror. But the voice that came to her on the wings of the tempest was human and reassuring.

"Good Lord, Mollie," it said, "are you crazy? Whatever are you doing out here?"

Mollie swallowed a sob of pure joy.

"Oh, Dan!" she said, and clung to him.

"You—you stayed so long," she explained weakly, "I was coming to hunt you up."

Dan patted her hands and piloted her safely back to the house. Then, manlike, he spoiled it all. For, as she faced him in the lighted room, Mollie saw the light of triumph in his eyes.

Dan was alive and safe and not at all repentant. He had not apologized, and Mollie had sworn that he should. She clutched at the scattered remnants of her pride and drew herself up coldly.

"It was purely on my uncle's account," she explained with great deliberation, "that I went out to look for you. It—it would be so unpleasant for him to come home and find you frozen to death in his front yard."

"I assure you," returned Dan with icy politeness, "I had no intention of harrowing up his feelings to that extent. I was getting down some feed for my horse and your cow and the chickens. One should not," he added virtuously, "forget the poor dumb brutes."

It was neatly done. Mollie found herself placed in the uncomfortable position of one who has worried unnecessarily. Moreover, she had made more or less of a spectacle of herself, and she—crowning humiliation—had not given a thought to the "poor dumb brutes."

She knew it, and Dan knew it. She felt that she stood convicted of cruelty to animals.

She sat down by the stove and drew the mending basket toward her with a jerk. Her lips shut in a tight line.

Dan divested himself of his snowy outer garments and took a chair opposite

hers. He picked up a paper and industriously read it—upside down.

Mollie unrolled the socks and redarned several pairs. Then she announced in a strictly impersonal manner that it was time to get supper.

She had felt that she would hate Dan if he did not offer to help her. Now, illogical though it was, and possibly childish, she was quite sure she hated him because he *did*.

He laid the cloth—awry. Mollie straightened it with a jerk. He brought dishes from the china closet, and Mollie promptly took them back and substituted others. Beyond an occasional snappy monosyllable she refused to talk to him.

But it was a good supper to which they finally sat down, for Mollie could cook, and she was minded to show Dan what he had missed.

He sighed as he broke open a light and flaky biscuit and spread it with golden orange marmalade. Dan had a weakness for hot biscuits and orange marmalade.

"Once," he said, "I thought to sit at the head of my own table and eat just such biscuits as these."

Mollie glared at him.

"I thought I had made it perfectly clear to you——" she began.

"That nothing on earth could induce you to marry me?" Dan finished cheerfully. "You have. And I'm not asking you to do it either. But I reckon a man can talk of what he once thought he was going to have, can't he?"

Mollie could think of no reasonable objection to oppose to this, so Dan continued to talk. When supper was over she was in such a state of exasperation that it would have been a relief to hurl the china at his head.

And the worst of it was that he left her no peg on which to hang even so much as the shred of a complaint.

She washed up the supper dishes with his assistance—she would greatly have preferred to do it without—and bade him a curt good night.

In her room a tiny drift of snow lay along the floor. It had sifted in where the window frame did not fit quite tightly. The Frost King had overlaid her window with a delicate tracery of white so that she could not see out into the night.

But the house shook in the wind's grasp, and she knew that the storm was raging with ever-increasing fury.

She shivered when she cuddled into bed, but less from the icy touch of the cold sheets than from a realization of what it would have meant to be alone on such a night. As it was, the wind might roar and the storm might rage, but deep down in her heart, all unadmitted though it was, was a feeling of peace and security.

Dan, big and strong and resourceful and masculine, was below-stairs.

II.

Mollie woke with a start the next morning, and the instinctive feeling that she had overslept. She groped beneath her pillow for her watch, and found to her dismay that it was eight o'clock. And she had planned to rise at six!

She had thought to grope her way down the stairs in the chill dark of the wintry morning to light the kitchen fire and lay the breakfast things—all while Dan was yet asleep. It would be well to show that young man how little she really needed him.

Now the situation was reversed, for it was Dan who had risen before daylight and done all those things.

The odor of coffee came to Mollie as she went down the stairs, and as she opened the kitchen door Dan turned from the stove with a plate of toast in his hand. He lifted bacon and eggs from the skillet and blandly invited her to breakfast.

So matter-of-fact and businesslike was his manner that Mollie at first was divided between anger and amusement. But when he remarked complacently, "Won't I make a good husband for some fortunate girl?" anger got the upper hand and Mollie glared at him.

"But I thought——" she began recklessly.

"That because you'd decided not to have me I'd stay unmarried," Dan finished for her. "Well, I thought that, too, just at first. But there're lots of girls in the world, and I dare say that if I look around a bit I'll find somebody who'll do quite as well as you would."

Mollie gasped and her hand shook as she poured the coffee.

"You know," supplemented Dan,

"you said yourself that we were unsuited to each other, and that I could probably find another girl who would make me a much better wife than you possibly could. I guess you were right."

"Y-es," Mollie murmured uncertainly.

It was quite true that she had said all those things, but just the same she was disappointed in Dan. She had not thought him so fickle. And he was so abominably cheerful, and had such a tremendous appetite for his breakfast.

Mollie, not at all pleased, wondered at him.

"It's just as well," said Dan, taking the last slice of toast, after a polite inquiry as to whether or not Mollie wanted it, "it's just as well to have that matter" (Mollie knew that he referred to their late engagement) "settled and done with. Now we know where we are. And I reckon that we can be good friends for the time that we'll be shut up here together."

"Oh, yes," Mollie agreed faintly. And then she asked, "Do you think it will be for very long?"

"Rather," said Dan. "It'll be a three days' storm, our big ones always are. And then there'll be mountains of snow to be shoveled through before anybody can get to us. We're liable to be here the best part of a week."

Mollie sighed and began to clear away the breakfast dishes.

"I guess," said Dan. "I'd best make a try for the stable. The animals ought to be looked after."

He walked to the window and stood looking out at the blinding, driving snow. After a moment's hesitation Mollie joined him.

"The storm is perfectly dreadful," she shivered. "Do you think it quite safe to venture out?"

Dan smiled to himself, for, in spite of her, Mollie's tone conveyed rather more than the calm, friendly solicitude she had intended.

"If I find it isn't safe," said Dan, "I can always come back, you know."

"If you don't get lost in the snow," Molly quavered.

Dan's inward smile reached the corners of his mouth, but was promptly suppressed.

"Tell you what," he said, "we'll hunt up a clothes-line and tie one end about my waist and hitch the other to the table leg. Then there'll be no trouble about my getting back."

The clothes-line was brought, and Dan at one end of it plunged into the storm. The snow drove into the kitchen and the wind whipped the cover from the table, but Mollie would not close the door.

The rope uncoiled with astonishing rapidity, then abruptly ceased, and Dan was back. He was panting and breathless from his struggle with the wind and snow, and the clothes-line was wrapped about him serpent-wise.

"I couldn't make it," he said. "The wind caught me and whirled me about like a top. Good Lord, but it's awful! And think of the cattle on the range, and the herders!"

But Molly had thought for but one man.

"You won't try it again?" she begged wistfully.

"Not I," said Dan. "The cow and the horse will just have to get along as best they can till the storm is over. And anyway I gave them an extra big feed last night."

All day the storm held them prisoners. Fortunately the wood-shed was built to open off the kitchen, so there was no lack of fuel, and the cellar held provisions that would have lasted through a siege. So they were compelled to undergo no bodily discomfort.

But the situation to Mollie was barely tolerable.

True, Dan was pursuing the course she had advised and even urged upon him, but she did not like it so well as she had thought she would. In fact, she did not like it at all. She would have been glad even to quarrel with him, for a quarrel presupposes a certain degree of intimacy, but you cannot quarrel with a cheerful casual acquaintance.

And that was what Dan seemed suddenly to have become.

Mollie felt very blue and desolate and forlorn when she went to bed that night. Her pillow was wet with tears, and her last waking thought was a melancholy one of the unknown but greatly to be envied girl whom Dan was eventually to marry in her stead.

Poor Mollie sobbed outright, and tried to frame a heroic wish for their future happiness, but only succeeded in dropping off to sleep with her heart full of envy of Mrs. Dan Norton that was to be.

III.

As Dan had predicted, it was a three days' storm. The fourth day dawned on a strange white world, guiltless of landmark, still and eerie.

Mollie, looking at the glittering white waste, shuddered.

"It is," she said, "as though all the rest of the world were buried and we were the only things left alive."

Dan, with trousers tucked into his boots, was already making the snow fly in a vigorous effort to reach the barn.

"Come on and help," he called to Mollie.

His tone held a hint of return to their old gay camaraderie. Mollie brightened instantly.

"I will," she called back. "When I was little I used to love to play in the snow."

Their task was a hard one, for not only was the snow deep on the level, but it was packed and drifted against the barn, so that a small mountain of it had to be removed before the door could be wrenched open.

When that was accomplished Dan stood still and whistled. Mollie coming up behind him saw that inside the barn another mountain of snow confronted them.

Through every crack and crevice it had sifted in and filled the place—a tight-packed mass.

"Oh," cried Molly, "the poor horse and cow!"

But Dan uttered an amazed, "Great Scott!"

For, far above his head on a hillock of snow, stood cow and horse with their backs against the stable roof. As the snow drifted in they had tramped it down and risen gradually until they could rise no further.

They seemed mildly surprised at the situation in which they found themselves, but not particularly uncomfortable.

Mollie laughed until she cried.

"If the storm had lasted another day," she said, "where would they have been?"

"Through the roof, I reckon," answered Dan.

He began to shovel snow, but it was well toward evening when he succeeded in getting the animals to the ground. They ate greedily, but seemed none the worse for their adventure. The chickens, too, were found to be alive, and save for a few frosted feet, in fairly good condition.

It was two days later when Mr. Ferguson broke through the drifts and returned to his ranch. His wife had insisted upon coming with him, for snow-bound Molly, she feared, might stand in need of her care.

They stared open-mouthed at the cleared paths about the ranch—unmistakable evidence that all was well. But when Dan Norton, with Mollie at his side, greeted them from the doorway they understood.

"Hullo," said Mr. Ferguson, as they hurried inside, "where'd you drop from?"

They told him. He thrust his hands deep in his trousers' pockets, looked at them with twinkling eyes, and whistled.

"'Most a week shut up alone together," he commented. "Isn't it," he demanded pointedly, "about time to send for the preacher?"

It had not before occurred to either Mollie or Dan to consider outraged proprieties, but now Mollie blushed for their disregard of the conventions.

"Mollie knows," said Dan, with quiet but convincing loyalty, "that I'm ready to send for the preacher whenever she gives the word."

This from Dan who had accepted his dismissal as final! From Dan who was to marry the other girl! Mollie determined to punish him.

"Oh, well," she began carelessly, "as a concession to Mrs. Grundy——"

Dan looked at her with a slow smile.

"Little girl," he said, "that won't go. Out here we don't recognize Mrs. Grundy. If you take me, it must be because——"

Then Mollie realized, as she had not before, that in spite of his teasing and his bluff about the other girl, it was owing solely to Dan's delicacy and consid-

eration that she had felt not one whit of the awkwardness of her position. For that surely he deserved reward.

The last remnant of her pride vanished and her heart spoke for her and for him.

"Because," she softly finished for him, "I love you with all my heart."

Then, with no thought of her uncle and aunt looking on she hid her blushing face against his breast.

CAUGHT.*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "No Way Out" and "Who and Why?"

The romance of a postal clerk, showing how it came to enmesh him in the coils of circumstantial evidence.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

BEING much in love with Marjorie Morgan, Tom Sutton, a clerk in a New York post-office, makes a serious mistake in cashing some money-orders made payable in another city, presented by her for her employer, Paul Dupree. Dupree refuses to surrender the money temporarily, and Sutton fears to lose his position, although Marjorie assures him that she will try to procure the money from Dupree. Some hours later a wallet, bearing the initials "P. D.," is sent to Sutton, containing the necessary amount to make up the deficit.

The following morning the newspapers are filled with the story of Dupree's murder. Marjorie is prostrated by the shock, and on his way to see her Sutton meets with an accident and is arrested. The wallet is discovered on his person and he is accused of the murder.

Sutton refuses any information as to how he obtained the wallet, but Postmaster Gray discovers that Tom supposes Marjorie sent it to him. Gray lays the case before Jeremiah Packard, a lawyer, and together they seek an interview with Marjorie, only to find that she and her mother have made their departure in the care of a strange man.

Saunders, the bookkeeper, having failed to force Marjorie into marrying him, reports to Inspector O'Connor the conversation between Marjorie and Tom in Dupree's office.

The Rev. Dr. Howard also furnishes the evidence that a messenger-boy delivered the wallet to Sutton, saying that it had come from Miss Morgan.

On the strength of these incriminating facts, a warrant is issued for her arrest.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S EXPERIENCE.

"HELLO, Jeremiah!" said Postmaster Gray as he entered Mr. Packard's law office. "Have you seen our client yet?"

"Yes, postmaster," replied the young lawyer. "I went to see him this morning and had a long talk with him."

"I suppose he was glad to hear that you were going to take up his case."

"Yes, he said he'll be glad to have me defend him, but only on one condition."

"What's that?"

"That I won't try to implicate Miss Morgan in any way. If I do, he says he'll dispense with my services and sign a confession that he killed Dupree."

"Phew! The young fool! How, then, does he expect us to help him?"

"To tell the truth, he doesn't expect it. He seems prepared for the worst. I started to question him about the girl, but as soon as he saw what I was after he became furious and told me to drop the subject."

"The young idiot! Did you tell him that the girl had run away?"

"I did."

"What did he say to that?"

"I saw him wince; but he answered:

** This story began in the July issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The two back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 20 cents.*

'So much the better. I hope she stays away.'"

"Well, what are you going to do, Jeremiah?"

"I haven't quite made up my mind yet. I think I'll accept his terms."

"What! Defend him without implicating the girl? You must be crazy."

"No, I'm not. There was nothing said about your part in the proceedings. I can go ahead defending him in court, and you go ahead gathering evidence against Miss Morgan. Then you can put that evidence into the hands of the police and let them do the rest. That'll be keeping my word to Tom, and, at the same time, we'll get the desired results," finished Packard.

"You're a real lawyer, Jeremiah," said the postmaster admiringly. "We'll have to proceed carefully. If that young fool gets wind of the fact that the girl is under suspicion he'll sign that confession without doubt."

The lawyer was about to speak when the door opened and a dapper-looking young man entered.

"Ah!" thought the lawyer, "Another client, perhaps," and he assumed his most professional air.

"Which of you two gentlemen is Mr. Packard, please?" asked the young man.

"Ah!" concluded Jeremiah, "it *is* a client.

"I'm Mr. Packard, sir. What can I do for you?" he said aloud.

"I'm from the *Daily Mirror,* Mr. Packard," went on the young man. "The city editor sent me up to interview you. I understand that Sutton has retained you as his counsel in this Dupree murder case."

"He has," replied Packard with dignity. "I don't know that I have anything to say, however. I'm not prepared to make any statement about the case as yet, except that my client is innocent and I hope to get him free."

"I understand that you were once in the postal service yourself, Mr. Packard," continued the reporter.

"I was."

"And that you worked side by side with the accused man."

"I did."

"And that you are taking up this case merely as a matter of friendship."

"Correct!"

"That's very interesting, Mr. Packard. Will you tell the *Mirror* a little about your career?"

"Oh, I'd rather not speak about myself," said Packard, blushing modestly.

"What is it you want to know, young man?" broke in the postmaster. "My name is Gray; Postmaster Gray of Station XY, where Sutton was employed. I can tell you all about Sutton, and also about this modest young man."

"Good," said the reporter, and proceeded to extract from the willing postmaster a few biographical details about the lawyer.

"And what do you think of this young man Sutton, Mr. Gray?" inquired the reporter. "Do you think he murdered Mr. Dupree?"

"I certainly do not," answered the postmaster emphatically. "I think he is as innocent as you or I," and he proceeded to tell what a fine young man he knew Tom Sutton to be.

All of which made interesting reading for the *Daily Mirror.*

"If it is agreeable to you, gentlemen," said the reporter, "I would like to have your pictures. The city editor asked me to get a picture of Mr. Packard, and I am sure he would like to get one of Mr. Gray also."

"I'd be glad to accommodate you," laughed the lawyer; "but unfortunately I haven't got a single photograph in my possession."

"Nor I either," added the postmaster.

"Would you mind if I sent a photographer up here to snap you both?" asked the reporter.

"All right, send him along," said Packard. "We can stand it if his camera can."

The reporter departed to call up his office on the telephone. An hour later a young man arrived, carrying a formidable-looking camera.

"My name is McKnight, gentlemen —McKnight of the *Daily Mirror,*" he announced. "With your kind permission I shall now proceed to take your photographs."

"All right, go ahead," said Packard. "I warn you beforehand, though, that we're not answerable for damage done to your camera."

"I'll take a chance on that," rejoined the photographer, grinning, and he proceeded to focus the instrument.

"All ready, gentlemen," he said presently. "Stay as you are for one second. That's very good."

He pressed a bulb. There was an answering click. "Thank you," he added. "That will do very nicely. I've taken the two of you together."

"It must be interesting work, being a newspaper photographer," remarked Packard. "I suppose you have many thrilling experiences?"

"Oh, yes, we have our thrills, all right," said McKnight.

"Many strange adventures, too?" suggested Mr. Gray.

"Oh, yes. Come to think of it, I had one the other day which ought to prove of special interest to you people."

"Of special interest to us? Why?" asked Packard.

"Because it concerns Dupree. The day before he was murdered I was hired by him to take a picture. He paid me one hundred dollars for the snapshot, too."

"You don't tell me!" exclaimed Packard with great interest. "A snapshot of what, my friend?"

"A snapshot of a man."

"Humph! That sounds interesting. Tell me all about it, will you, please?" said the lawyer.

"I don't know much about it myself," rejoined McKnight, lighting a cigarette. "I can't dope it out what the old boy wanted that picture for, badly enough to pay me one hundred dollars for it. At the time I thought he had bats in his garret."

"Tell us all you know, please," said the lawyer eagerly.

"Well, you see it was like this. There had been an accident on lower Broadway. A trolley-car had collided with an automobile. I happened to be passing at the time on my way from an assignment. I thought it would be a good scheme to stop and get a picture of the automobile wreck.

"I got my pictures and was leaving, shoving my way through the crowd, when a man on the outskirts stopped me.

"'You're a photographer, ain't you?' he asked me. 'What do you think I'm carrying in my hand—a grand piano?' I replied, pointing to my camera. 'Do you want to earn fifty dollars?' says he. 'It all depends on what's to be done to earn it,' I answered cautiously.

"Then he points to a tall guy with close-cropped, gray hair, walking on the other side of Broadway. He didn't have any hat and he was hurrying along like mad.

"'Get a picture of him and I'll give you fifty,' says the man, and he put a card in my hand which read 'Paul Dupree, Brixton Building.'

"'Call around at my office to-morrow morning with the picture,' says he, 'and the money is yours.'

"That was good enough for me, so I ran across Broadway like a race-horse and pretty soon I caught up with the hatless man.

"He was a queer-looking chap. He looked like a dago or a Frenchman. His face seemed villainous enough for the rogues' gallery and he had a small V-shaped scar on his forehead. His gray hair was straight and bristly, cropped quite close to his head, which was bald at the very top. As I came alongside of him, I raised my camera, intending to take a flying snapshot.

"He saw what I was up to, however, and put both his hands over his face, at the same time muttering something that sounded like a swear word, in dago or French.

"I kept alongside of him, both of us walking rapidly.

"'He can't keep his hands to his face all the time,' I told myself. 'As soon as he drops them I'll press the bulb. I'm not going to lose that fifty dollars because of a dago's excessive modesty.'

"Well, as luck would have it, just then an empty hansom comes along, and, uttering an exclamation that sounded like the squeal of a startled pig, the man without a hat jumped into the cab. I heard him tell the cabby, in English, to drive straight ahead as quickly as possible."

"I suppose you lost him then," remarked Packard, with a sigh of disappointment.

"I did, like fun. I was just going to jump on the back of that cab and hang on until the end of the journey—that's

the way I got a society woman's picture once—when suddenly I saw another empty cab coming along and I hailed the driver.

"'This is a private cab,' says he. 'Never mind,' I answered. 'I'm not particular. A private cab is good enough for me. Be a good fellow and follow that cab in front and I'll give you two dollars.'

"'All right,' says he, 'jump in;' and I did. We followed that other cab clean down to the Battery, keeping far enough behind so as not to be noticed.

"At the Battery the other cab stopped, and the man without a hat got out. There was a smile on his face. He evidently thought he had given me the slip in fine shape.

"I saw him pay the cabman, and then he walked toward a hat-store, evidently with the intention of buying a hat.

"Before he could enter the store, however, I had got close enough to him to get a good profile view. I focused very quickly, and then I pressed the bulb.

"He happened to see me as I was taking the picture, and you just ought to have seen his face. I never saw such terror and rage in any man before.

"He came running toward me with his fists clenched, and, as he came on, I just leveled the camera at him again and coolly and calmly took a good front view of him. That made two pictures.

"'How dare you?' he cried in English, but with a strong foreign accent. 'Give me that picture or I will make for you great trouble.'

"'Not much,' said I. 'I get fifty dollars for taking this picture, my friend.'

"'I'll give you one hundred dollars for not taking him,' said the man eagerly.

"I thought hard for a minute. It was just double the amount Dupree had offered me; but then I like to treat people square, and I had made a bargain with Dupree first.

"'No,' said I, 'nothing doing, my dago friend. I promised to get your picture, and I'm going to keep my promise.'

"With that he utters a dago cry of rage and suddenly leaps at my camera.

"It isn't the first time I've had an expensive camera smashed by an angry victim, and I saw in a second what he was up to.

"I was too quick for him. Before he could grab my camera I shot out my left fist and caught him under the chin. He went down and I beat it before a crowd could gather.

"The next morning I took the two pictures, the profile and the front view, around to Mr. Dupree at the Brixton Building.

"He seemed very glad to see me.

"'Did you get the picture?' he asked eagerly.

"'Yes,' said I. 'You really owe me a hundred dollars. That's what the other guy offered me not to snap him.'

"He took the pictures in his hand and looked at them with great satisfaction. Then, to my surprise, he took out a hundred-dollar-bill and handed it to me. 'I'll pay you a hundred for these,' says he, 'on condition that you don't breathe a word to anybody about this little transaction.'

"That's all I know about the matter. That very morning, as you know, about two hours after I had left, the old fellow was murdered."

"What an extraordinary incident," exclaimed Postmaster Gray. "What does it mean, Packard?"

"Mean!" exclaimed the lawyer excitedly. "It means that we've got to work night and day to find the man with the close-cropped, gray hair."

CHAPTER X.

A NEW THEORY.

In a cell in the Tombs sat Tom Sutton, in a very dejected frame of mind.

He had been transferred to the Tombs from the prison at police headquarters, to await the verdict of the coroner's jury.

That that verdict would pronounce him guilty of the murder of Paul Dupree, he had not the slightest doubt.

This was not the only reason he was melancholy, however. It must not be forgotten that Tom was in love.

Now there isn't a more propitious place in all the world for the ripening of a love-affair than a prison-cell.

Tom sat in his cell and brooded and brooded. Half the time his thoughts

were of himself and his wretched plight, and the other half they were of himself and Marjorie Morgan.

Who was this girl with whom he had fallen in love, and for whose sake he was so resolutely holding his tongue about that wallet?

She was almost a stranger to him. He knew little more about her than that her name was Marjorie Morgan and that she had a pretty face and a good one.

For all he knew, she was not worth a passing thought. Some of the wickedest women the world has ever known possessed faces that were innocent and good.

For all he knew, she had really murdered her employer and stolen his wallet from him, and a woman who could murder and steal must be thoroughly bad at heart. And it was to save such a woman that he was placing the noose around his own neck!

Thus the unfortunate prisoner brooded and brooded; but, whenever he arrived at the conclusion that, after all, it was foolish and quixotic to shield this girl, and that it was his duty to himself to speak out and tell the truth about that wallet, the sweet, innocent face of Marjorie Morgan would appear before him in the gloom of his cell, and in her eyes was a pleading look that was not to be resisted.

"No! No!" he would cry aloud, as though he had been arguing with somebody. "I can't do it. I won't be coward enough to do it. I can't bring any suffering to that poor little girl. I would rather go to the chair than do that! I can't believe that she is bad. She must be as good and innocent as she looks. She couldn't be guilty of murder and robbery; or, at least, if she is guilty, she did it all for my sake, God bless her!"

It was while he was in this frame of mind that he picked up a morning paper a turnkey had considerately brought him.

"I wonder what they say about me," he mused. "I suppose those cursed newspapers have tried and convicted me already before my case comes to court."

He laughed bitterly as he glanced at the printed page.

As the first headline caught his eye, he gave vent to an involuntary cry of horror.

"Good God!" he groaned. "Why have they done this? Oh, why have they done it? Poor little girl! I tried my best to save her, and now it has come in spite of all."

The printed head-line ran as follows:

DID GIRL MURDER DUPREE?

Police Now in Possession of Evidence That French Wine Agent May Have Been Slain and Robbed by Woman.

WARRANT OUT FOR STENOGRAPHER'S ARREST.

Girl has Fled from Town and Cannot be Located. Police Drag-net out for Her. Now Believed that Sutton is Innocent or was Merely an Accessory.

With beating heart and blanched face, Tom read the body of the newspaper story. It went on to tell of the visit of the bookkeeper and the clergyman to the inspector's office, and also stated the fact that the dead man's stenographer, Miss Marjorie Morgan, was believed to be betrothed to Sutton.

Inspector O'Connor had decided to give out this information to the reporters, and hence the newspaper story.

Tom groaned as he reached the last line of the newspaper story.

"I suppose they'll bring her here and lock her up. That poor, tender, little girl will be put in a cell and have to face the publicity and the degradation of a jury trial," he gasped. "Oh, it's a shame—a brutal shame! I won't stand it, either. They can do what they like with me, but they sha'n't touch her. I can prevent it and I'm going to do it."

He had just arrived at this determination when the turnkey came to the gate of his cell to announce that visitors wished to see him.

"Who are they?" he asked indifferently.

"Your lawyer and a man named Gray."

"All right. I'll see them," he snapped. "Confound them," he muttered. "It's their cursed interference that has brought this thing about, I'll be bound."

If Postmaster Gray and Jeremiah Packard expected to be received by the prisoner with smiles of welcome they were sadly disappointed.

He glared at them furiously. Neither the postmaster nor the lawyer had ever seen Tom so angry.

"You've broken your promise," he yelled at Packard. "I told you yesterday that I wouldn't have you for my counsel if you did anything to implicate that girl."

"I didn't, Tom," protested Packard; "it was none of our doing. We only heard of this new evidence to-day, after we saw it in the papers. Then we went down to police headquarters and learned that the newspaper stories were true, and so we've come to see you about it."

"What do you want to see me for?" demanded the prisoner.

"To find out what you're going to do," answered the lawyer. "A word from you, Tom, corroborating the testimony of this clergyman, who says he saw the messenger boy hand you that package, would result in setting you free."

"Well, I won't say the word," said Tom firmly.

"Come, Tom, be reasonable," urged Postmaster Gray pleadingly. "You've done all that chivalry demands. You were willing to shoulder the blame to protect this young woman, while her secret was safe. Now that the real facts of the case have come to light through no fault of yours, you owe it to yourself and to your friends to tell the whole truth."

"I won't say a word, I tell you, postmaster," growled Tom. "It is an infernal shame to drag that poor little girl into this."

"That poor little girl didn't hesitate to drag you into it, did she?" said the lawyer impatiently. "Don't be a sentimental fool, Tom Sutton; the girl isn't worth it."

"Don't you dare say a word against her!" cried Tom threateningly. "I won't stand it."

"Come, Tom, be reasonable," said Postmaster Gray. "After all, you scarcely know this unfortunate young woman. You just think you're in love with her. You've only seen her half a dozen times. You've scarcely spoken to her more than twice. It's very evident that she's a murderess and a thief. You're not going to sacrifice yourself for a woman like that, are you, Tom?"

"She's not a murderess, nor a thief," cried the miserable prisoner. "She couldn't be guilty of either crime. She's too good to do anything wrong."

"Bah! That's what you think," said the lawyer. "Unfortunately for the young woman, Sutton, the evidence is now strongly against her. If she didn't steal that wallet from her employer, how did she obtain possession of it?"

"I don't know; but I've got faith in her innocence. Even if she did murder and rob Dupree, which I won't admit, she did it for my sake."

"For your sake. How do you mean?" asked Packard.

"To save me from getting into trouble over those cursed money-orders."

"If you think that, you're foolish," said Packard, with a taunting laugh. "I didn't suppose that you were as easy as all that, Tom Sutton."

"What else could have been her motive then?" cried Tom wildly.

"Motive. It's plain enough. According to the bookkeeper, Dupree had over six hundred dollars in that wallet. All she sent you was the $225. We have ascertained that she was in need of money. She probably murdered Dupree for his money, and then she thought of the clever plan of sending you some of her ill-gotten booty in that wallet so as to fasten the crime on you. It was a smart trick, Tom. Just the kind of scheme a woman like her would think of. And you fell for it, like a fool."

Tom groaned.

"You've no proof of what you say," he murmured more quietly. "I won't listen to you."

"We haven't any proof of it," rejoined Packard. "But any reasonable man would look at the matter that way. If she murdered Dupree for your sake, as you so foolishly suppose, why didn't she send you all the money she found in the wallet?"

"Come, be reasonable, Tom," urged Postmaster Gray again. "Don't sacrifice yourself for this woman. She isn't worth it."

"If she's guilty or innocent, I love her and I'm going to save her," declared Tom stubbornly.

"Save her! You can't save her," said the lawyer. "Even if you keep your

mouth shut, the police have got a case against her, anyway. There's a warrant out for her arrest and the police expect to have her before long. There's enough evidence to warrant her indictment, even without your testimony. It's only a question of saving yourself, Tom. If you don't open your mouth they'll accuse you of being her accessory."

"I tell you I can save her and I'm going to do it," affirmed Tom resolutely.

"How?" asked the lawyer and the postmaster in one breath.

"By making a confession that I murdered Dupree myself, and stole his wallet."

"What!" cried the postmaster and lawyer in chorus. "Are you crazy, Tom Sutton?"

"Maybe I am," said Tom. "But that's what I'm going to do."

"You're going to accuse yourself of a crime you didn't commit?"

"I am," said Tom.

"You sha'n't—you sha'n't do it," shouted the lawyer angrily. "You confounded young fool! Perhaps I can tell you something that will make you change your mind. You may be in love with a murderess and a thief; but supposing I tell you that this girl does not care for you, what then?"

"You can't prove it," cried Tom. "I know she does care for me. She never told me so; but I know it."

"Then perhaps you'll change your opinion when I tell you that she's run away from this city with another man."

"That's an infernal lie," cried the miserable Sutton furiously.

"It's the truth," said Postmaster Gray earnestly. "You'll believe me, won't you, Tom? What Packard says is the truth, my boy. The janitor of the flat where she lives told us so. He saw her go away. She was called for by a one-armed foreigner, and she and her mother went away with him in a cab. That's the last seen of her. Now will you be such a fool as to go to the electric-chair for her sake?"

Tom groaned in anguish.

"Oh, I can't believe it. I can't believe it!" he cried. "Perhaps this man was a relative of hers or a friend of her mother."

"Perhaps," said the lawyer sarcastically. "I gave you credit for having some common sense, Tom Sutton. Be a man. Don't talk like a four-year-old."

"You'll promise me not to make any confession, won't you, Tom?" pleaded Postmaster Gray.

"No, I won't. I'll stick to my determination. I'll wait until she is captured and brought here, I'll promise you that much; but if she gets into trouble over this wretched affair, I'll save her by confessing. My mind is made up."

"Then you're a bigger fool than I ever deemed you," said the lawyer angrily. "Come, postmaster. It's no use arguing with him. Let him go his own way. Perhaps he'll change his mind after a little calm thought."

After they left the Tombs, the postmaster turned anxiously to his companion.

"Do you think he really will make a confession?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so," said Packard. "He seems to have set his mind upon doing it. Confound him. I can't help admiring the pluck and loyalty of the young ass."

"He's a true lover, isn't he?" sighed the postmaster.

"Lover! Bah! He isn't in love; he only thinks he is. Why, he hardly knows the girl."

"Well, I've heard of cases of love at first sight," said the postmaster. "I guess this is one of them. What are we going to do now, Jeremiah?"

"I don't see that there's anything we can do," replied the lawyer, "except to try to find that fellow with the close-cropped hair the photographer told us about."

"What part do you think he plays in this mystery?" inquired the postmaster.

Packard shrugged his shoulders.

"It's hard to tell yet," he answered. "I've got a theory, though."

"A theory, Jeremiah? Let's hear it," said the postmaster eagerly.

"Well, you see, Dupree was a Frenchman. That man with the close-cropped hair was evidently a Frenchman. That fellow with the one arm missing and the foreign accent who called for the girl in a cab was either an Italian or a Frenchman. Then there's that mysterious incident of the photographer.

Don't all these coincidences suggest something to you, postmaster?"

"No, I can't say that they do," said Gray, shaking his head. "What do you mean, Jeremiah?"

"Well, my theory is that this girl may be mixed up with some secret society, and that she may have been instructed to murder her employer by these two foreigners and their gang."

CHAPTER XI.

CAUGHT.

"JEREMIAH," said Postmaster Gray to the lawyer, as the pair stood outside the Tombs waiting for a street-car, "I've got an idea."

"What is it, postmaster?"

"Let's pay a visit, right now, to the scene of the murder, Dupree's office in the Brixton Building."

"Morbid curiosity, eh!" laughed the lawyer. "I didn't know that you had any, postmaster."

"No, it isn't morbid curiosity at all, Jeremiah. I've got a good reason for making the visit. The coroner doesn't seem to be sure whether Dupree was killed with a hat-pin or with some weapon with as fine a point. Believing, as we do, that the girl did it, the chances are that the hat-pin theory is correct. Now, if it was a hat-pin the question is what became of it afterward?"

"Phooh! The girl threw it away of course," said the lawyer.

"Of course she threw it away. You don't suppose I imagine for a minute that she kept it for a souvenir, do you? The question is, however, where did she throw it? The chances are that it's still to be found somewhere in that office."

"On the contrary, the chances are all against it's being found there," replied the lawyer. "If it had been there the police would have unearthed it."

"Pshaw!" said the postmaster; "you a lawyer and talk that way, Jeremiah. I'm surprised to hear you. Don't the newspapers tell us every day that the police are as blind as bats? They might easily have overlooked a little thing like a hat-pin."

"I'll admit that it's possible," rejoined Packard.

"Very well, then, let's pay a visit to that office at once. Think what it would mean to Tom if we could find that piece of evidence."

"That's where I don't agree with you, quite, postmaster," said Packard. "Supposing we did find a hat-pin somewhere in the office. What would it prove? Nothing. You must remember that that girl worked in the office and might easily have left a spare hat-pin around, even though she were innocent of the murder."

"Yes, I've thought of that; but you're forgetting one thing, Jeremiah," said the postmaster. "According to the coroner, whatever weapon was used was prepared with poison first. Now supposing we find this hat-pin and subject it to a chemical test and a deadly poison is found on it. What then?"

"That's a good point, I'll admit; but the chances are all against us. In the first place, it's probable that the girl threw that hat-pin away somewhere outside the office. In the second place, whatever poison was put on the pin must have been wiped off in piercing the body of the victim."

"It may be so, Jeremiah; but then again there may be a faint trace of the poison left on the upper part of the pin. You never can tell. At any rate it won't do us any harm to try, will it?"

"No, I suppose not. We might as well take a chance. As you say, you never can tell."

"Very well, let's go to that office right away. Something tells me that we shall succeed."

"Not so fast, postmaster," interposed the other. "We'll have to get permission from the police first. Undoubtedly they've got a police padlock on the door of the office and are barring all visitors."

"And will they refuse to let us go there?" asked the postmaster disappointedly.

"I don't know. But undoubtedly they'll send a detective along with us. They wouldn't let us go there by ourselves, you know. Come, let's get to police headquarters and see Inspector O'Connor."

"And will you tell him that we're going there to look for the hat-pin?" asked the postmaster anxiously.

"Not much. You must take me for a blithering idiot. I'll tell him that as Sutton's counsel I'd like to be allowed to look over the scene of the murder just to get some local color."

Accordingly they adjourned to police headquarters and interviewed the chief of the detective bureau.

"All right," said Inspector O'Connor gruffly, when Packard had stated the object of his visit. "I've no objections. There's nothing much to see there, though. The body, of course, has been removed. You can go up if you like. But no monkey business, mind! No placing of manufactured evidence in the room, or anything like that, because it won't work."

"Sir!" said Packard indignantly. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, it's all right, young man. You're a young lawyer and I suppose an ambitious one," responded the inspector. "I've met all sorts of lawyers and some of them are pretty fly birds. I had a case once where a lawyer went to a room where a murder had been committed, threw an innocent man's gloves under the bed and came near convicting the innocent man and getting his own guilty client off scot free. I'm taking no chances these days. Detective-Sergeant Hawkins happens to be in and I'll send him along with you."

"All right," said Packard. "That's satisfactory to us."

Hawkins was summoned and accompanied Gray and Packard to the Brixton Building.

"What's the game?" asked the detective, while on the way to the scene of the murder. "What's your object in visiting that office, at this late day?"

"Oh, just to learn the lay of the land," said Packard suavely. "It might be useful to me at the trial to know just how that office looks, you know."

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Between you and me," he said, "I'm not quite sure that Sutton will be brought to trial at all. We've got the girl dead to rights. If I can find her and bring her back under arrest, I think we can wring a full confession out of her."

"Then you are convinced that Tom is innocent, eh?" exclaimed Postmaster Gray joyfully.

"Well, I'm not saying that he wasn't mixed up with the case," said the detective quickly. "The chances are that he was an accessory. The girl probably murdered and robbed Dupree at Sutton's suggestion. If the young fool persists in his policy of silence it will go hard with him, no matter what happens to the girl. If he'd open his mouth and tell his side of the story, it's very likely the coroner's jury would exonerate him."

"He's keeping silent to shield her," explained the postmaster.

"Then the more fool he," answered the detective. "For he can't do her any good by his silence. We've got too strong a case against her, as it is."

They arrived at the Brixton Building and took the elevator to the tenth floor.

The door of Dupree's office was tightly closed. By means of staples and a heavy padlock the police had fastened it securely, as Packard had surmised.

Hawkins took a key out of his pocket and opened the padlock.

Old Postmaster Gray could not repress a shudder as they entered the place. There seemed to be an uncanny stillness about it.

"This is the outer office, where the girl stenographer and the bookkeeper have their desks," said the detective. "This door leads to the private room where Dupree was murdered. His dead body was found stretched face downward on the carpet there.

"When the bookkeeper left to go to Bradstreets', the girl was in the outer office and Dupree was at his desk in the private room. You see how easy it would be for her to go through this door and kill him."

"And do you think she used a hat-pin?" inquired Gray.

"Yes, I do, but the coroner's office is in doubt on the subject. It certainly looks like a hat-pin stab, and a hat-pin would be the first weapon a woman bent on murder would naturally think of, I suppose."

"And where do you think she got the poison?" asked Packard.

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"That's where your client is in bad," he said. "From his attitude it looks as if he may have plotted this murder with

the girl, provided the poison and told her how to use it."

"Are you sure a poisoned weapon was used?" asked Packard anxiously.

"The coroner's office says so. They say that according to the autopsy the stab, although a deep one, in itself would not have caused instant death, as it did not penetrate the heart or any of the vital organs. They say they found indications of some very powerful poison having been used; but they admit they are as yet unable to name that poison."

"And what do you think this unfortunate young woman did with the hat-pin, after killing her victim?" asked Postmaster Gray.

"Oh, she threw it away somewhere, I suppose. She didn't leave it in either of these rooms, for I've searched them thoroughly. If we could find the hat-pin it would make our case much stronger, of course."

Postmaster Gray glanced at the window of Dupree's private office, which opened into a narrow air-shaft.

"She might have thrown it out of that window," he suggested. "Did you look down at the bottom of the air-shaft?"

"Oh, yes," laughed Hawkins. "You must give the police credit for some intelligence, Mr. Gray. When I said I made a thorough search for that hat-pin, I meant just what I said. We looked everywhere."

"Then, of course, you looked in the waste-basket over there in the outer office," continued Gray.

"Humph! I'm not sure that I did. That's one on me. But I'll look now."

He suited the action to the word, turning the basket bottom uppermost, emptying its contents on the floor.

"Not a sign of it here, you see," said Hawkins, as he rummaged through the small heap of rubbish. "But, hello! Here is something that may prove of value."

He held up a torn envelope.

"What is it?" asked Packard and Gray eagerly.

"It's an envelope addressed to Miss Marjorie Morgan and in the corner is the sender's address in writing: 'Miles, Broome Street, Catskill, New York.'"

"What's the significance of that?" asked Packard wonderingly.

"Yes, I can't see the value of that find," declared the postmaster.

"Perhaps not. Perhaps it has no value," replied Hawkins quietly. "But then again, perhaps it is a lucky find. It's just a matter of chance. The girl has gone out of town somewhere. I happen to know that she went from her home to the Grand Central station and took a train somewhere. Here's an address that's worth investigating. Perhaps she's at 'Miles, Broome Street, Catskill, New York,' at this very minute. It isn't very likely, I'll admit; but still it's a clue I'm not going to overlook. If you're through here, I'll lock up. There's no time to lose. I want to get back to headquarters at once."

"What are you going to do?" asked Postmaster Gray.

"Well, it's police business; but seeing that you're both so interested I don't mind telling you. I'm going to telephone to the chief of police at Catskill and have him look up this 'Miles, Broome Street.' If the girl is there I'll have him arrest her at once."

With that they separated. Postmaster Gray went with Packard to the latter's office and Detective-Sergeant Hawkins hurried back to 300 Mulberry Street, where he told his chief of the clue he had discovered, and telephoned to the chief of police at Catskill on the long distance wire.

An hour later Hawkins rushed excitedly into Inspector O'Connor's office.

"We've got the girl, boss!" he cried. "I've just had word from the chief of police at Catskill. He says he found the girl and her mother at the home of Mrs. Miles on Broome Street. He's got them safely locked up and awaits your instructions."

"Good work, Hawkins," said the chief of the detective bureau. "Get out there as quick as you can and bring her back here. Don't lose a minute."

CHAPTER XII.

CROOKED WORK SOMEWHERE.

NEXT morning Detective-Sergeant Hawkins brought Marjorie Morgan and her mother into the private office of Inspector O'Connor.

"Here's the prisoner," he announced, with a triumphant air.

The chief of the detective bureau glanced keenly at the women. There was something of sympathy in his look. They certainly appeared worthy of sympathy.

The girl's face was deathly white and there were heavy circles under her eyes. Her aged mother seemed on the point of collapse.

"Sit down, ladies, and don't be alarmed," said the inspector gently. "If you answer all my questions, frankly and truthfully, you may come out of this all right, after all."

"What is it you want of us, sir?" gasped the old lady. "Why have we been brought here in this terribly humiliating way? This man claims to have a warrant for my daughter's arrest. Why is she arrested? Surely you don't suspect——" She stopped short, unable to finish the sentence.

"Tell me first, madam, why you and your daughter saw fit to run away?" said the inspector, fixing his keen eyes upon the girl. "If your daughter is innocent, that was a bad move to make."

"We left town to escape the annoyance we were being subjected to over this wretched case," replied the girl in a low voice. "We were being bothered by reporters and other people and it was more than I or my mother could stand, so we went to my aunt, Mrs. Miles, at Catskill."

"And did you go away alone?" asked the inspector.

"Yes," said the girl faintly.

"Come, Miss Morgan, be candid. You know that is not the truth."

"Not the truth!" gasped the girl. "How do you know?"

"I know that you left town in company with a tall foreigner with one arm missing. You were seen leaving your house in a cab by the janitor, and he told my men. Now if you want to escape trouble you will not lie to me. Who was this one-armed man?"

"I can't tell you," said the girl firmly.

"And why not?"

"Because that man has nothing to do with this case."

"That's what you say, Miss Morgan. You'll have to excuse me for thinking otherwise. As I said before, you must answer all my questions candidly, if you wish to get out of this trouble. If you want to be obstinate you must take the consequences."

"And what will those consequences be?" asked the girl faintly.

"You will have to stand trial for the murder of Paul Dupree," said the inspector gravely.

Old Mrs. Morgan uttered a scream of horror, and a low cry issued from the girl's white lips.

"Oh, sir," cried the old woman, "how can you say that? What reason is there to believe that my daughter had anything to do with that horrible affair?"

"Several reasons," responded the inspector grimly. "In the first place, Miss Morgan, will you explain how you got the wallet you sent to Tom Sutton?"

"Oh, what are you saying, what are you saying?" gasped Mrs. Morgan. "Who has told you that lie? My daughter did not send Mr. Sutton any wallet. Oh, what does he mean, Marjorie? What does he mean?"

"Hush, mother," said the girl. "Let them say what they like. I don't care!"

"Do you deny that you sent Sutton that wallet?" asked the inspector.

"Did Mr. Sutton tell you that I gave it to him?" asked the girl.

"Supposing he did? What then?"

For reply the girl burst out sobbing.

"Oh, my God! My God! How could he do it? How could he do it?" she cried hysterically. "Oh, he must be a coward, a contemptible coward."

"Of course he's a coward," said the inspector quietly. "Now listen to me, my girl, and do as I advise you. Why should you seek to protect this young man. I am sure he is really the guilty party. I am convinced that you had a hand in the murder of Paul Dupree, but I don't think that you did it alone. I think that you were simply a tool in the matter. Now, if you wish to save yourself, you will tell me how you got that wallet and what part Tom Sutton played in this crime."

"Oh, sir, I cannot tell you anything," sobbed the girl. "Please don't ask me any more questions. I can't stand it, I really can't."

The inspector looked at the girl anxiously. She seemed on the point of collapse. Then an inspiration came to him.

"Would you like to see Tom Sutton, Miss Morgan?" he asked, more gently.

"Yes, yes," answered the girl eagerly. "If you please, sir, let me see him."

"Very well," said the inspector. "Come, Hawkins, we'll take them to the Tombs."

He whispered in the detective's ear.

"This is a good idea of mine," he explained. "We'll learn something important from this interview, you mark my words. The girl is shielding Sutton, just as he's been trying to shield her. They're a loyal pair and no mistake. We'll let them think they are alone and we'll overhear all they say to each other. That ought to put us wise to the real facts of the case."

"A good scheme," commented Hawkins.

He summoned two cabs. Marjorie Morgan and the inspector rode in one and Hawkins and Mrs. Morgan in the other.

Brooding in his cell in the Tombs prison, Tom Sutton was suddenly surprised to learn that two ladies wished to see him.

"Ladies!" gasped Tom. "Who are they?"

"Miss Morgan and her mother," said the turnkey.

"What!" gasped Sutton, his heart beating wildly, "Marjorie Morgan here! Oh, let me see her at once."

The turnkey smiled at his apparent eagerness.

Two minutes later Tom was looking into the white face of the girl.

"You here — Marjorie — Miss Morgan!" he stammered. "I thought you were out of town. It is good of you to come here."

"I was out of town," answered the girl coldly, "but I was brought back here."

"*Brought* back!" cried Tom in horrified surprise. "By whom?"

"By the police," answered the girl with a hysterical laugh.

"What!" cried Tom. "You don't mean to say that they dared to arrest you, Miss Morgan?"

"Oh, yes, they did," was the reply.

Old Mrs. Morgan had been listening to this conversation thus far in silence, but she broke in here.

"Yes. They've arrested my daughter, young man," she said shrilly, "and all because of the cowardly lies you have told about her. Oh, how could you do it? How could you try to save yourself at the expense of an innocent angel like her?"

"Lies I have told!" cried the amazed Tom. "What do you mean?"

"I don't blame you for trying to save yourself, Mr. Sutton," said the girl softly. "But, oh, could you not have found some other means of doing it?"

"Miss Morgan," cried Tom in despair, "I swear to you I don't understand a word of what you're talking about. I really don't. What am I supposed to have said to save myself?"

"That my daughter Marjorie gave you that wallet," said Mrs. Morgan angrily.

"Good God!" cried Tom in horror. "Did they tell you that, the cowards? I never said it, Miss Morgan. Somebody has been lying to you, for the purpose of trapping you."

"What!" cried the girl excitedly. "Do you mean to say, Mr. Sutton, that you never told the police that I sent you poor Mr. Dupree's wallet?"

"I swear that I did not. I refused to tell even my lawyer where I got it. Your secret is safe with me, Miss Morgan. I would rather go to the electric chair than betray it."

"My secret! Why, what do you mean?" cried the girl.

Her amazement appeared so unfeigned that Tom Sutton was staggered.

"If I didn't know that she sent me that wallet I'd almost believe in her sincerity," he thought. "She's certainly a natural born actress."

Aloud he said:

"I only want to ask you one question, Miss Morgan. You need not answer it if you don't want to. You may be able to help me, however, without incriminating yourself, and we are all alone here, so you can safely speak out."

"What is it you want to know?" asked the girl.

"Miss Morgan," he said earnestly, "I don't for a minute believe that you killed

Paul Dupree. I think you are as innocent of that dastardly crime as I am, even though appearances are all against you. Now, just between ourselves, I want to ask you to tell me how you obtained possession of that wallet?"

The girl regarded him with a look of horrified amazement so apparently genuine that even Tom Sutton could not doubt it.

"Mr. Sutton," she gasped, "why do you ask me that question? I don't understand you."

"What!" cried Tom hoarsely. "Do you mean to deny even to me that you sent me that wallet?"

"I do deny it," said the girl earnestly. "I swear to you, Mr. Sutton, that I did not send it to you."

Tom looked at her in petrified amazement.

"But the messenger boy said it was from you," he managed to gasp.

"The messenger boy! What messenger boy?" cried the girl wonderingly.

"The boy who rushed into the post-office with the wallet and the two hundred and twenty-five dollars the day of the murder. He said that you had sent the package to me. Oh, what does it all mean?"

"I didn't hire any messenger boy on that day," said the girl emphatically. "I didn't send you any money. I went out a little after eleven o'clock to try to borrow the two hundred and twenty-five dollars from a cousin of mine on Wall Street, but he wouldn't loan it to me. That is how I came to leave the office 'to go to lunch,' even though the bookkeeper was also out and there was a rule about our not going out at the same time. Mr. Dupree was mad, but I told him I simply had to go out and I went. When I came back, unsuccessful in trying to borrow the money I had promised you, it was to find poor Mr. Dupree lying dead on the floor."

She spoke with such apparent sincerity that Tom could scarcely find it in his heart to doubt her. And yet, under the peculiar circumstances, how could anybody else but Marjorie Morgan have sent that money?

It was impossible! She must have sent it, and she must be lying now to save herself. Even though she knew that he shared her secret she could look into his face and lie unblushingly. And this was the woman he had thought he loved!

He shuddered.

"Then if you did not have anything to do with that wallet, Miss Morgan," he found himself saying in a strained voice, "will you please explain to me what reason there was for your running away?"

Concealed in the shadow outside the cell the inspector and Hawkins leaned forward eagerly to catch her answer.

"That's an extraordinary question for you to ask me, Mr. Sutton," she replied. "I should not have thought of leaving town if it had not been for the message from you your friend brought me."

"Message my friend brought you! What message? What friend?" cried the perplexed prisoner.

"Why, your one-armed foreigner friend. The man you sent to me."

"Miss Morgan! What riddles are you talking!" cried Tom? "I have no friend who answers the description you give, and I sent you no message by anybody."

"Then somebody has been doing crooked work," exclaimed the girl excitedly. "For a man with one arm missing and who spoke with a foreign accent came to my home and told us that he bore a message from you."

"And what was the message?" asked Tom hoarsely.

"That I leave town at once. He said that I was the most important witness against you, and that if I stayed in New York and testified at your trial they would send you to the chair. He said that you had sent him to beg that I go away somewhere out of town. He appealed to me and to my mother to save you by this sacrifice. I told him we would go to my aunt in Catskill and he begged us to leave at once. He had a cab at the door, and he took us to the Grand Central station and procured our tickets to Catskill."

"And did he go to Catskill with you?" asked Tom anxiously.

"No, he left us at the depot, warning us not on any account to come back to town or let anybody know where we were if we valued your life."

"And you don't know this man's name or who he was?"

"No, he didn't tell us his name. He said he was an intimate friend of yours and interested in your defense. We believed him."

"Miss Morgan," said Tom after a long in-drawn breath. "I don't know as yet what all this business means or what object that fellow could have had in getting you out of the city, but, as you say, there must be some crooked work here, and we have got to find out what it is."

(To be continued.)

THE PINK CARNATION MAN.

BY MELVILLE F. FERGUSON.

A scheme to boom circulation and the boomerang it almost proved.

"THE paper is going to the dogs—going to the dogs, I tell you," roared Colonel J. Montague Manning, bringing down the knob of his hickory cane with a tremendous crash on the polished surface of the table. "Look at the figures. Look at 'em—a falling off of twenty thousand copies in less than three months! Why am I surrounded by such a lot of incompetent nincompoops?"

His angry glare traveled rapidly around the little circle.

The circulation manager uncomfortably directed his gaze toward the managing editor, plainly intimating that he knew whom the colonel had in mind. The managing editor stared hard at the business manager. The business manager squirmed in his chair.

"I think, colonel," he began, nervously conscious that his irate employer was swelling up preparatory to another outburst, "that if we had not taken the unpopular side of that franchise question last fall, we—we—we——"

Before the gathering wrath of the proprietor he quailed. The words failed him. He forgot what he was talking about.

The veins stood tense on the colonel's forehead. His face purpled from the patch of straggling bristles on the top of his head to his leathery dewlap. Every hair of his fierce white mustache distinctly stood on end.

"We—we—we," he snarled mockingly. "You imbecile jackanapes! You doddering, chuckle-headed, four-flush cross between a donkey and a dodo, do you essay to criticize the editorial policy of this paper? Do you presume to dictate from your parrot-like perch on a counting-house stool which cause we shall espouse and which condemn? Is that what I hire you for, you continuous performance of false pretenses? Is it?"

"B-but don't you think——"

"Shut up!" screamed the colonel. "How dare you interrupt? No, I don't think. I don't have to think. That's what I pay you for—and you, and you," he added, turning suddenly on the circulation manager and the managing editor, who had begun to breathe more easily in the belief that the storm would vent itself wholly on their companion. "I'll tell you what's the matter—when I thought I was buying brains of you fellows I was in the wrong shop. I got a beautifully gilded gold brick. But by the Lord Harry, there's going to be a shake-up! If you can't build up the circulation of the *Standard* I'm going to get somebody that can."

There was a stir in the council. A chair was overturned as the circulation manager sprang to his feet.

"Sir," he said, in a queer little breaking voice, "I want to say to you that you are a blackguard and a scoundrel, sir, and that you couldn't be a gentleman if you tried. And I hereby tender my resignation. Go to the devil, sir!"

His pale face and trembling lips belied the boldness of his words, but he met the colonel's astonished stare unflinchingly.

Colonel Manning had been a newspaper proprietor for thirty-five years. In all that time nobody had ever ordered him to undertake so unpleasant a journey.

He regarded young Bacon now as a

visitor to the zoo inspects some rare animal brought with tremendous difficulty and expense from a distant clime. The white heat of his resentment burned out as suddenly as it had kindled, and a peculiar expression flitted over his countenance.

The eruption his subordinates expected failed to materialize. Instead, he clapped on his hat, turned on his heel, and started for the door. On the threshold he paused, and said quietly:

"Bacon, go down and get your money."

The door closed softly. The hurricane was over.

Wilkie Bacon called at the cashier's window within ten minutes, and was told that directions had been issued to withhold his pay until he should present a written order for it signed by Colonel Manning. Boiling with rage at this fresh indignity, he marched straightway to the colonel's down-stairs office to demand an explanation.

"What do you mean by holding up my salary?" he burst out the instant he found himself once more in the august presence.

"I wanted to have a talk with you, my boy," said the colonel. "Sit down."

"I prefer to stand."

"Tut-tut! You have more spirit than I gave you credit for. Stand, then, and be hanged. I only wanted to tell you that you mustn't think of leaving the *Standard*. We need you."

It was Bacon's turn to be amazed.

"Are you stringing me?" he asked. "Do you mean me to understand that in spite of what I said up-stairs——"

"Pshaw!" broke in the colonel; "what you said was just right, under the circumstances. Let that pass. I think you're the man to rectify the blunders of the muttonheads who are running the paper into the ground. I'm going to give you a free swing and see what you can do. To-morrow I sail for Bermuda; I'll probably be away a month. If you can put ten thousand on the circulation of the *Standard* before I get back, I'll double your salary. It's up to you. What do you say?"

"You give me authority over any department of the paper that may serve the purpose?"

A richer red began to spread over Colonel Manning's face.

"Are you thinking of the editorial department?" he asked.

"No, no," Bacon hastened to explain; "the news columns and the necessary financial support."

"Certainly," said the colonel, mollified; "certainly. The news columns unreservedly. Money in any reasonable amount. Whatever you need."

"I'll undertake it," said Bacon simply. And he did.

The morning after Colonel Manning sailed, the *Standard* addressed to its readers a startling interrogation. "DO YOU WANT THIS $100?" it inquired, in block type two inches high, spread across the top of the front page. "THEN ASK THE PINK CARNATION MAN FOR IT," suggested a second line; and beneath was set forth, in yellow detail, Bacon's scheme for swelling the declining sales of the paper:

> The New York *Standard* proposes to give away one hundred dollars daily to the shrewdest and most observant of its readers. Every day, beginning to-day, between the hours of 9 A.M. and 5 P.M., an employee of the *Standard*, with a crisp new one hundred dollar bill in his possession, will frequent the streets and other public places of Manhattan, wearing a PINK CARNATION on the lapel of his coat.
>
> To the first person who accosts him with the greeting: "THE NEW YORK *Standard* IS THE MOST ENTERPRISING PAPER IN THE UNITED STATES," at the same time holding in plain view a copy of the *Standard*, he will, as evidence of his identity, reply, "So I am told." Thereupon, on demand of his discoverer, he will hand over the one hundred dollar gold certificate as a FREE GIFT from the New York *Standard*.
>
> Look out for the PINK CARNATION MAN. You may meet him to-day—on the street, in the surface, Subway or Elevated cars, at the ferries, or in any place freely open to the public. He may endeavor to screen his carnation from your view, but he will wear it, and if you are keenly observant you will detect him. If you ask him for the money, it is yours.
>
> But you MUST exhibit a copy of the *Standard*, and you MUST tell him that "THE NEW YORK *Standard* IS THE MOST ENTERPRISING NEWSPAPER IN THE UNITED STATES." Buy a copy of the *Standard*, tell your friends about it, and LOOK OUT FOR THE PINK CARNATION MAN.

The next day the announcement, in slightly varied form, appeared again, embellished with a photograph of the first prize-winner, an interview in which he told how he had detected the Pink Carnation Man in the waiting-room of the Grand Central station, and an elaborate article by that celebrity himself, brimful of capital I's, describing his hairbreadth escapes in eluding the multitude.

The city circulation of the *Standard* began to pick up. Day after day, as the experiences of the fortunate individuals who had been unexpectedly enriched by encountering the newspaper Monte Cristo were featured in print, public interest in the adventures of the Pink Carnation Man grew by leaps and bounds.

Staid business men who loathed the *Standard* and its sensationalism shamefacedly bought copies of it on their way down-town in order to be prepared for a chance meeting with the distributor of wealth. Women who had no genuine excuses to neglect their domestic duties invented shopping pretexts, and sallied forth with folded newspapers in their hands.

Children scarce able to read contributed their pennies to the cause of saffron journalism and became Pink Carnation cadets. Newsboys found that *Standards* went like hot cakes, while the sales of other papers lagged. All New York seemed to be committed to the task of the ages—the effort to secure something for nothing.

At the end of the first week the *Standard's* sales had increased by eight thousand. Bacon rubbed his hand in glee, and pushed the scheme with renewed energy.

Another week brought the gain to eleven thousand, and still the figures grew. By the time he began to look for the return of his employer the increase had reached eighteen thousand, and the excitement was at fever heat, with no sign of abatement.

Bacon's soul was overjoyed with anticipation of his reward. The colonel had promised to double his salary, and the thing was as good as done. It remained only for him to apportion the swollen income among the various channels of outgo; to decide just what things he had never been able to afford he would now find it impossible to get along without.

II.

WHAT evil genius inspired the first officer of the Bermudian to present to Miss Mabel Manning a bunch of beautiful pink and white carnations on the morning of that vessel's arrival at New York it is useless to inquire; but it must have been the same malignant spirit that prompted her to offer to her father a *boutonnière* culled from her nosegay, and that dictated his choice of a pink rather than a white one.

If he had seen a copy of the *Standard* during the month of his vacation perhaps he would not have been so mightily pleased when his daughter's deft fingers pinned the fragrant blossom to his lapel as a finishing touch to his immaculate attire before he stepped ashore.

Jauntily swinging his cane, Colonel Manning walked down the gang-plank with the elastic step of a youth of sixty-five, to all outward appearances keenly alert to all that was going on around him, but in reality absorbed in consideration of a powerful editorial roast he had in process of incubation for a certain city official who had ventured, some weeks before, to disagree with him about a little matter of advertising.

So immersed was he in this congenial mental occupation that he took no note of the interested stare of a passing drayman who brought up his team with a jerk at the edge of the wharf, leaped from his seat and ran back after the colonel, frantically tugging a wad of newspaper from his hip-pocket.

"Hey!" cried the drayman, plucking the colonel by the sleeve and spreading the paper out before him; "the New York *Standard* is the most enterprising newspaper in the United States!"

Colonel Manning, surprised at the man's vehement remark, halted abruptly and surveyed the individual who entertained this flattering opinion with no less of astonishment than of interest.

"My good fellow," he replied pompously, "I am delighted to hear you say so. Your appreciation is so genuine."

"Aw, cut it out!" retorted the drayman in disgust. "Go chase yourself."

Turning on his heel, he hurried off to his dray, leaving the colonel gazing after him with open mouth, amazement depicted in every line of his countenance.

"Come on, father," said Miss Mabel, dragging him away by main force. "Never mind that drunken fellow. Put me in a hansom, and then I'll let you go to the office."

Still dazed, the colonel nevertheless obediently moved on, accepted the proffer of the first solicitous cabby, and handed the girl into the waiting vehicle.

The cabman leaned over to listen to the address, and looked searchingly at the old gentleman for the first time. Something riveted his attention. He hastily arose in his seat, pulled a newspaper from beneath the cushion, and extended it at arm's length,

"Here you are, sir!" he cried. "The New York *Standard* is the most enterprising newspaper in the United States!"

The colonel pricked up his ears. The *Standard* was certainly growing in popularity.

"Do you think so, too?" he asked.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the cabby, with a sheepish smile. "My mistake. No harm done, sir, I hope?"

And before the puzzled proprietor of the *Standard* could frame a reply he had whipped up his horse and was off.

"Strange," mused Colonel Manning, as he threaded his way across the street and headed for the office. "They both said the same thing, and then acted like madmen. This strenuous life is fast making a race of lunatics. I'll have to editorialize on that."

On the opposite corner a policeman clutched him by one arm at the same instant that a newsboy grabbed him by the other.

"The New York *Standard* is the most enterprising newspaper in the United States!" they yelled in chorus, shoving copies of that publication under his nose from either side.

"Gwan with ye," added the bluecoat, reaching across and giving the newsboy a shove that sent him sprawling toward the gutter. "I seen him first. I'll lock ye up if ye don't move on. Did ye hear me, sir? Says I: 'The New York *Standard* is the most enterprising newspaper in the United States.'"

"Ha-ha-ha!" roared the colonel, affecting huge enjoyment of the joke. "Ha-ha-ha! What's the point, hey, officer?"

The policeman scowled and looked him over superciliously, from the crown of his silk hat to the soles of his patent leather shoes.

"Ye look like a nice, respectable old guy," he said, with a sneer. "Let me give ye a straight tip. Ye'd better go back to Weehawken an' stay there. It's dangerous in New York. Some wan will be selling ye a bunch o' green goods if ye wander about loose over here."

The usual symptoms appeared. The colonel looked as if he were an the verge of an apoplectic stroke.

But even as he began to sputter in advance of the explosion a white-aproned bartender who had come out to hang up a free-lunch sign in front of a neighboring saloon rushed forward, paper in hand, and interrupted him with the inevitable formula: "The New York *Standard* is the most enterprising newspaper in the United States!"

An ominous calm for a second spread over the colonel's features as he confronted the newcomer.

"So I am told," he remarked dryly, with a telltale tremor in his voice. "But this thing has gone far enough. I——"

"Aha!" shrieked the bartender, dancing about the pavement in the intensity of his excitement, "I win! Give me the hundred dollars, Mr. Pink Carnation Man!"

"Hold on, here," the policeman broke in; "why didn't ye say 'So I am told' to me? I get the money. Come, shell out."

It all happened so quickly that the policeman didn't know precisely what struck him.

The colonel simply boiled over. The demand for money was the last straw added to the overload on his slender patience.

His stout hickory stick flashed through the air like a bolt of lightning, and the gnarled handle caught the chief offender beneath the rim of his helmet, just back

of the left ear. The bluecoat sank in a limp heap on the sidewalk, and a little stream of blood trickled down over his neck.

For one brief instant the colonel regarded his work with dismay. The next, he was struggling like a maniac to throw off the contaminating grip of the bartender.

A crowd sprang up around the swaying couple of the mêlée, and presently he felt the ripping of cloth across the small of his back as a well-meaning neutral tried to drag him away from his opponent by the coat-tail.

The joy of single combat cannot last forever. In an incredibly brief time another policeman pushed his way through the constantly augmenting throng, and Colonel Manning found himself ignominiously seized by the collar, jerked hither and thither by an arm of iron, and hustled off like a common criminal to the nearest police-station, breathing dire vengeance upon all concerned in the multiple indignities heaped upon him.

To make matters worse, the captain of the precinct happened to be one of the many whom the *Standard* had consistently denounced twice a week for the past six months as habitual grafters, and he instantly recognized the dilapidated prisoner. Therefore, at the colonel's first attempt to assert his identity, he was curtly commanded to hold his tongue.

With malicious glee the captain listened to the one-sided story narrated at the sergeant's desk, and ordered the defendant to be held pending an investigation of the policeman's injuries.

"Put down the charge as aggravated assault and battery with intent to kill," he said. "It may be homicide before we're through with him. Run him back."

And the millionaire newspaper owner was unceremoniously conducted by an officious turnkey to an ill-smelling cell in the rear of the building.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon when Wilkie Bacon, glancing over an early edition of an afternoon paper, read a garbled account of the arrest of the *Standard's* Pink Carnation Man. The matter demanded immediate investigation.

He summoned a cab and drove post-haste to the station-house mentioned in the article, where he requested an interview with the prisoner. Peering between the bars at the dimly outlined occupant of the cell pointed out to him, he said, with a sudden decline of interest:

"That's not the Pink Carnation Man. I don't know him."

The man in the cell jumped up from the bench on which he had been seated. Two strides brought him to the grating.

"Wilkie Bacon!" he cried.

Bacon looked at him again.

The battered, shapeless remnant of a fashionable "tile," the rumpled frock-coat ripped up the back nearly to the shoulder-blades, the silk ascot skewed around under one ear, the buttonless waistcoat gaping wide and disclosing a torn and finger-marked shirt — these manifold disguises were confusing, yet the young man could not but recognize the erect, soldierly figure of his employer.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "Colonel Manning!"

It was an affecting meeting—while the generalities lasted. But when the conversation got down to details the colonel explained what he knew of his predicament; Bacon supplied the missing data in the shape of an outline of his brilliant circulation scheme, and the key to the mystery was mutually discovered in the pink carnation.

Then the colonel's wrath against the author of his misfortune knew no bounds.

"You dod-gasted, pin-headed imbecile!" he howled, shaking the heavy steel door in his rage, "you're at the bottom of this whole business! If it hadn't been for your scheme I'd never have been turned loose in this bedlam of carnation fiends. But I'll get even with you, you imitation genius. You're discharged. Discharged, do you hear? And this time you go for good."

Bacon felt genuinely sorry for the old man. But to be arbitrarily dismissed after he had fairly earned the stipulated reward—this was too much.

He faced the colonel a moment in silence. There could be no doubt Manning's fiery spirit needed further chastening. A flash of positive inspiration suggested the means.

"Very well, sir," said Bacon. "I had hoped to do you a service, but if our

amicable relations are at an end you can hardly expect me to exert myself further on your account. At any rate, I wish you no ill. I hope you will be able to make out some sort of a case of self-defense."

"Self-defense!" gasped Colonel Manning. "What do you mean?"

"Sh—not so loud," retorted Bacon softly. "I forgot you hadn't heard. The policeman, you know. Poor fellow—he leaves a wife and seven small children. He struck you first, didn't he?"

It was impossible for the colonel to turn white. His complexion wasn't built that way. But Bacon had never seen his face quite such a delicate shade of red. He groaned and pressed his trembling hand over his eyes.

"Too bad—too bad," continued Bacon. "In the present inflamed state of public sentiment they are hardly likely to give you a fair show. Your wealth, the pitiable circumstances of your victim's family, your position as the owner of a paper so heartily disliked in administrative circles, will all count against you. There is but one chance, and that, I understand, you refuse."

"What is it?" asked the colonel eagerly. "You mistake me—I refuse nothing."

"Listen," whispered Bacon impressively. "I came direct from the hospital. They have not heard about the death here. I have some pull with Captain Clarency, and so long as he does not know the truth I may be able to get you out. Then you might keep out of reach until the popular clamor abates. Once the news reaches the police-station your case is hopeless. They cannot admit a homicide to bail."

"For the love of mercy, see the captain, then, at once," whispered the colonel, almost on the verge of tears. "Spare no effort——"

"You forget, Colonel Manning, that I am discharged," Bacon retorted carelessly. "But I am not vindictive. Some time this afternoon I'll send somebody else to see what can be done with him."

"No, no! It will certainly be too late—they will know all," the colonel protested. "For heaven's sake do it yourself—do it now. I'll keep my word—I'll double your pay—I'll do anything in reason you ask."

Bacon deliberately tore a leaf from his notebook, scribbled a few lines upon it and passed it to his every-little-while employer through the bars.

"There," he said, "that's a three-years' contract at the promised advance. If you are sincere, sign it."

Without a balk the necessary signature was appended, and the turnkey laboriously affixed his own name as witness. Then Bacon went to see the captain.

When he came back, bringing the turnkey with him, he was stuffing a slender wallet into an inside pocket. The lock clicked, and the prisoner tottered forth, a free but by no means a happy man. The crime of murder weighed heavily upon his soul.

In the doorway of the police-station Colonel Manning halted a moment to take counsel with his escort as to the best means of eluding the pursuit which would inevitably follow close upon the receipt of news of the policeman's death. As he stood there some one came up behind him and poked him gently in the ribs.

He turned and confronted a uniformed minion of the law. Apparently his flight had been delayed too long. He felt morally certain that he was to be rearrested.

"Well?" he gasped.

The officer removed his helmet and revealed a broad white bandage encircling the top and back of his head.

The colonel reeled. The world spun 'round too rapidly for him. He leaned upon the friendly shoulder of his companion.

"You're a nervy old geezer," said the policeman, "an' pretty swift with yer club; but there's no hard feelin's. I jest wanted to thank ye fer the bunch o' dough ye sent me be the hand of yer friend here."

Colonel Manning smiled feebly and turned to Bacon.

"Young man," he said slowly, "you're the most unconscionable liar on the face of the earth. You're just the sort I have long been looking for. How would you like Burke's job as advertising manager? It pays better than your present position even at the new salary, and offers a wider field for the exercise of your peculiar talents. What do you say?"

"With a three-years' contract?" asked Bacon, grinning.

"With a three-years' contract."

"Done," said Bacon.

"So I am," admitted the colonel, looking keenly at his new advertising manager, "but there's no necessity for rubbing it into me."

AN AGE OF MADNESS.*

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "The Hoodoo Ranch," "A Perilous Trail," "The Mysteries of the Flying Fudge," "The Man From Martinique," etc.

The strange and thrilling experiences that sprang from a quiet plan to build air-ships on an island.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

It was hardly a month before my father's death that I met Laphystium Poggitt, who endeavored, successfully, to interest me in a scheme for building an air-ship which should remain in the air for any desired length of time. My father, John Deckesson, Sr., refused to invest any of his own large fortune in the enterprise, but I had already furnished enough for the building of a small plant on Frenchman's Island, in Oneida Lake, Otsego County, when my father died, overcome by successive failures, leaving me penniless.

Things were at a standstill when M. de Watines, the owner of the island, and his daughter Josephine arrived from Paris. They were in search of a buried treasure, which, one day, we unearthed. On that night all retired, weary with excitement, but peacefully and with no fear of robbers.

I wakened early in the morning, to start the fire for Josephine, and was about to fetch some water from the well. I opened the door to find M. de Watines lying dead on the threshold, stabbed in the neck. The treasure trunk was gone.

Josephine was prostrated at the news. He had no enemies, she thought, although his sister's husband, Mr. Kaufmann, had never been on very friendly terms with the De Watines. On the shore were found traces showing that a heavy boat had been run up, and the imprint of two shoes, one with and one without a rubber heel.

I secured the nearest constable, an old man named Dorwell, who proceeded to arrest the three of us, and so feel his duty was performed. Therefore I defied the law and escaped to Syracuse, where the chief of police took the necessary steps, and returned with the coroner to the island. The coroner's jury, feeling that some one should be arrested, selected me.

In spite of Lawyer Dixon's able defense, I was convicted of murder, but on the way to the Auburn State Prison the car took fire. In order to save his life Sheriff Jones unlocked the handcuffs. I escaped to the island and was able to assure Poggitt that he might continue on his invention, as it had been discovered that a portion of my father's fortune was still left to me.

Josephine, I found, had recalled some important papers of her father's connected with Kaufmann, and which were now missing. I determined to look the matter up and obtaining a complete disguise and assuming the name of Arthur Larkin, I took ship for Paris. Just before my departure I learned through the papers that a detective was stationed on every outgoing steamer. I wondered who would attend me on the Marseilles.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SPYING ON A SPY.

IT was Saturday morning we sailed; a bright cold morning, and one on which those who love comfort prefer a warm room to the deck of a ship. But I had schooled myself to the fact that in no way must I be conspicuous, and as it is quite the thing for vigorous people to stand and look at the receding shores of New York as the steamship moves in stately dignity down the bay, and wave adieux to friends on shore, I did the same, with my gloved hand, for the benefit of the detective, whoever he might be.

**This story began in the May issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The four back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 40 cents.*

I speak of a gloved hand. Of course, in the winter my hand would be gloved on deck, but I speak of it because there was a special reason why my right hand should be gloved, and this reason caused me no little uneasiness.

I still had a slight mark where the weight of Jones had pressed the bracelet into my wrist, and it was essential that I keep this from the sight of the detective.

I resolved to make it my business to ascertain as soon as possible which of my fellow passengers the detective was.

I mingled freely with the crowd, and many I knew by face and reputation so well that speculation concerning them was needless.

I was not sure that my man would travel first-class. Detectives sometimes in their shrewdness make mistakes. It might have been supposed from a detective standpoint that I, being rich and accustomed to traveling first-class, and mingling with the stratum of society that goes first-class, would avoid notice by going second-class or even in the steerage.

I had done nothing of the kind, but had as good accommodations in the first-class cabin as I could get.

It was no easy task I had set myself, playing the spy upon a spy. It cannot be said that either had the advantage.

He, knowing that I was a New York resident, and probably familiar with most of the well-known police faces, would be disguised, while, from experience in pursuits of this kind, he undoubtedly would be searching for a man also in disguise. My greatest danger was the mark on my wrist.

The first task I set myself was to single out those men who were traveling alone.

There were elderly men, apparently well-to-do, traveling with their families. There were groups evidently under the chaperonage of older people. There was the unmistakable American agent for an American motor-car company; there were priests; there were men alone.

It was useless to try to decide on all at once. I chose one to study first. I believed that if I took up one at a time and studied him till I made sure he was not a detective, and then went on to another, I would have a better chance of success.

The first man I took up was tall, thin, and evidently of a nervous temperament. He was not at all the ideal detective. He was not the ever calm individual we read about in detective stories. He was quite the reverse.

He seemed never at rest. He paced the deck almost constantly until he became sea-sick. I happened to be near him at the time. He took to his bed and was seen no more during the voyage.

I knew he was no detective. A man who had never been seasoned to the sea would not be sent to pursue a murderer.

The next man I took up seemed to have all the characteristics of the detective in disguise. He was well dressed, not very tall, stocky in appearance, and his eyes were keen and alert.

He was a talkative fellow, apparently about forty years of age, and very fond of cards.

I was standing at the rail one morning, having a smoke after breakfast, when this man passed me. I knew his name. It was Borden.

"You don't seem to care for cards," he said, as he came up alongside. "It's a hard job to get anybody to play mornings. We had a good game last night. You retired early, I believe. I didn't see you after dinner. If you like, I'll go you a game."

As a matter of fact, I was very fond of cards. But I remembered that accursed mark on my wrist, and nothing can make a man's wrist more conspicuous than dealing cards.

"I would be glad to give you the pleasure of a game if I knew how," I said. "Unfortunately, I have never learned to play any but the most childish games, like Casino, or something on the style of Old Maid. I fear I would merely be a load on your hands and time."

"Well, of course if you don't play, you don't play. Traveling for pleasure, I suppose?"

He glanced inquisitively at my clothes.

"Yes," I said, stroking my beard, which Tortoni had put on with a fixity of purpose that made the caress safe, "I had a few weeks to myself and thought I would take in some of the out-of-the-way places of earth I have not seen before."

"That is the sort of travel I like. There is no pleasure for me in visiting Paris just so often, London once a year, and all that. Those cities, once you are accustomed to the difference between them and New York, are just the same as staying home. I like to start out with plenty of time and just roam—go whither the wind bloweth me. That's a good one, eh? I'm from the West, and I have queer ways of expressing myself. But then, in this world, there are enough ways to choose from. Eh?"

I assured him there were. I did not take a fancy to Mr. Borden.

In the first place, he was too loquacious, and his friendship was too apparent. He was too persistent. I don't know that I really thought he was a detective, but there was sufficient uncertainty about it to make me wary of Mr. Borden.

I studied every one of the men who were apparently alone. This grew more difficult as the days went by, for they became acquainted with one another and it was only by asking questions or listening to scraps of conversation that I could obtain any information. I was gratified to see the mark on my wrist disappearing, so that the necessity for keeping it concealed was not so great.

There was one passenger I set down at once as a detective after I had studied him an hour or two. He was traveling under the name of Richard Montgomery, a typical man for the business, if the type is to be considered.

He was somewhat taciturn, but his keen eyes seemed to pierce the thought-shell of every one he looked at. I did not like Mr. Montgomery, and had as little to say to him as possible.

I had from the beginning made it a point to be rather late for my meals, without being conspicuously so. I found that there was another passenger who did the same thing, but I attributed this to modesty.

This passenger was a woman, somewhat tall, gracefully formed, and dressed in excellent taste. She wore little jewelry, had but few words to say to the other passengers, and seemed conscious of her own power to take care of herself.

On deck she wore a long, elegant, seal-skin coat, a fur hood, and defied the cold.

In various little ways I had made myself useful to her, as she was evidently without a maid.

She wore two rings; one a wedding-ring, the other a large solitaire, which ornamented a small white hand as dainty as a girl's, though Mrs. Carson must have been thirty at least.

It so happened on the fourth day out we left the lunch-table together.

"You seem to be having a lonely time, Mrs. Carson," I remarked, as we met at the end of the table.

Mrs. Carson sat directly opposite me.

"Why, I have not really felt lonely," she said in a mild, pleasant voice, a little color coming into her face. "It is not my first trip, you know."

"It is a fine day; let us have a promenade on deck. We have sat opposite, spoken at table, and almost eaten salt out of the same receptacle. On ship board, people are not supposed to be so rigid in their etiquette as in the city."

She laughed slightly, and musically.

"Your remarks are true, but you do not seem to work out your theory. You scarcely speak to any one."

"I am a poor hand to make acquaintances. I seldom begin a conversation."

She glanced up at me with a look that was full of laughter.

"So I have discovered—just now," she said. "I must have that promenade with you. You may smoke if you like."

I did smoke, and she took my arm. I had thought much of Josephine de Watines. She was pretty, bright, and in every way a girl to love. But Mrs. Carson was charming. She had such command over her voice that no matter what her mood, it was always low and well modulated. She was a good conversationalist, and, when the ice was once broken, a ready wit.

"I came away in such a hurry," she said, "that I never even took time to engage a new maid. The one I had, a French girl, ran off with the coachman of a friend, and left me in the lurch. My little girl is at school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, in Paris, and I was eager to see her, as she is ill."

"Your husband, then, could not accompany you."

Her face became sober, and she looked down over the rail at the sea.

"I am a widow," she answered quietly.

"Pardon me," I said, catching my breath. "Forgive me. I did not know —I would not have wounded you."

"It is not a wound—now," she said. "I have been a widow six years."

Every day after that Mrs. Carson and I were together most of the time. I found her company so interesting that I neglected my self-imposed work of picking out the detective who might be on my trail. I felt, though, that the constant association with a woman would do much to disarm suspicion if the detective had me under suspicion.

So the days wore on, until it was announced that we were nearing the end of our voyage. It was a cold and stormy day, and the deck was not a comfortable place. But neither was the saloon or cabin.

The ship rolled constantly. The wind increased to such fury that icy waves rushed over the decks. I knew the officers were anxious.

Suddenly something broke. The captain rushed past me to the bridge. I heard him mutter something about the shaft.

What I had heard was true. With a broken shaft the ship was at the mercy of wind and wave.

Efforts were made to fix the break. Perhaps, after a time, it might be accomplished, but it was slow work. Meanwhile, in a blinding storm that made it impossible to see a hundred feet from the ship, we were driving ahead with our crippled machinery useless, every passenger knowing that each moment might be our last.

It was bitter cold on deck, but I would not leave it. The officers were cool and brave. They did all they could to calm the passengers and encourage them.

Excited and frightened people came on deck, and those in whom there was a strong religious sentiment knelt on the snowy boards and prayed. Nobody knew just where we were. Somewhere near the mouth of the channel. But where?

Mrs. Carson came out of the companionway, and, groping about in the storm, found me by accident. I stopped her. She seemed to recoil—appeared to act as though she had not wished to see me.

"Are you frightened?" I asked.

"Who wouldn't be?" she asked, her teeth chattering. "Do you think there is danger?"

"Yes," I said. "decidedly there is danger. It would be folly to shut our eyes to that fact."

But the hours went on, and still the ship remained sound. Reports were constantly being carried to the captain, but beyond the few words necessary to tell us we were safe, he said nothing.

Suddenly there was a shock. The steamer stopped with a suddenness that hurled every one this way and that. At the same time a huge wave swept the deck, and Mrs. Carson was lifted from her feet.

She let out a cry of terror, and grasped me.

I struggled to regain my footing. Above the roar and howl of the tempest rose the shrill and agonized shrieks of those who were being washed overboard, and cries that the ship was sinking.

Mrs. Carson had a strong grip on me in her frenzy, and making a last desperate effort to clutch the rail, we went down into the sea together.

CHAPTER XXX.

I MAKE A DISCOVERY THAT LEADS UP TO A VERY INTERESTING SITUATION.

It had been fearfully cold on deck, but that plunge into the icy water struck terror into my very soul. It deprived me for a time of all power to move, and that desperate clutch that Mrs. Carson maintained on me was forever, apparently, dragging me down, down.

But with all the will-power left me I fought my way to the surface, taking my companion with me, for, though it had been her terrible grip of fear that had been the means of dragging me over, I would not leave her to her fate.

She lay limp and lifeless against me. Her grip had relaxed, and I found that she was unconscious. I might have left her to her fate and taken care of myself, and no person would ever have been the wiser. But I could not do this.

Although the woman was nothing to me, I could not commit what looked to me like actual murder.

I supported her with my left hand while I fought the icy waves with my right.

I shouted at the top of my voice for help. Of course I could not tell how serious the mishap to the ship had been. I knew I was in the sea with no apparent chance for my life unless a boat was put out, and that chance was very remote indeed.

Even as I shouted the dim shadow of the great ship grew dimmer still. I could no longer hear shouts. The shadow disappeared.

Had she gone down? Were all on board lost save Mrs. Carson and myself? Or were they safe, and we doomed to destruction?

I did not know whether Mrs. Carson was dead or alive. But I prepared to battle for life with what strength I had left.

I knew there was no use swimming in the direction of the ship. There was nothing but open sea there. Rather, since we had run upon a rock, or reef, I thought the possibilities of finding a landing were far better if I kept on in the same direction the ship had been going when she struck.

With the storm at my back, I struck out with my right arm, and, being a good swimmer always, I managed, notwithstanding my burden, to make fair headway.

Several times I felt exhausted, and was about to give up the struggle when the vexing question rose, what should I do about the woman? Should I leave her to her fate, and use all my energies to save myself, or should I struggle on in the hope of saving both, with the chances of saving neither?

Had my companion been a man, I fear I should have looked after my own safety, and let him go. But it was so like murder to let a woman go down that I fought against the inclination with all my strength of will.

Gritting my teeth once more I battled away, and wave after wave tossed us like two corks in any direction they chose.

It seemed as though we had been in the water for hours, when my feet suddenly touched something firm. I let myself down, and stood erect upon a submerged ledge of rock.

It was possible that near at hand, could I only see it, there was a rock above the water. I had a brief respite, drew several deep breaths, and then a wave came and washed us off again.

I kept on as nearly as I could judge in the direction I had been swimming, and after what seemed an age, though probably it was about fifteen minutes, I felt ground under my feet, and with a breathless, "Thank God!" I scrambled from the water to a place of safety and sank with my seemingly dead burden, unconscious, on the sand.

I do not know, and I never will know, how long I was in the water, or how long I lay unconscious on the beach. But when I recovered my senses, the sun was shining.

I looked at Mrs. Carson. She lay just where she had dropped, but she was breathing. I knelt over her, and felt her pulse. Her face was white, and I opened her dress in front to give her air.

I rubbed the muscles of her chest and was suddenly struck with their peculiar muscularity. Then, as she opened her eyes, her beautiful brown hair fell off, leaving a perfectly bald head.

Mrs. Carson was a man.

I was almost maddened by this discovery. I had almost lost my life to save a man in disguise, and who would a man in disguise be but the detective who was after me?

I cursed myself for a fool, and while I did it one half my mustache, loosened by the water as his hair had been, dropped down on his face. I snatched it up with a cry, not knowing whether he saw it or not.

I rearranged the wig, and pretended to work over him till I got him half way round to consciousness. I did not want him to know that I had discovered his disguise.

"How do you feel now," I said, pressing on my mustache to make sure it would not fall again.

"Better." was the reply. "That was terrible. Did the ship go down?"

"I don't know," I said. "I know we went down."

"Yes? And you—you saved my life?"

"Yes," I admitted, rather grudgingly.

"I thank you. I will pay you back some day."

"Never mind that," I rejoined. "Get yourself in shape. I am going to take a look about and see what sort of a place we are on."

I left "Mrs. Carson" and strolled a short distance to a slight elevation from which I could look round and obtain a fair idea as to the nature of our refuge.

I found that we were on a small, rocky island covering about ten acres. With the exception of, perhaps, two of these, it was all rock. On one end there was a ledge of rock that ran some distance into the sea, and on the point of this stood a lighthouse. There was a small shanty near it, and beyond this, no sign of habitation.

I could see in the distance other lighthouses, or what seemed to be lighthouses, and some way off I saw a ship proceeding under sail.

It was not now very cold. The genial rays of the sun were beginning to dry my garments, and though they were somewhat stiff and salt, and decidedly uncomfortable, I kept them on. I did not know who might be in the lighthouse or hut.

I saw "Mrs. Carson" adjusting "her" wig, and with a feeling in my heart that I had been made a fool of, I started for the lighthouse.

The question was, how much did the detective know? Had he penetrated my disguise, and had all his little graces been assumed for the purpose of destroying any suspicions I might have?

It was a game well played. And I had saved the life of a man who was pursuing me to take mine.

I reached the hut and found there no human being. The hut was divided into two parts. One had evidently been a kitchen and dining-room. An old stove stood under the chimney, an old deal table and two dilapidated chairs were near it, and that was all, save a broken plate on the floor.

In the other apartment I found a spade, rake, and hoe, rather the worse for wear, and a pile of potatoes. This, at any rate, was a discovery that meant something.

The potatoes were beginning to sprout, showing that they had been there some time.

I left the hut and went to the lighthouse. I found an old chair on the first floor. From this there was a winding stairway that led to another floor, and here I found a bed. Another stairway led to the great lamp.

There was no one there, and the appearance of the lamp showed that it had not been lighted for some time.

I returned to the ground and found my companion at the hut door.

"I don't see any one here, do you, Mr. Larkin?" asked the false Mrs. Carson.

"No," I replied. "I have been up in the lamp. There is no one there, and no one has been there for a long time. We are undoubtedly on an island in or near the English Channel, once a lighthouse island, or beacon rock, but now deserted for one farther out. We may, perhaps, gather some idea of our location at night if it is clear."

"Our position is not dangerous, is it?" asked my companion. "I feel queer about it—how long do you think we shall be obliged to stay?"

"I don't know," I said, looking off to sea and thinking a great many things. "I don't suppose anybody comes here in the winter."

"Not even fishermen?"

"Oh, I suppose smacks may pass here, but they couldn't come very near with safety. We won't starve. There are potatoes, and we can catch fish, and perhaps kill a few gulls."

"I wasn't thinking of that," was the reply. "I was thinking——"

"How awkward it would be to stay here long with a strange man?" I asked maliciously, and laughing.

"Yes," she answered in a low voice, looking at the ground.

I went and sat down on a rocky shelf and looked out to sea again. The situation was becoming interesting indeed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHICH ENDS WITH ANOTHER SURPRISE.

I DOUBT if there was ever a situation exactly like the one in which I was now placed. Guilty of no crime, yet con-

victed of a most horrible one, escaped by a miraculous accident before even seeing prison, racing across the ocean to probe into the private affairs of one I suspected to be guilty, and now, stuck on a hunk of rock in the sea with the detective who was after me, and not knowing whether he had spotted me or not.

If he had not recognized me as Deckesson, I had the advantage in the battle of guile that was to follow. If he had, it was an even thing.

Certainly he had not realized that I had discovered his secret or he would not have kept up the farce of being a woman.

It was going to be a difficult piece of acting, to maintain the air of protecting man over a fellow I knew wanted to drag me back to Auburn and the death-chair.

We had no idea of time, but when the sun went down we decided to have supper.

"Those potatoes are all right," I said. "I'll pick out a few good ones. There is plenty of old driftwood. We will have baked potatoes for tea. Know how to bake potatoes?"

My companion looked at me in surprise, and then burst out laughing. The laugh was musical, and decidedly feminine. I wondered where the deuce New York State had found such a detective.

"Why, of course I can bake potatoes," he said. "When my husband was alive I did all the cooking. We used to go out camping every summer, and make fires and roll potatoes in clay and bake them in the fire. When you crack the baked-clay cover the jacket comes off with it. It's great fun, camping out."

"Is it?" I asked. "I have been too busy to try it. Where did you go?"

"Oh, we have tried several places. We went twice to the Adirondacks, then we went to Oneida Lake, and once to Seneca Lake. I love Seneca Lake. Its winding shores, its vineyards—no, I am thinking of Cayuga Lake. Well, there are vineyards on Seneca Lake, too. I was very fond of camping out."

Was the fellow testing me? Why should he mention Oneida Lake? Was he so sure of me that he could afford to tantalize me?

"I wish I had some tackle. I'd get some fish," I said.

"My husband used to catch fish with a pin. Not a bent pin like a boy uses, but a pin bent like a fish-hook. He knew how to do it."

"Have you such a pin?" I asked. "Women always have a lot of pins."

"Yes, I am half pinned together like every other woman," said my companion, and straightway from some part of his makeup he produced a long pin.

"What you lack is a line," he said. "I think I can furnish you with that also. Excuse me for a minute."

He went inside the hut and I stood like a hopeless idiot trying to bend the pin. My hand actually trembled.

Who was going to win in this battle of wits? That my enemy never lost a trick was proven by the fact that he had gone inside the hut to get a line from his apparel, modesty, of course, forbidding a display of lingerie before me.

He emerged pulling out a strong linen thread from a piece of something or other he had been wearing. I didn't know anything about the mysteries of women's clothing, and did not know what portion of his wardrobe had been sacrificed.

I did know that he gave me a linen thread about fifty feet long, and strong enough to hold an ordinary one-pound fish if it didn't bite the thread. But I had to risk that.

"I have seen my husband use thread like that," explained my companion; "but there is danger that the fish will bite the thread. Wait a minute."

Again into the hut, and this time he came out with a fine piece of wire about a foot long. Now where did that come from? If any woman reads this she may know. I don't.

I took the wire, fastened it to the pin, and the other end to the thread. I went along the rocks at the water's edge and succeeded in finding a few mussels. These I broke and with the hard part of one I baited my hook. I had used a small, square stone for a sinker.

I threw my bait out as far as possible and waited. While I waited, I mused.

My companion knew a good deal about makeshifts of camp life for a woman. He had a ready wit I had not found among the young ladies with whom I had become casually acquainted.

Was I correct? All the cause I had to judge my companion a man was the fact that her head was shaved and she wore a wig. I had no reason to say positively that many women did not do the same thing.

True, her chest was the chest of a man rather than a woman, but in this age of golf, physical culture, and aped masculinity almost anything might be expected of a woman.

And she had certainly fainted when we struck the water. That was not much like the fellows I knew in New York who were detectives.

I was in a beautiful stew about it, when there was a tug at my line and I felt a good pull. Carefully playing it, so he could not break the thread, I managed after about five or six minutes to land a fish that weighed about a pound.

It was enough for supper, and I found a flat piece of driftwood on which I wound up my line.

Smoke was coming from the chimney of the hut as I turned toward it, and Mrs. Carson stood in the door watching me. She waved her hand in the air as I held up the fish.

"What glorious luck," she said. "Perfectly glorious! It isn't half as bad as being lost in a desert where you can't get anything to eat or drink. Did you see the spring?"

"Spring? No; what spring?"

"Why, a lovely spring of sweet water coming from the rocks down near the garden. And there is celery there, and cauliflower, and onions."

"What have we struck?" I asked. "A farm?"

"Why, it is perfectly plain," she said. "The lighthouse tender, when he left, did not take away his garden for the simple reason that he couldn't. He probably comes in a boat once in a while, and now perhaps will come to see what damage the storm has done, and will take away the stuff."

"That's a good scheme," I said, "provided he takes us along as well."

"Yes," she said pensively, then with a laugh she glanced at me and put the fish in the fire.

I've eaten suppers. I have attended banquets of college classes at the Waldorf-Astoria. I had feasted in grill-rooms. But no meal I ever had tasted so good as that dinner of baked fish and baked potato washed down afterward with handfuls of water from the spring.

I wished I had something to smoke. But all my tobacco was on board the ship. We sat and talked of a dozen different things.

"You have made no arrangements for the night," said my companion, looking away from me so I could not see her face.

"Oh," I said carelessly, "you can have the bed. I'll sleep on the floor of the hut."

This settled, after a short time we retired.

I did not see my companion till morning. The day began just where the one before had left off. The same dissembling, the same effort to hoodwink each other.

It is not my purpose to lead the reader into a long detailed account of our stay on that island. Suffice to say that we were there till the middle of February.

We were comfortable enough, but each wanted the farce to end one way or another. I know I did, and supposed the detective did—if it was a detective.

We came no nearer an intimacy. There was always the same shrinking modesty about my companion. The same fear of being found out in my own mind.

Our larder was replenished at times by the addition of a sea bird I would knock over with a stone as he rested on the rock.

One morning, about the fifteenth of February, I was doing something around the place when "Mrs. Carson" let out a little scream.

"Mr. Larkin!" she called. "Here comes a man in a boat."

I looked. It was a small fishing boat driven by a small lug-sail, and there was one man in it. I left my occupation and went to meet him.

He knew just where to go, and soon stepped on the rock with the painter of the boat in his hand.

He stared at me.

"Who be you?" he asked.

"Well, I am an American, and so is my companion. We were washed over-

board from a French liner about a month ago and have been here ever since."

This fact did not seem either to impress or oppress him. He fastened his boat to an iron of the lighthouse, and stared at my companion.

"Was this light ever kept?" I asked.

"Ov gorse it vas gept. I vor many years dender. Now ve live, my vife and me—in the new von. Out yonder. But I come when I vant onions and cabbage."

"Well, we have eaten some."

"Velcome."

He was a stumpy, little, old fellow, and as he started toward his little farm I motioned to my companion to come along.

She nodded.

"I suppose you will be willing to take us off and put us ashore somewhere," I said. "I will pay you."

"Yes, sure. I vill put you ashore at Vallennan. It is near Morlaix."

He was gathering onions, and I was talking, when he straightened up, looked toward the lighthouse and let out a terrific yell.

"Dam!" he shouted. "The voman steal the boat!"

To my utter astonishment the man of whom I was afraid was making off in the boat. I darted toward the lighthouse, flinging aside my clothes as I went, and leaped into the sea.

My companion knew very little about sailing, and the boat went this way and that. As I drew near, "Mrs. Carson" stood up, and leveling a revolver at me, said:

"I know you. You won't get me. I'll shoot you if you touch this boat."

I dived. I remember my mind was in the utmost chaos, but I would have that boat and at least an explanation.

I came up close to the gunwale, seized it while "Mrs. Carson" was looking the other way, and in another instant we were struggling, as though to the death, in the water.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EXPLANATIONS ARE EXCHANGED.

I DON'T know who was the most astonished at the sudden turn of events; the supposed Mrs. Carson, who found herself fighting me in the water on the side of the boat I was not supposed to be on; the frantic lighthouse tender, who was dancing up and down and cursing on the rock, while his boat was veered this way and that among dangerous rocks, while two people he had promised to help were fighting in the water; or myself, finding that the man or woman going by the name of Mrs. Carson in whom I saw only a detective after my scalp, was as anxious to get away from me as I was to get away from her, or him.

I was much the stronger of the two, and after a few rough blows I had my antagonist at my mercy.

I dragged my vanquished foe to where the boat was wallowing in the trough, and, getting into it, sailed back to the lighthouse.

"Vy vor the voman steals the boat?" asked the lighthouse tender.

"Hanged if I know," I answered, as I dragged the half-conscious mystery out on the rock. "Now, then, my friend, Mrs. Carson, or whatever your name is, explain this conduct."

The wig was off again, and I took it in my hand.

The glare that I received from the eyes could not have come from any one but a man at bay.

"You've won," he said. "I don't suppose there is any use asking for mercy at your hands."

His words and manner were more surprising than his attempt to steal the boat.

"I was onto you as soon as you spotted my hour to eat," he said. "I thought I was made up to escape, but now you've got me, I suppose it is a case of Sing Sing."

I stood in my wet clothes and looked out to sea.

My mind was doing some of the quickest thinking of which it was capable.

"So you knew me, eh?" I said.

"I didn't know you. I knew you were a detective in disguise. I have used disguises long enough to spot one when I see it."

"What is your real name?"

He stared at me with a peculiar laughing look in his frightened eyes.

"What?"

"What is your real name?"

"Oh, drop that. After traveling across the sea with me, and living on this rock a month with me, and preventing my escape, do you think you can make me believe you don't know my real name?"

While this dialogue was going on, the lighthouse tender stood in speechless amazement trying to understand, and I suddenly realized that he might be a dangerous listener.

"Come inside and let's dry our clothes," I said. "We can't sail for Valennan like this."

We entered the hut.

"Don't go," I told the lighthouse tender. "We want to go ashore. It will pay you well to wait."

"I'll vait."

Inside the hut I turned to my companion sternly.

"It is perfectly apparent," I said, "that you and I have been laboring under a misunderstanding all along. We may now, that we are about to reach France, need each other's help. You speak as though you believed me to be a detective."

"But—you are a detective!"

"No, I am not. I don't want to meet a detective any more than you do. When I dragged you on this rock after our plunge from the deck of the ship your hair came off, and I saw by the muscular formation of your chest that you were a man. In disguise myself, trying to avoid arrest, I naturally took you for a detective."

A ringing boyish laugh followed, and he grasped my hand.

"My story is a short one," he said. "My name is George Pallser. My father is a very wealthy man, but somewhat penurious. At college I got in with a fast set of fellows, and spent too much money. I got in debt, and forged my father's and my uncle's name to obtain money. The forgery was found out and I had to skip.

"I had often taken the part of a woman in college theatricals, and at once chose that as my disguise. I suspected you from the start. You came to meals the same time I did, and you were constantly studying the faces of all the people in the saloon. Your manner was that of one who was seeking some one. Then, as I lay on the rock after you had saved my life, your mustache fell off. Then I was convinced you were after me."

"I was not after you," I said with a laugh. "I was afraid of you. You may have read, perhaps, of the murder of De Watines in Oneida Lake."

"Yes. I was interested because I know that country very well."

"I am the one convicted of the murder—John Deckesson. I did not commit the murder, but propose to learn who did. Now, I am not one to assist a criminal against justice, but it seems we are pretty much in the same boat. The forgery of a rich father's name is not unknown among fast young men, and it is usually forgiven. Any way, if there were detectives on the steamer who had suspected us, they have probably reported us as lost at sea. You are perfect in the disguise of a woman. I wish to live a while in Paris. I suggest that you remain as you are, only making sufficient changes to throw the detectives off the track. I will do the same, and we will take apartments in Paris as man and wife."

"Good! Just the thing I would like. I am sure I can get my father to relent. I didn't mean to be a criminal. I had taken too much wine, and older ones urged me to do it."

I found my companion to be just a little over twenty-one, boyish, of a very agreeable disposition, and scared half out of his wits at the idea of being a prisoner. We built a fire in the old stove, dried our clothes, and were ready for the trip to Valennan.

There was one habit of mine on which I had reason to congratulate myself. Not knowing what was before me I had made it a practise to keep all my money on my person. I had it now.

I felt the loss of the extended wardrobe I had purchased in New York, but considered it wiser to let this go than to make any attempt to recover it. It stood as proof that I was drowned.

Truly, circumstances had played strange pranks with me. I had not succeeded in making the officials believe I was burned in the train wreck, but, perhaps, now they would agree that I was drowned.

The lighthouse tender took us in his

boat to a small fishing village on the main coast. It was a very small place, with a few families, several dogs and absolutely no curiosity. To them we were as though we had never been.

I had no money except American, but fortunately I had a few gold pieces. I gave the lighthouse tender a twenty-dollar piece, telling him to get it changed. He knew very well what to do with it, but he did not want French money. He was employed by the English Government and the island we had been on belonged to England as well as the one he was on with the new light.

It was not a difficult matter to find some one to take us to Morlaix.

A month having elapsed since our accident we felt no fear of entering Paris. I exchanged some money, purchased the tickets, and late that night we were in the French capital.

We went to a hotel, where we registered as M. La Tour and wife. My father's father had been French; I was familiar with the language, and the name could easily be made to fit.

The next morning we visited a costumer, from whose place we emerged reconstructed, but still with Pallser in the disguise of a woman.

We hired a cab and drove to the Rue Saint-Antoine.

I was familiar with this great street, and with the exercise of due caution soon ascertained where M. Adolf Kaufmann lived. It was in a large private hotel, where he had the second floor.

We took up our temporary abode at the Hôtel Meurice, and with Pallser had nothing to do but wait, I began operations at once to ascertain what I could about Kaufmann, and the property of Mlle. de Watines.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PLANNING IN PARIS.

It was not my purpose to inflict upon the reader the details of our daily life in Paris. There are a few matters worthy of attention, and these will suffice to show the methods by which I sought to clear myself of the charge of murder and bring the real criminal to justice.

I was, in the first place, curious to know what construction had been put upon our disappearance from the steamer.

To this end I learned the date of her arrival in her crippled condition at Havre, and bought up the copies of the Paris edition of the New York *Herald* of the next few following dates.

In that I found a full account of the accident, and learned what a fortunate thing it had been for me.

I have quoted enough newspaper articles, and the quoting of an article is largely to repeat what has already been written. I will, therefore content myself with a digest of the long columns that were printed in the *Herald*.

The Mr. Borden who had been so agreeable, and so eager to have me play cards, was really Jim Clarey, one of the shrewdest detectives of New York State. He had, so his statement said, discovered my disguise at once, having seen the tell-tale mark on my wrist. Another detective had traced me to the first hotel I had stopped at in New York, and there my trail was lost until Clarey saw me on the ship.

There was, so far as the account read, no detective on board to capture Pallser, but his skill in playing the part of a woman had been so well known that it was concluded at once that he had chosen that disguise. He was traced as far as the steamer, but too late for any one to intercept him, and his father had cabled to the Paris authorities, as well as to Havre, to have him apprehended upon arrival.

As he did not arrive with the steamer, an investigation had been set on foot, and the entire story of his appearance as a woman, his evident acquaintance with me, and our sudden disappearance in the storm, was told by Clarey.

"It was a terrible storm," Clarey's statement continued, "no person could live in it in the sea. Waves dashed clear over the decks. We were crippled, the shaft being broken, and we struck a rock somewhere in the Channel. The water-tight compartments kept us afloat and we made Havre under sail. The most rigid scrutiny failed to discover either one of the two missing passengers. Of course at that time I did not know that

'Mrs. Carson' was Pallser. But now that it is known, I can understand a good many things that puzzled me then. There is no doubt these men both died at sea. I know Deckesson is said to bear a charmed life, but no charm could work against the sea that was running that day."

So we were both dead, according to the decision of those who ought to know. Other articles told of interviews. One spoke of the grief of the elder Pallser.

"George was a good boy," he was quoted as saying. "He would not commit a crime unless led into it by older heads. I would give him all the money needed to pay his debts if I could have him back. His mother is nearly crazy. After all, he is only a boy."

Another told of Mr. Poggitt.

"The crank who was the partner of Deckesson on Frenchman's Island seemed sad when told of the drowning at sea of his younger mate," wrote a correspondent. "Yet he did not evince that grief that one might expect. When asked direct if he believed Deckesson was dead, he turned, blinked at the reporter a moment and said:

"'Dead? Of course he is dead. Who could doubt it?'

"Does he doubt it? Is this old man as crazy as he seems to be or is there a cunning and shrewdness underneath unsuspected by all save, perhaps, Deckesson himself."

Another correspondent called on Mlle. Josephine. She was too ill to be seen, but sent word that she was inconsolable.

Then still other articles, while the sensation lasted, told of the score or two of workmen "Mad Poggitt" had on Frenchman's Island.

A high fence had been built around its shore. Nobody was admitted save on order of Mr. Poggitt. Forges were in full blast. Machines that were not known before were working day and night. And the crazy Mr. Poggitt was forever poring over books and papers, making queer figures which he tore up.

When asked what he was doing he replied that he was trying to discover the cubic feet of oxygen necessary for a man to have at command if he lived on the moon a thousand years. Poor Mr. Poggitt!

I could picture Laphystium with his vacant stare, his rambling speech, completely mystifying the reporter, yet convincing him, as he had convinced me at the Butterfield House in Utica at the beginning of our acquaintance.

Pallser and I read the articles together.

"Poor mother," he said. "I must go back to her at once."

"You will do nothing of the kind," I told him. "I saved your life. Now I need you. The detectives are not looking for us, and a quiet married man will not be molested. I shall not be long, but I must be sure. And I may need your help."

I soon had the pleasure of seeing Adolf Kaufmann. He was a man about fifty, tall, with a hooked nose, and an eye that seemed to indicate that he was an enemy of all mankind. I disliked him, yet there was nothing so far as I could see in his daily life with which I could find any fault.

I resolved to get acquainted with Mr. Kaufmann.

I had placed what money I had left, about four thousand dollars, or twenty thousand francs, in the banking house of M. Martin; and in conversation with him let it be known that I had plenty of money, and would perhaps purchase a house.

I traced my descent from a La Tour family almost extinct, but the respectability of which satisfied M. Martin. As a result we had not been in Paris a month before "M. and Mme. La Tour" were invited to a reception at the mansion of M. Martin in Rue du Temple.

I longed for an opportunity to communicate with Mr. Poggitt and Josephine to let them know I was alive. But I feared that if a letter from Paris reached the little post-office of Constantia, where Mr. Poggitt got his mail, it would reopen suspicion, and the search for me would begin anew.

"We must attend this reception," I told Pallser. "In conversation with M. Martin I learned that Kaufmann will be there."

"You, not I," said Pallser. "I am willing enough to play the woman here, but I cannot go to a reception. I would have to go the limit. I would be taken to

the women's dressing-room. I would hear little secrets of women. Count me out. Tell M. Martin I am indisposed."

And so it had to be.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PUTTING OUT A FEELER.

THE reception of Madame Martin was to be held on the 21st of March. I laid considerable stress on my preparations for this event. I had learned a few things, but not enough to content me.

In fact, I had learned only what anybody would learn of prominent people in a neighborhood if he took the trouble to inquire.

My choice of bankers had not been made haphazard. I had gone step by step during my month in Paris, being in no hurry, preferring certainty to haste. I knew I had some sharp wits against me. I had the advantage now, for I knew what I wanted and with whom I dealt, whereas I was supposed to be dead.

I had gone to M. Alexander, an agent who handled the property of M. de Watines, and gave him the commission to look out for a villa for me. This led to a friendship, and through him I learned that M. Martin was the banker for De Watines and Kaufmann.

I had thus, with slow and cautious steps, ingratiated myself in the circle where I could get the most information.

I went to the reception in style.

"Monsieur La Tour!" was the butler's announcement.

I was in a crush—and it was a crush. It was evident at once that the receptions given by Madame Martin were very popular.

There was very little chilling ceremony. I was guided to the dressing-room, and then mingled with the crowd. M. Martin sought me out.

"I am very pleased to have you with us, M. La Tour," he said. "I trust you favor our Paris as a place of residence."

"I think it is charming," I replied.

"Madame Martin."

The banker's wife was a large woman, elegant from head to foot, but her charm of manner offset any appearance of haughtiness.

I met M. Alexander, who introduced me to M. and Madame Kaufmann. I studied the sister of De Watines well.

She had been a pretty woman. I could read her at a glance. She had succumbed to a stronger will, effaced by her husband's more powerful personality.

She was dressed in black, but not in deep mourning. She seemed to follow her husband's every action with her eyes, and there seemed to be a timidity in them I had never before seen in a French matron.

"There is something to be afraid of," I said to myself.

Everybody has been at receptions. There is no need to tell of the reception at M. Martin's. It was just like all other large and successful ones.

About one o'clock found M. Martin, M. Kaufmann, M. Alexander, and myself in a cozy corner, smoking.

"You must have been interested in Kaufmann's brother-in-law's death," said M. Martin to me. "It was a terrible affair."

"I have been interested in many things while living in New York," I answered. "But not having the pleasure of knowing the brother-in-law of M. Kaufmann, I cannot say."

"His name," said Kaufmann gravely, "was De Watines."

"What!" I exclaimed as though startled. "Ferdinand de Watines?"

There was a lively interest at once.

"Did you know him?" asked M. Alexander.

"Yes, and my wife knows Josephine, his daughter."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" exclaimed the banker. "Wait! I must call the ladies. You may keep your cigars. But Madame Martin will want to hear of De Watines at first hand."

He went for them, and the ladies came.

"M. La Tour knows Josephine," said M. Martin.

"Alas! my poor brother," said Madame Kaufmann.

Upon their urging I told them what I might have been supposed to know about the crime. They listened attentively.

"I understand they convicted a man named Deckesson," said Kaufmann, "but that he escaped in some strange way."

"There was an accident to a train," I explained. "He was set free from the deputy sheriff, who was conducting him to prison, and he made off."

Kaufmann shrugged his shoulders.

"Queer way they have in America," he said. "Careless. But he received his just dues. He was drowned at sea."

"So the papers stated," I answered.

"By the way," said Alexander, "you've never found any trace of Bai Rak, have you, Kaufmann?"

Kaufmann seemed to start.

"No. The fellow is without doubt a rascal and has deserted me. He took with him two thousand francs I had sent with him to M. Martin's to deposit."

"You are out two thousand francs," said the banker, "but I fancy you are well rid of the Malay."

I pricked up my ears.

"I don't see what you ever brought him to Paris for any way," said Alexander.

"Well, he saved my life at Pinggang, and I felt grateful. When he wished to enter my service I took him. I thought he was honest."

"Honest! He was a rogue if there ever was one."

"How long is it now since he left?" asked Martin.

"Several months. I think he left me about the middle of October."

This corresponded with the time De Watines was killed.

"M. La Tour," said Alexander, "was there any truth in the story that De Watines found a great treasure in the old cellar of his ancestral home?"

"That," I replied, "would be a difficult matter to say. It was never seen except by the four people on the island. There was Deckesson, Poggitt, De Watines, and Josephine. They said that De Watines had found the treasure, and since he was killed, there must have been some reason for killing him."

All agreed to that.

The ladies chatted a short time and went away again.

I visited Alexander two days following.

"You are the very person I wish to see," he said. "The conversation the other night set me to thinking. There is a beautiful house for sale—it was owned by De Watines. His estate is in the market."

"But there is Josephine, his daughter."

"Yes, but unfortunately this is the foreclosure of a mortgage. Ferdinand de Watines was a most unfortunate man. Madame Kaufmann, his sister, contracted a marriage that was to say the least a mistake. In Kaufmann you behold a man who has led several lives. He is a gambler, yet he maintains a certain respectability. Through his wife he borrowed large sums from De Watines, to that extent, so earnest were her representations, that poor De Watines mortgaged his house in Paris and his château at Watines, to pay debts Kaufmann had contracted. I suppose Kaufmann must now owe at least two hundred thousand francs to the estate. But it is mortgaged to M. Martin, who wishes to foreclose, yet does not care to have a public sale, nor to injure Josephine."

"What is the price asked for the entire estate?"

"You mean the house in Paris and the château and farm at Watines?"

"Yes."

"I should say four hundred thousand francs would be fair."

"I will buy them."

Alexander stared.

"How long will you give me to get the money?"

"My dear sir, all the time you want!"

"Give me two weeks."

"Very well."

"I will pay down fifteen thousand francs as a deposit."

"Ah! That will seal the bargain."

A paper was drawn up, signed, and we went to the bank.

"Ah, M. Martin, I have a customer for you. I have sold the house on Rue du Temple belonging to M. de Watines, and the entire estate at Watines to M. La Tour for four hundred thousand francs."

"Very good," said M. Martin, rubbing his hands. "But we must not be precipitate. There is Mlle. Josephine."

"That is settled," I said. "My wife had a talk with Mlle. de Watines before we came away, and they arranged that if I could see an opportunity of disposing of the property and saving her some money I should do so."

"Splendid! But you were a long time coming about it."

"I never do things in a hurry."

I made over fifteen thousand francs to Alexander, and M. Martin also signed the paper.

"Watines is yours," said Alexander.

"We shall at least have a friend of Josephine's as owner," said M. Martin.

"Possibly some day Josephine herself," I added.

M. Martin nodded at Alexander as much as to say he was pleased.

I hurried home to Pallser.

"Here," I said. "Your masquerade is over. Are you sure now you can go home to your father and uncle without danger?"

"Lord, yes. All was forgiven when they thought I was drowned. It will be like being born again and starting anew."

"Then get out of those fool togs and go buy some decent men's clothing, and get to New York as fast as Providence and the Compagnie Transatlantique will let you. Here—got any money?"

"No."

I gave him some, and off he went, delighted to escape the thraldom of sham.

He was a handsome young fellow when he was dressed as he should be.

"Now then," I said, "you engage passage on the first ship out from Havre. Make your peace with your folks, and keep your mouth tightly shut about me. Tell any story you like about your escape from drowning, but do it alone. You did not see me after the wave swept you overboard.

"When you have dried your mother's tears go to Oneida Lake. Get off the New York, Ontario & Western train at Constantia. You will see almost across the lake some buildings on an island. That is where Poggitt is. Tell Poggitt I am safe and making some progress. Tell him not to write—wait, I can write him and Josephine, and they can destroy the notes."

I wrote to Poggitt as follows:

MY DEAR LAPHYSTIUM:

I am in Paris working on clues, and believe I am right. I do not think Kaufmann murdered De Watines, but I think he knows who did. He had a servant who disappeared about the same time De Watines left for America. I have learned that though De Watines had lived in London much of the time he was in Paris and at his country estate just before he sailed. Kaufmann owed him two hundred thousand francs. I cannot find that he has any more money than before, and it is possible that the servant got away with the goods himself.

I have bought the Paris house and country estate, and will give it to Josephine when we can make the transfer without comment. I want one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. If you have used up your checks I send five more. Please leave me a little money out of my fortune, or make the air-ship a success. I'll be broke otherwise.

Send the money to M. La Tour, in care of M. Martin, Banker, Rue Bergère, Paris. Hurry up. Cable the money. I want it in two weeks.

DECKESSON.

I wrote another letter to Josephine, but as she was not an active participant in the task of solving the mystery, and as my mind had dwelt upon her a great deal, it is not essential to the success of this history to give my letter to her.

Pallser took both letters, and in two days he was gone. The way seemed to have smoothed itself before me, but it was good for my peace of mind that I could not look into the future a bit.

(To be continued.)

DRIFTWOOD.

MEN say I float with any wayward tide;
They liken me to driftwood on the sea,
And murmur, passing with averted face,
They see no use in floating planks like me.

But planks will float where stanchest boats go down.
I drifted by a shipwrecked life at sea;
Clinging to me it safely reached the shore.
God sees some use in floating planks like me.

Alice M. Goodwin.

BLUFFED.

BY LÉE BERTRAND.

A tale of certain summer-time happenings that were by no means as idyllic as the season.

"GO away! I don't want to hear you. I won't listen to you. Leave me at once."

"But, Julie——"

"But nothing, sir. Leave this room instantly, I say. I won't listen to a single word from you."

"But I can explain, my dear, really I can. Honestly, I am not to blame. It happened this way, you see——"

"Pray spare yourself the trouble of explaining. It would do you no good. You would merely be wasting your breath. It is too pleasant a breath to waste, too—a ninety-nine per cent alcohol breath. Oh, you wretch!"

"But, my precious darling——"

"Don't you dare address me in that way, John Billings! Don't you dare apply such endearing terms to me! Coming from your liquor-stained lips, they are insults."

"But I mean them, my pet. I swear that I do——"

"Your oaths don't prove anything, sir. When we were married, you swore you would never touch a drop of liquor again—now look at you!"

"But this was an exceptional case, my love. You see, it was this way. Some of the boys——"

"I won't listen to you, I tell you. There isn't anything you can say that will excuse the fact of your coming home and rolling into this room last night in a beastly state of intoxication. You know you can't deny that. I'm through with you."

"But, you see, my dear, they were some fellows I hadn't seen for years—some old cronies of my bachelor days. They were surprised to hear that I was married so happily. 'Good for old Billings,' said they, when I showed them your photograph in my watch-case. 'Didn't think he had such good taste,' they said. They really did. They insisted on drinking my health and yours. Naturally I couldn't refuse——"

"Oh, please don't continue. What's the use? It won't do you a bit of good. You may have a smooth tongue, John Billings. I understand that you pride yourself upon its possession. Well, here's one woman it cannot deceive. I'm through with you for good. I'm heartily tired of your disgraceful carrying on. And to think that we've only been married two brief years——"

"It seems like two months to me—two happy months," murmured the diplomatic husband.

"That will do, sir. I don't want to hear any foolish talk of that sort. It seems like twenty years to me—twenty years of worry and disappointment. My married life is a failure. There's no doubt of that. What were your words, John Billings, when we came to this watering-place for our little vacation? Didn't you say that we were going to live our honeymoon all over again? You did—you know you did. You cannot deny it.

"And has it been a honeymoon? Perish the thought! During the week we've been here, you've shown me absolutely no attention whatever. You've deserted me cruelly to seek your own selfish pleasures. I'm ashamed to go down-stairs to face the other people in this hotel. I know they all pity me. They all say, 'Poor woman, she made a sad mistake in marrying that good-for-nothing man.'

"And I did make a sad mistake, John Billings. I realize it now. Thank heaven, however, it isn't too late to rectify it——"

"Now, see here, little woman," broke in the repentant husband, hastily, "don't you talk that way. Don't be a foolish girl. Let's start all over again. We've still a week of our vacation left. I'm sorry for getting in that disgraceful condition last night. Honestly I am. I didn't mean to drink so much. I didn't notice how fast they were coming.

"I'll turn over a new leaf, from this morning on. I'll promise you never to touch another drop. I'll not leave your side once during the rest of our stay here. I'll be devotedness itself. Everybody shall point to us as we walk along the beach and say admiringly, 'There goes a happy, devoted couple—bet they haven't been married more than a week.' Give me another chance, little girl."

"No, sir. It's too late. My mind is made up. I intend to leave this hotel this very day and return to mamma. I'll be happier there. Mamma cares for me. She doesn't come rolling home intoxicated at two o'clock in the morning——"

"Oh, say, Julie, you're not really serious, are you?"

"I was never more serious in my life, Mr. Billings. I'm through with you for good."

"You won't give me another chance?"

"No, sir."

"Not even if I promise to turn over a new leaf?"

"I don't trust you. I don't believe in your promises."

"But I'm serious this time. I mean it. Honestly I do. You just try me and see."

"No, sir. My mind is made up. I'm going to leave you this very day."

"I'll buy you that new dress you've been bothering me about."

"No, sir. You cannot bribe me. My mind is made up, I tell you."

"And that new hat."

"No, sir."

"I saw a beautiful diamond pendant in a store window last week. I'm going to buy it for you."

"I wouldn't accept it, Mr. Billings. You can buy it for your next wife. I suppose you'll marry again, after I—after I get my divorce."

"Oh, don't talk so foolishly, Julie. Really this is going a little too far. You're making a mountain out of a molehill. Be reasonable, like a good girl."

"I am. I'm very reasonable. I'm going to a State where they grant divorces for almost anything, and I'm going to end this horrid union."

"You're not serious?"

"Oh, yes, I am."

John Billings sighed dismally.

"Be careful, Julie," he said gravely. "Don't drive me to it. You'll be sorry."

"Drive you to what?" asked his wife in unaffected surprise.

"Can't you guess?" whispered Billings hoarsely. "Doesn't your heart whisper it to you?"

"No, my heart whispers nothing to me except that I made a bad mistake the day I married you. Really, I haven't the slightest idea what you're hinting at."

"Well, you'll find out soon enough, if you leave me, and when you do find out, you'll be very, very sorry. It isn't the first time I've been thinking of doing it, either. Ever since you first began to scold me on the least provocation and I saw thereby that you had ceased to care for me, I've contemplated it."

"Contemplated what?"

"Suicide!" hissed Billings.

It was Billings' trump card. He had always held it in reserve for the very greatest emergency.

He expected his indignant spouse to scream with horror and fall into a dead faint. Then, he was prepared to take her in his arms, bathe her temples with ice-water from the pitcher, and beseech her to calm herself, whispering in her ear the while that for her sake he was willing to forget and forgive and abandon his desperate intention.

But the plan miscarried. Mrs. John Billings did not scream or faint. She laughed scornfully.

"You commit suicide, John Billings! You!" she cried. "Why, you haven't got the courage."

"Very well," exclaimed John savagely. "So that's the way you take it, is it? Very well, I'll show you. I'll do it this very day. I'll go to Baffin's Point and pretend to go in swimming and never come back until—until the sea gives up its dead.

"The world will think that I was accidentally drowned while out for a swim," he continued mournfully; "but you will know differently—you cruel, heartless woman. You'll know that it was your hard, pitiless words that urged me on to my blind fate, when one little murmur of appeal from you might have held me back and caused me to give up this desperate purpose. I forgive you, though. After I am gone, it may give you some ray of comfort to remember that I forgive you for everything."

With tears in his eyes, John Billings stepped mournfully from the room, closing the door resolutely behind him.

"And I'll do it, too," he muttered as he strode down-stairs and on to the porch of the hotel. "She shall weep her pretty eyes out. I'll teach her a lesson. I'll warrant she will never scold again."

Now, the great disadvantage in committing suicide to teach somebody else a lesson is that the person who commits suicide cannot be present afterward to see what effect the lesson has.

John Billings, however, had devised a means of overcoming this disadvantage. He fully intended to be in at the finish. He was determined to be a witness of the terrible effect his tragic end would have on his obdurate wife.

To accomplish this, he paid a visit to the biggest clothing store the little summer resort boasted. He purchased a complete outfit, not forgetting a shirt, collar, and tie.

"Shall we send them to your hotel, sir?" asked the salesman as Billings paid the bill.

"Oh, no, thank you. I'll take everything with me. Wrap all the things together and make it into as small a package as possible, there's a good fellow."

With the complete outfit under his arm, wrapped in manila paper, Billings walked along the beach to Baffin's Point.

Despite the fact that he was on suicide bent, he smiled and chuckled when he left the board-walk and reached a deserted stretch of sands.

"It will scare her terribly," he mused. "It is almost a shame to do it. But then it will teach her a wholesome lesson. It will drive all the foolishness out of her head. Julie is a splendid girl and an excellent wife, and I think the world of her; but she's a little too exacting. Just because a fellow takes a few drinks occasionally, or goes out with the boys, she raises the very deuce. It isn't right. A man can't be expected to become a domestic slave just because he steps into matrimony. I reckon this lesson will do her good and scare her into acting more reasonably in the future."

Baffin's Point is a very secluded spot. Behind a concealing rock, Billings hastily doffed the clothing he wore and donned the outfit he had purchased.

Then he artistically arranged the discarded clothing in a careless heap, placing the shirt, collar, and tie on top. This done, he scribbled the following significant line on a piece of paper:

> I said I would do it. You see I did have the courage after all.

"I guess that will make her wince," he chuckled as he pinned the note to the discarded shirt. "When she comes here and reads that she'll recall her cruel, defiant words and she will repent. Poor girl. It's a terrible punishment; but she's brought it on herself."

So, being a merciful man, he walked off and concealed himself behind another rock near-by to await developments.

Billings felt confident that inasmuch as he had taken care to mention to his wife the exact spot whereat he proposed to make his fatal plunge, she would arrive on the scene sooner or later.

Two hours passed, however, without his spouse putting in an appearance, and the disappointed Billings was just about to pronounce the scheme a failure and leave the place in disgust when suddenly he espied Mrs. Billings sauntering along the beach.

To Billings' eager eyes she did not appear to be very much perturbed. She walked along leisurely, carelessly dragging her parasol along the sand.

"Ah!" reflected Billings. "That is because she doesn't think that I was in earnest. She believes I was only bluffing. Wait until she comes across those clothes over there. Poor girl, she'll faint away, I know she will. I can see it coming."

Suddenly Mrs. Billings espied the heap of discarded clothes.

Billings, concealed behind the big rock, saw her stop short with a little gasp of alarm, and then hurry anxiously forward.

As she drew near enough to the clothes to recognize them as those of her husband, she uttered a little cry of horrified alarm.

Then the heart of Billings was glad within him even though he pitied her greatly.

"It is for her good," he reflected. "It will teach her a lesson. She'll never scold again."

The unfortunate woman examined the

clothing carefully, as though to make sure that her eyes did not deceive her. Then she discovered the note and, seizing it with trembling hands, read it eagerly.

"That will fix her," chuckled Billings.

And he was right; for with another cry of horror she sat down on the sands beside the mute evidence of her husband's desperate deed and burst into tears.

Suddenly she arose and, gazing far out to sea as though in search of him, she piteously called his name.

But there was no answer, and sobbing as though her heart would break, she sank down on the sands again and gave herself up to her grief.

Now Billings was by no means a hard-hearted man. He had made up his mind to be firm and to play the game to its bitter end; but the sight of his poor little wife sobbing her heart out was too much for him.

He suddenly realized what a brute he was to inflict such cruel torture, and he instantly resolved to rush out from behind the rock, confess the whole dastardly plot and do his best to comfort her.

It would spoil the thoroughness of the lesson. But what of that? What was a wholesome lesson, compared to his wife's tears? He must stop those heart-rending sobs at once.

With this laudable intention, he was just about to dart out from his place of concealment when suddenly he saw something which caused the blood in his veins to freeze with horror and amazement.

His wife had stopped weeping. She had seized his discarded trousers as eagerly as a cat pounces upon a mouse, and with eager hands was going through his pockets.

The disgusted Billings saw her extract therefrom a handful of small change, which she put in her pocketbook, and then, mopping her red eyes with her handkerchief, she arose and hastily left the scene.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" muttered Billings, gritting his teeth with rage. "To think that at such a time she should allow her cupidity to get the better of her to such an extent. One minute she was consumed with grief and the next she was pilfering my pockets for small change. Can you beat it?

"Her grief was genuine, too," he reflected. "There's no doubt about that. If there had been anybody looking on I might have thought she was shamming. But she was all alone, or rather she thought she was. What an extraordinary woman!"

Billings was now resolved to continue with the lesson. Since she could take his supposed death so indifferently, he would not go back to her. He would let her continue to think he was dead.

Perhaps, as the days went by, she would begin to realize what she had lost and then she would experience bitter grief—real grief—not the kind that could permit of the grieving one stopping the flow of her tears long enough to pilfer trousers' pockets.

At first Billings was inclined to believe that perhaps his wife had in some manner discovered that he was not really dead and that that was the reason for her comparative indifference.

But later, when the local evening papers appeared on the beach, he was forced to abandon this idea. These sheets made much of the supposed tragedy.

They declared that while the beautiful widow protested emphatically that her husband's death was accidental—that he must have been seized with cramps while taking a swim—nevertheless there was reason to suppose that the dead man might have committed suicide.

The papers also said that the unfortunate Mrs. Billings was prostrated by shock and was confined to her room at the Pierview Hotel.

"Ah!" muttered Billings with deep-founded satisfaction, as he scanned this last item, "she must have taken it to heart, after all. It is well. Perhaps I attached too much importance to that pocket pilfering episode. It may have been merely a ruling passion strong even amid the most intense grief. Yes, I reckon I misjudged her. Poor girl, I suppose she really is heartbroken."

Billings was resolved, however, that this time his compassion should not get the better of him.

He would carry out his plan to the bitter end. He would take a run up to

town for a day or two, and then when he had reduced his remorseful wife to a proper state of humility, born of grief, he would suddenly return and present himself before her astonished gaze.

Billings' vivid imagination could picture that reunion.

At first she would refuse to believe the evidence of her own eyes. She would think that she was dreaming. Then she would suddenly get the idea that it was her husband's ghost she saw. She would then be convulsed with horror and fear.

At this point he would take her in his arms and assure her, in endearing terms, that he was no ghost, but the real John Billings in the flesh. Then there would be bitter reproaches that he could practise such a cruel trick upon his loving wife, but finally she would weep tears of joy and gratitude that her beloved husband was not dead.

Of course she would promise him never to scold again, and she would beg him as a special favor to her to go out with the boys whenever he pleased. It was a beautiful picture.

Billings smiled with anticipatory joy while his imagination painted it.

It was intensely hot in New York City. The thermometer was over a hundred in the shade and the humidity was simply awful.

Billings suffered martyrdom in abandoning the cold seashore resort for the seething metropolis. He bore it, however, with saintlike fortitude. He told himself that he could afford to be a martyr in such a worthy cause.

At the end of two days he made up his mind that it was time to go back—not because he was worn almost to a shadow by the excessive heat, but because, in his opinion, his wife had suffered the pangs of remorse and grief long enough, and it would be cruelty to prolong the agony.

He took the five-thirty train and arrived at the hotel a few minutes before supper-time.

He had disguised himself most ingeniously by a false beard and a mustache so that his arrival did not attract any attention.

"Of course my poor little wife will not come down-stairs to supper," he told himself with satisfaction. "She's doubtless confined to her room, mourning her loss. Poor little girl! What a joyful surprise I have in store for her."

But as he stood in a corner of the large dining-room thus reflecting, a woman, dressed in black, appeared, leaning on the arm of the handsomest summer boarder.

With a gasp of horrified amazement Billings recognized his wife.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" was all he could ejaculate.

Save for her black dress there was not a sign of mourning about his wife. As she looked up into the handsome face of her escort her own features were illuminated with smiles. She seemed to be chatting gaily.

Even the black dress was not, strictly speaking, a mourning garb. Billings recognized it as a dinner gown she had worn several times during his "lifetime."

They sat down and Billings, by strategy, managed to secure the table immediately behind them, where he could overhear nearly all they said.

His wife's appetite was apparently unimpaired. She ate most heartily, and many times during the meal she laughed at the witty remarks of her companion.

But poor Billings could not eat. He scarcely touched the food the waiter placed before him. There was wild rage in his heart—rage and bitter despair.

"Only two days dead," he groaned, "and she can laugh and chat and eat! By Jupiter, it's scandalous. Even if she feels no real sorrow for her loss, she ought to feign sorrow for decency's sake. Why, hang it all, she hasn't any regard for appearances. And only two years married, too! Oh, heartless woman—heartless woman!"

The more he gazed upon his apparently care-free wife, the more desperate he became. He felt as if the whole light of his life had gone out. He even thought of making another trip to Baffin's Point and there carrying out in grim earnest that which he had before pretended to do.

"What does life mean to me now?" he sighed. "Nothing but gall and wormwood. Alas, that I should have lived to see this day!"

Despite the mental agony it caused

him, he resolved to watch his fickle wife still further.

It was only by a supreme effort that he managed to keep his seat, as he heard her companion invite her to a promenade on the beach. And she accepted the invitation without a moment's indecision.

"I'll follow them," Billings muttered. "Perhaps, as she stands on the beach and gazes at the vast, cruel ocean—the ocean which she believes has engulfed me—she'll be seized with remorse. Perhaps she'll repent of her wicked indifference as she looks upon the merciless waters which are supposed to contain my lifeless body. If she has any sentiment in her at all that scene ought to bring to her a realization of her loss. I'll trail their footsteps."

His wife went up-stairs for a wrap and then left the hotel, leaning on her escort's arm. The miserable Billings followed in their wake, gnashing his teeth with rage and despair.

To his surprise they walked directly toward Baffin's Point.

"I should have thought she would have avoided that spot," he mused. "Even to one as heartless as she it ought to bring back unpleasant memories."

But to his horror, the couple sat down on the sands beside the very rock behind which he had left that significant heap of clothes and that reproachful ante-mortem note.

Trembling with surprised indignation, at this almost sacrilegious act, he concealed himself behind the rock, where he could overhear everything they said.

For a time they were silent, gazing as though fascinated at the restless waves.

At last she spoke.

"It was here, at this very spot, that he jumped in," she murmured.

"Poor fellow!" replied her companion.

Billings stifled a wild desire to rush out and seize him by the throat.

"He was very foolish to take such a step," said Mrs. Billings, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Considering the wife he left behind him—yes," rejoined her companion.

Billings had to fight with himself to overcome the inclination to strangle the man.

"He never appreciated me," went on Mrs. Billings sadly. "Poor John! I'm sorry he came to such an untimely end—but he never appreciated me."

"Then the fool must have been blind," replied her companion.

"Confound it!" muttered Billings, behind the rock. "This is more than flesh and blood can stand. I shall commit murder in a minute."

"It is very nice of you to say that, Mr. Smithers," whispered Mrs. Billings. "You always do say such very nice things."

"Don't call me Mr. Smithers," was the response. "Please call me Horace."

This was too much for Billings. With a howl of fury, he darted out from behind the rock and seized the fellow by the throat.

"Call you Horace, eh!" he yelled. "Not much. Not while I'm alive she won't. I'll 'Horace' you, you white-livered addlepate!"

He shook the surprised man as a terrier shakes a rat.

"Don't hurt him, John," remarked his wife calmly. "Really, he's not to blame."

"Oh, you know me, then, do you?" gasped Billings, so surprised that he let go his hold on his victim.

"Of course I know you," replied Mrs. Billings. "You don't think that funny looking beard and that mustache serve as a disguise, do you?"

"Then perhaps, madam, you will explain this disgraceful conduct," cried Billings wrathfully. "What do you mean by displaying such disrespect for my memory?"

"For your memory?" she repeated, her eyebrows uplifted inquiringly.

"Yes. For my memory. Haven't I been dead for two days? And here you are enjoying yourself and spooning. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Have you been dead, John?" inquired his wife innocently. "I was not aware of it."

"I mean you thought I was dead. It's the same thing. You saw my clothes beside this very rock. You know you did. You can't deny it," spluttered the enraged Billings.

"Oh, yes. I saw your clothes here, John. It gave me quite a scare, too,

first of all. I really thought for the moment that you'd carried out your threat and committed suicide. Yes, I saw all your clothes here, except your collar buttons. It was a great relief to me, John, not to find your collar buttons."

"What do you mean?" gasped Billings.

"I mean, John, that next time you try to frighten your poor little wife by a miserable ruse like that, take care to provide yourself with an extra set of collar buttons."

"I don't see what you are driving at, Julie," said the puzzled Billings.

"Don't you? That shows you are lacking in perspicacity, John. The collar buttons spoiled your whole game, or rather the lack of them did. When I came here the other day, and found your clothes and your horrid note, I was consumed with grief. I thought that you had taken seriously my idle threat to leave you and that you had summoned up enough courage to take the fatal plunge.

"But while I was sitting on the sand here, weeping my eyes out, I suddenly noticed your shirt. It was a very pretty shirt—one I chose for you, if you remember. But it wasn't the pattern of the shirt which attracted me—it was the fact that the collar button had been removed from it.

"I immediately asked myself 'Why should a man who has committed suicide first go to the trouble of removing the collar buttons from his shirt?' The answer was plain. When you donned the new outfit you needed the collar buttons for your new shirt. You had carelessly neglected to provide yourself with an extra set. That was a fatal oversight on your part, John. You see, it gave the whole scheme right away. I knew then that you were only bluffing, and that instead of being dead you were prowling around somewhere, probably watching how I was taking my supposed loss. So I resolved to teach you a lesson by carrying on scandalously, and I chose poor Mr. Smithers as my innocent assistant. You see he is not to blame at all."

"By gum, you're the most observant woman in the whole world, Julie, and I'm the silliest ass," said Billings humbly. "I suppose I don't stand a show of being forgiven, do I?"

"Yes, you do. If you'll apologize to poor Mr. Smithers here for the rough way in which you greeted him, and if you'll swear to behave yourself better in future and never to touch a drop of liquor again, I'll forgive you, John. I guess the joke has been on you, anyway. Men are always so careless with their collar buttons."

NO PLACE FOR A WOMAN.*

BY MYRA C. BRECKINRIDGE.

The problem that confronted the confidential secretary when all the heads of a great concern vanished between two days.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GAUNTLET IS FLUNG.

THE usual slowly disintegrating crowd was at the scene of the accident when Miss Holland arrived. The ambulance had gone, but the injury to the workman seemed to have made more than the usual passing impression upon the public mind.

"That company's on the fritz, anyway, they say," she overheard one man remark to his neighbor. "They don't know how to take care of their men, that's sure."

"Gee! his leg was smashed to bits. It made me sick. They must have let the whole weight of that girder down on him," said another.

"The foreman ought to be punished for it."

"Company ought to be punished for having such a foreman."

"Guess there won't be any company for long. Shouldn't be surprised if it went up in smoke after this."

** This story began in the June issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 30 *cents.*

"It ought to."

These and other ugly speeches she heard as she pushed her way into the throng. Many of the men looked at her wonderingly.

Perhaps they thought her a newspaper woman assigned to get a new "sensation" for one of the afternoon dailies.

But when she caught sight of Malloy she found him the center of a group of policemen who were evidently taking notes of his statement of how the accident occurred. It was from Brayman, however, that she received the particulars. He had been on the lookout for her appearance.

The injured man had been sent to do something that he evidently did not know how to do. Malloy himself had sent him, and then sworn at him for his awkwardness.

"The fellow had been drinking. I noticed that when he came on the job this morning, and I called Malloy's attention to it," Brayman said.

"He got mad at the foreman and answered back. He was so interested in his quarrel with Malloy that he did not look out for himself and came right in the way of that girder yonder—just as it was let down on the run!

"Lord! but it squashed him!" added Brayman, with a shudder. "Beg pardon, Miss Holland! I ought not to have told you of it——"

He had seen her whitening face; but his last words were like a pin-prick, and angered her.

"Why not? I'm here to see about this, am I not? Whose fault was it?"

"The fellow's own. But Malloy shouldn't have let a drunken man go to work on a job of this kind."

"That will do," she said shortly, and pushed her way into the ring about the foreman.

Malloy saw her and his countenance changed. The policeman looked upon her curiously.

"I want your side of this affair, Malloy," she said sharply, ignoring the wondering gaze of the officers. "What happened?"

"I don't know as it's your business, but the man did it all himself. He was swearing at me, and threatened to brain me, and stepped right under the girder."

"And you ordered the girder dropped?" suggested a policeman who had his note-book out.

"By thunder! I didn't want to kill the man. I could have licked the life out of him in three minutes. I don't ask any man to help me in a row," declared the bully, shaking his head threateningly.

"No, I guess that's so," remarked another officer. "You wouldn't be likely to take the risk of killing him."

"I'd given the order to lower the girder before."

"But the man was a greenhorn, and had been drinking. What right had you to put him on the job?" demanded Miss Holland.

The policeman with the note-book turned to her.

"You represent the Burlingham Building Company?" he asked, with some doubt.

"I do. If we have been at fault we shall do what we can to repair the fault. At any rate, we shall see at once that the man's family does not suffer, and shall pay his bills. That we will do out of charity. But if, as I understand, he was drunk, and brought the accident upon himself, we cannot be held legally accountable."

"I guess he was drunk all right," said the officer. "I'll report. If the captain thinks an arrest ought to be made, I'll let you know."

"You won't arrest *me!*" cried Malloy threateningly. "And I reckon you won't find anybody at the offices to arrest," and he laughed harshly.

"You will find *me* there," said Miss Holland sharply. "The Burlingham Company is not running away to-day. And now, Malloy, I want to see *you*," and she turned upon the foreman with blazing eyes. "I understand that some of these men you are hiring are not structural iron workers—that they know nothing about the trade, in fact. What does it mean?"

"What does it matter to you what I am doing? Lemme tell you, you can't come here bossing me."

"While Mr. Guild is away——"

"Yah! Why don't Guild come here himself? I'll do as I dam' please," declared Malloy. "I won't be dictated to by a snip of a girl like you!"

"You will be dictated to by the company for whom you work, Mr. Malloy," she said coldly. "Don't you bluster and swear. You cannot intimidate me.

"Now, sir, I want to see all these men you have hired. I want them lined up here. And I want them to understand that you are only engaging men for work temporarily; the company does not give you authority to hire whom and what you please.

"We have always had the best workmen to be obtained. We have some of the best now. We'll not have greenhorns hired to come in here and endanger the lives of the other workmen.

"If you don't know how to select journeymen bridge-builders, the company will find means of engaging them through some other channel."

There was an unmistakable cheer from the crowd of men who had gathered within earshot behind Malloy. These were men whose faces were more or less familiar to her. She knew some of them by name, and knew that they were old employees.

But her words sent Malloy into a paroxysm of rage. He swung his fists and swore like a pirate. What he might have followed this outburst with she never discovered, for Fred Brayman suddenly took a hand in the matter.

Not even when the young man had threatened Geoghan, the contractor, had he looked so much the tiger as he did now! With one muscular hand hooked into Malloy's collar, he dragged the choking foreman suddenly forward, plump on his knees at the feet of Miss Holland.

"Down there, you dog! Down on your knees!" Brayman said huskily. "Beg her pardon for that language, or I'll leave you without enough breath to take you home. Quick, now!"

His other fist, held threateningly over Mr. Malloy's head had never looked so big and coarse to the girl before. She could not see in his attitude the manly vigor and honest indignation which possessed him. She only saw the brutal side of his character shown suddenly forth.

"Stop! stop!" she commanded. "Let that man go. If you strike him, Mr. Brayman, I'll never forgive you!"

"Aw! let him soak him one, miss!" exclaimed somebody in the crowd. "It's what he needs."

"I command you!" she repeated. Her eyes blazed into Brayman's own, and quelled him. "If you ever lift your hand in *my* defense, sir, I'll never forgive you!"

Malloy, terrified, and misunderstanding the significance of her words, was already babbling some kind of a protest and excuse. Brayman dropped his hand from his collar, and shrank back under Miss Holland's indignant glance.

The foreman got up gingerly. She turned upon him with the same calmness she had before displayed.

"Remember, Malloy. You will hire no more hands. These you have taken on I will look over and weed out such as I think are unfitted for the work——"

"*You!* What do you know about this job. I wanter know? Why don't the Burlingham Company send a *man* here?"

"When the circumstances become such that a *man* is needed, perhaps they will," Miss Holland said. "Meanwhile *I* will do very well, I think.

"Now, let it be understood. This crowd of new men will have to be sifted. We will pay for one day's work to all; but before night I will send over word which men are to be kept, and which are to be turned off."

"You will, eh? We'll see what the union has to say to such highhanded actions. Let me tell you, my girl, that if you carry out any such plan, I'll shut down the whole job.

"I'll have the men called out on strike. I'll cripple ye! I'll blacklist the company—if there's enough left of it to be blacklisted. I'll fix you——"

She went away with his muttered threats still following her. Before she got entirely away from the building site a bare armed workman came close to her side and whispered in her ear:

"Miss, I say! You take a tip from me. Just you see Lafe Porter."

"Who is he?"

"Lafe runs the local branch of the union. You see him first—before Malloy gets to him with his lies. Lafe is square, and he'll see you through—if you're willing to do the square thing by the union."

She nodded understandingly. The advice gave her an idea, and one that she believed would give her the whip-hand of Malloy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PUZZLING CLUE.

FAITHFUL to her word, Miss Holland went to the hospital before returning to the offices. She was determined to forestall any malicious stories in the afternoon papers about the heartlessness of the corporation.

She was allowed to see the man as soon as the doctors got through with him. It was a clean break, and the report was that he would be all right as soon as the bone knit.

She found out about his family, learned that his wife had not been informed, and promised to send the woman assurance of help while he was ill.

"And how came you on a job like that?" she asked pointedly. "You've been a roustabout on the docks, you say?"

"Why, work was slack, mem, an' they promised me a skilled hand's pay."

"And you're not a skilled bridge-builder?"

"Of course not, mem. No more's half the fellers Malloy's hiring. I dunno his game, but ter tell ye the trut', now't you're so kind, mem, it's a rotten lot of bullies he's gittin' together."

With this information to back up Brayman's statement and her own personal observation, Miss Holland returned to the offices and sent a note by Morry to the leader of the branch union of the Structural Iron & Bridgebuilders' Association, Mr. Lafe Porter.

Meanwhile, during her absence, a telegram had arrived from No. 2 Mill in response to her second wire. It said:

> Full reply to yours of yesterday addressed to your Mr. Guild, who has particulars of the matter. We are following his instructions.

The situation was evidently a shaky one. If Guild understood all about the carload of unstamped framework, what should she do about it?

Should she go ahead and allow the unmarked pieces to be used? Yet she knew very well that that was against the rules of the corporation. And if the rules had been waived in this case, surely she would have heard something about it.

That is, she would have heard about it if the officers at large had known about it. Guild might not have told her; but one of the others would. Guild never had told her more than he could help.

Now, what could she do? Would she be right in accepting the statement of the mill and allow the unmarked pieces used?

Yet, what if Guild, on his own responsibility, had allowed the mills to send on certain parts of the framing that had not passed inspection by the Plimsole Engineering Bureau? Should *she* go back of the known rules of the company for which she worked?

What was in that letter from No. 2 Mill, on Guild's desk? What was the understanding between the steel people and the superintendent of construction? Was it as a secret understanding, for the best interests of the Burlingham Building Company?

This thought brought her finally to a conclusion. She dictated the following telegram to the mill:

> Mr. Gould at present away. The Burlingham Building Company accepts no steel for this contract unless inspected and stamped by the Plimsole Engineering Company. We hold carload mentioned to your order.

Then she went over to Guild's desk, selected the letter bearing the card of No. 2 Mill in the corner, and locked it securely into a drawer of her own.

"If there is nothing in it, I have done no harm in retaining the letter," she thought. "If there is treachery—well, it is just as well to have such evidence as there may be to justify my action."

It was after lunch that the next disturbing incident occurred. Mr. Stoefel, wearing a very lugubrious face, came to her with a letter. The bank messenger had just left it, and it was addressed to Mr. Zeigler.

"I knew they'd hear these stories—or see the papers, or something!" groaned the bookkeeper. "What will we do now, Miss Holland?"

"I'll go and see the president of the

bank myself. It is a bad plan, I believe, to try to deceive the bank with which you have any dealings—or any other bank, for they have a community of interests and a strict blacklist."

"But they—they'll shut down on us if they learn the officers have all gone away."

"How can they? Don't they always pay money to your order? Isn't our balance all right?"

"I know—but——"

"You leave it to me," said Miss Holland, taking the note, and with an appearance of much greater assurance than she really felt, she started for the bank with which the Burlingham Building Company deposited.

This was really the first occasion on which she had been obliged to transact important business with a man of affairs since the strange disappearance of Victor C. Crest and his associates; and to say that she assumed the task boldly would be untrue.

But she knew that a display of timidity would damn her irrevocably in the eyes of the hard-headed financier whom she was about to approach. She must be open as to the admission of facts, but very cunning as to any exhibition of personal fear of the conditions which had overtaken her.

In other words, she knew she must impress the bank president with the idea that she felt herself quite able to conduct the business of the building corporation until the officers returned, or until the legal administrators of their affairs should see fit to depose her from the position of acting manager.

The president of the bank was a suave, cautious man who punctuated his mild speeches with deprecatory waves of the eyeglasses which he affected but seldom looked through—a man indeed in whose mouth "butter wouldn't melt."

He was so courteous, and listened so politely to his visitors, and spoke so softly, that one knew intuitively that he was as hard and shrewd as they grew, and quite unable to be moved by either pity or personal feeling. Quite the right sort of man, in fact, to be at the head of a banking institution, than which nothing can be more pitiless or less human.

He greeted Miss Holland most courteously. She handed him his own note to Mr. Zeigler.

"I have come in response to that, sir," she said, "although I do not know its contents. Our Mr. Zeigler is not in town."

"Indeed? And Mr. Crest?"

"Is likewise away. In fact, *I* am at present managing the business. I am Miss Holland."

"I have heard of you, Miss Holland," and the president bowed again. "You will be seated? Thank you."

"Now, Mr. Allingham, what is it you wish to know?" she asked frankly.

"Ah—er—why, I had a small question to ask Mr. Zeigler regarding a loan that he spoke of making," began the president, with his usual circumlocution.

"I am afraid you will have to talk with me if you wish any information whatsoever—or with our legal adviser, Mr. Jennessy."

Mr. Allingham sat up suddenly and cleared his throat.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Lemuel Jennessy is your counsel?"

"He is, sir. I can tell you the facts regarding the absence of our officers—as far as we know them. *He* can give you his opinion of the way things stand and the company's ability to pay its just debts and carry out its contracts.

"Merely because the officers are away, does not stop our business, despite lying reports. Our contracts with the proprietors of the Arcade Building are being fulfilled. *You* know the condition of our balance."

"I have the statement of that before me, Miss Holland," said Mr. Allingham softly. "And my purpose in sending for Mr. Zeigler—er—was to inquire about the check drawn yesterday."

"Wasn't it signed as usual by Mr. Stoefel? We always draw on the same day for our mechanics' wages. *I* countersigned the check. I often do so.

"I have here with me now another check signed by the bookkeeper, to pay off a certain number of men which we have discovered were hired by a treacherous foreman, and which men we do not propose to keep after to-night. I wish you to honor this check, too, Mr. Allingham."

"That, Miss Holland, I suppose is—er—all right. Of course, you are not going outside your powers if Mr. Jennessy approves."

"The families of the officials and principal stockholders of the company approve of my actions, sir. I am merely doing my duty as I see it."

"Ah—very brave indeed!" declared Mr. Allingham, with mild enthusiasm. "And for a young lady, too, of such unquestioned family and character. I had the happiness to know your father, Miss Holland."

The girl winced, but made no reply, only continuing to gaze questioningly into his face, expecting something else from his shifting manner.

"You see, certain stories have reached our ears regarding the condition of affairs with the Burlingham Building Company——"

"And those stories have come to you direct, I presume, from a certain rival concern, Mr. Allingham?" she interposed sharply.

The president of the bank really looked slightly confused.

"Oh, no, my dear young lady—oh, no!" he said. "The stories came to us in—in quite the usual way."

"Which is an underhand way, I'll be bound," thought Miss Holland, but she knew better than to say it.

"Of course, we are obliged to look out for ourselves and our stockholders, you know," added Allingham, with a pleasant laugh.

"We shall not ask you to let us overdraw our account for a single dollar, Mr. Allingham," she said firmly, rising now. "If we find it advisable to raise funds to carry on the business before Mr. Zeigler or Mr. Crest returns, I will advise Mr. Jennessy to make arrangements in some other quarter."

"Ah, my dear young lady!" exclaimed the president, with some mild excitement. "You quite misunderstand me."

"I believe it is not customary for a banking institution, with whom a concern has dealt for some years, and which holds something like twenty thousand dollars of the said concern's money on deposit, to raise objections to its checks or question its credit at the first breath of suspicion that scandal may blow upon its name.

"If it *is* so," added Miss Holland, in righteous indignation, "I wonder that banking institutions do business at all. Good afternoon, sir."

She went away with her head in the air, but knowing secretly in her heart that she had made another failure. Business is business. There can be no sentiment in it. And she had allowed sentiment to creep into her final remarks to the bank president.

Oh, why was she always to be hampered by the womanly instincts which ensnared her in the midst of the coldest business proposition? It was the littleness and meanness of Allingham that had raised her ire.

She found the detective waiting by her desk when she returned. She was eager to hear what he had to tell her; but the way he began was not encouraging:

"I tell you, Miss Holland, the unanimity with which those five men seem to have covered their tracks is uncanny. It begins to look more and more to my mind as though they had voluntarily and intentionally disappeared.

"I can't find a living soul who heard them drop any remark pointing to a single reason for their absence. I have searched their usual haunts. I have examined dozens of people. And I've raked the gashouse district with a fine-tooth comb!

"But riding over here in the car just now I came across something that seems to suggest—well, it may be unwise to say what it suggests; I'll show it to you first and see what you think."

He placed a folded afternoon paper—a copy of the *World*—before her and pointed to an advertisement in small type printed under the heading: "Lost, Found, and Rewards."

BROKE ADRIFT OR STOLEN, my canal barge Lillie Lee, from Doxie's Pier, North Side. Ten dollars will be paid for information leading to recovery, and no questions asked, if goods are untouched.

SIMON SKILLINGS.

"'Lillie Lee!'" gasped Miss Holland, looking at Burlingame with amazement. "It can't be possible that *that*——"

"Everything is possible. Some things aren't probable," was the detective's response. "If this woman in the case turns out to be a canal boat? Gee! I had thought of its being a five-cent cigar, or a race-horse; but this!"

"It can't be possible, Mr. Burlingame," declared the confidential clerk.

"Everything's possible in this world, I tell you," he said, still laughing.

"But what could these gentlemen have to do with a canal boat? And have they run off with it? And why?"

"Well, why should the five of them have run off with one lady?" he demanded. "Oh, the canal-boat for mine! I'm going to hunt up this Simon Skillings."

"It—it's preposterous!"

"So it is. Or would be if there wasn't a single connecting link," said Burlingame, becoming serious again. "I might say two links."

"What are they, sir?"

"Well, I have found out that four of these young men who make up the roster of your company landed at Burlingham originally on a canal-boat. Two of them worked on the boat, in fact."

"Oh, I know all about that. Mr. Kessler told me. It is only a coincidence."

"Yes. A coincidence. One of those things we scoff at because they are so common. We will pass that up, then. But there is another link—and it's well forged in my mind, and was the instant that advertisement caught my eye. Do you know where the old Doxie Pier is, Miss Holland?"

"Of course not."

"It is disused now. The Doxie Soap Company has gone out of existence and nothing has been done with the plant for two or three years.

"The wharf is on the north side of the town, just west of the opening of the Centralia & Ohio Canal. Boats often used to dock there before the canal traffic was knocked out by the railroad combine.

"They used to discharge the boats into the river through the head lock, and warp 'em along to Doxie's plant. Humph! Well, that's ancient history that you're not interested in. What I am getting at is, that Doxie's is in the gas-house district. A man walking down Dolliver Street toward the river would come out within half a block of Doxie's. See?"

"Mr. Zeigler was last seen there!"

"So we understand."

"But I can't imagine why five respectable, well-to-do young men, with the cares of a business like this on their shoulders, should make way with a canal-boat!" she gasped. "And they were all in dress-suits, too!"

"I'm not up in social etiquette," said Burlingame grimly, preparing to depart. "Perhaps that is the proper dress to wear nowadays when one elopes with a canal-boat."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRUMP CARD.

It was too utterly ridiculous, Mary Holland refused to believe it. After the detective had gone she laughed, though her amusement was not unmixed with chagrin.

She had depended so much upon the activities of the Hammerton Agency man, and he had unearthed this single clue! The name of the woman found in the scraps of letters to Victor C. Crest and Mainwarring Bates was the same as that of a certain canal-boat which seemed to be missing. Therefore——

"Well, I always thought that the business of detecting crime was left to the lowest order of human intellects. Now I know it to be true," she declared, and dismissed the detective and his wonderful deductions from her mind in favor of more important business matters.

She had drawn a sufficient sum from the bank to pay one day's wages to the new men Malloy had so recklessly hired; but now Stoefel came to her with a difficulty.

All day small creditors had been running into the offices in evident alarm, to present their bills, and the bookkeeper had met each demand with ready cash.

In some cases the creditors had plainly shown how foolish they felt because of the "scare" which somebody, or something, had inspired in their minds. They acted like the depositors of a bank on which there is an unwarranted run; having received their money they looked as though they wished they hadn't asked

for it, especially as Stoefel was particular to tell them to close up any further account they might have against the Burlingham Company and bring it in immediately for settlement.

But these drains upon the cash drawer had been so great that the bookkeeper, confronted with a bill of some size, found that he could not pay it out-of-hand.

"What shall I do? Make a check for this? The bank is closed now," said he. "It is Jacobson again. He hasn't been in before to-day, and he has a lawyer with him, I believe. I think he's been put up to this game."

"What is the amount?"

"Four hundred and seventy dollars."

"And he comes for such an amount after banking hours? Send him in here to talk to me. I don't care to have you write any checks against our account at the bank, excepting those to be paid personally to you or myself. That Allingham is a snake in the grass, I believe; I don't trust him."

"Why, Miss Holland! He is one of the foremost business men of our city!" gasped Stoefel.

"That's why I don't trust him," she returned grimly. "Send Jacobson to me."

The plumber came in with a smirk. At his elbow was a dapper little fellow who looked like a lawyer's clerk.

"I don't want to disoblige a lady, miss, but I am a poor man—a poor man," began the plumber. "I need the money, an' I ask Mr. Stoefel for it, and he say——"

"You needed the money when you were in yesterday, didn't you?" she asked him sharply.

"Oh, yes, ma'am."

"Why didn't you come in for it to-day, then, previous to the closing of the bank? We do not keep four hundred and seventy dollars lying loose in our safe overnight."

"Hem!" said the man at the plumber's elbow. "I advise my client to ask for a check, then."

Miss Holland scrutinized this pompous little man before she replied.

"Who is your friend, Jacobson?" she asked finally.

"He isn't my friend," declared the plumber, with more haste—and possibly more truth—than politeness. "He's my lawyer, Mr. Abram Krause."

"Well, I'd like to know whether I am going to conduct this business with *you* or with your lawyer? For if the latter, then I will wash my hands of the entire affair and Mr. Abram Krause can see the Burlingham Company's counsel, Mr. Lemuel Jennessy, and make the best arrangement he can—at *your* expense—for the payment of this account."

"Oh, no, ma'am!" cried Jacobson eagerly. "He iss not acting in this case. Not at all. It iss merely a friendly feeling on Mr. Krause's part; he comes mit me to see that I justice gets——"

Jacobson was forgetting his English idioms in his nervousness.

"See here, Jacobson," said the confidential clerk, tapping the desk with her pencil and staring the writhing plumber out of countenance, "you know very well that your account is not due until the first of the month. You have no business to present it before that time.

"But you claim to need the money, and you can have it—to-morrow morning. We never pay small accounts by check, excepting on the first of the month, when we clear up all such claims. You have worked for the Burlingham Building Company long enough to know that.

"So, if you desire your four hundred and seventy dollars—*less five per cent*, because the bill is not yet due—come in half an hour after the banks open to-morrow and Mr. Stoefel will pay you. And I think that will be about the last account you will ever hold against this company. We don't wish to do business with people like you."

"Ach! This is an outrage!" cried Jacobson, almost weeping. "Five per cent!"

"It's worth it, if you need the money. In any case, you get no more work from us. Now, go away—and tell those who put you up to this to make up the five per cent you have lost by being so precipitate."

Jacobson now turned to Krause, whom he evidently considered at fault for advising him in the matter. They went out wrangling in bastard German, to the vast amusement of the clerks within earshot.

Miss Holland put this affair down to the count against the Sampson Construction Company. One hand moved all these puppets working against the interests of the Burlingham Company—Malloy and his treachery, the article in the *Clarion*, the bank president's unfair suspicions, the early demands made upon the cash drawer for bills not yet due according to business usage.

Could she not look to the same source as the starting-point of the entire trouble? She put aside Burlingame and his canal-boat clue as childish and puerile, and clung more tenaciously to the suspicions of J. H. Morehouse which Fred Brayman had first audibly expressed.

The afternoon was slipping by rapidly, and she had time to be considerably worried regarding a certain matter before Mr. Lafe Porter, the Burlingham member of the executive committee of the Structural Iron & Bridgeworkers' Association, and the head and front of the local union, presented himself before her desk.

Were I drawing the ordinarily accepted picture of the labor agitator, I would say that Mr. Lafe Porter wore a red vest, his hat cocked at an angle, and smoked a black cigar while he talked to Miss Holland.

But as this happens to be a character taken from life, I will merely explain in passing that the representative of the Structural Iron & Bridgeworkers' Association was a very quietly dressed, scholarly looking man, who wore eyeglasses, spoke quietly, and chose his English well, and was really, aside from Mr. Lemuel Jennessy, the most polished gentleman who had sat beside Miss Holland's desk during these three days of her particular trial.

"We are not in the habit of treating with employees of any concern, Miss Holland," he observed kindly. "This must explain my delay, as I wished to make some necessary inquiries before answering your note, either in person or otherwise.

"Our arrangements with the Burlingham Building Company have always been satisfactory—satisfactory, I mean, considering the general attitude of the employer's associations toward our union in this part of the State.

"I understand that one of your foremen, James Malloy, long in your employ, has a grievance against you, or against your methods, and this had to be looked into first. There is a peculiar situation here, I understand, at present. Your officers seem to have disappeared."

"The officers of the company have gone away."

"But you know where they are?"

"That is aside from the matter we are to discuss, Mr. Porter," she told him firmly. "You will find our accounts all right at the bank; we owe nobody whom we cannot pay; the capital has not been withdrawn from the company; members of the families of the officers are cognizant of our affairs, and are willing to see me manage the business for the present under the advice of Mr. Jennessy, our counsel."

"Well, well! It looks straight enough. Besides, I see that the *Clarion* has withdrawn its statements in this afternoon's issue. Have you seen the apology?"

"No. But it was made under threat of suit for libel by Mr. Jennessy," she said.

"That looks better and better!" he admitted.

"As for this Malloy—he is a traitor, Mr. Porter! He is doing his best to ruin the work at the Arcade Building."

"That is a bold statement for you to make, Miss Holland," declared the union leader.

She explained her reasons for the charge, and Mr. Porter listened discreetly.

"But you cannot discharge the man."

"I can and must discharge these men he has hired who are not iron workers. It is for the benefit of the union, as much as for our own benefit, that I do this."

"Well—perhaps."

"You know it is, sir!" she cried earnestly.

"But how do you propose to do it? If you discharge them over Malloy's head, Malloy will walk out and call out the union men."

"You don't mean to say that he is a bigger man than *you* in the union?"

Mr. Porter smiled quietly.

"He may be a louder talker—and talk counts for a lot in moments of excitement. Every man in the union knows that if our journeymen are to be discharged over the heads of foremen, and by people who are really not able to judge the merits of the matter" (he let her down as easily as possible there), "that the union idea is endangered.

"We have fought so hard for recognition by the employers in this section that we cannot afford to give up an inch we have gained."

Miss Holland leaned forward and transfixed the gentleman with her earnest gaze.

"Suppose I offer you an advantage which the union has never yet obtained from any employer in Burlingham?" she demanded.

He looked at her keenly. "You mean——"

She whispered several phrases into his ear that the neighboring clerks might not overhear. Mr. Porter's face remained unchanged, but his eyes sparkled suddenly.

"You will—er—sign an agreement now to that effect, Miss Holland?"

"*I* will sign it—yes. But, remember, my name is worth nothing after our officers come back and Mr. Guild, or some other properly qualified superintendent of construction, takes charge."

"I can only agree to fulfil the contract while I manage the business, and promise to do my best to have it continued by my—my successor."

Mr. Porter actually laughed.

"Your name will be worth nothing, eh?" he cried. "I'll show you, Miss Holland, how much I think it is worth—what weight I consider it will have with your corporation when Mr. Crest and the others return.

"I'll take your word for this—your verbal promise. I don't need your signature. And let me shake hands with you, Miss Holland," he added, rising.

"I admire your qualities as a business woman. You are as shrewd as I often meet them—fair, too. Go ahead and spring your mine upon Jim Malloy—and I'll be there to see that you get fair play!"

He bowed over her hand courteously and took his departure, leaving Mary Holland flushed with pride and satisfaction.

CHAPTER XX.

NIPPED IN THE BUD.

YOUNG MORRY had been hanging about her desk and "making eyes" at her for an hour, and busy as she was this so got on her nerves that finally she had to demand of him pointblank what he wanted.

"You watch me like a cat, and you're always stuttering and stammering when you address me. What do you want, child?" she demanded.

"I guess you won't listen to anything I say," he returned gloomily. "You and that detective don't want me no more, I can see that. But I know a thing or two, I do!"

"If you know anything, I'm glad," she returned tartly. "What is it?"

"It's about that feller that lost the canal-boat."

"Humph! So you were listening, were you?" she said sharply.

"Umph!" with a nod of his curly head. "I got a paper and looked. I thought I knew the name."

"What name? The canal-boat's name?"

"No'm. Mr. Skillings, ma'am. Simon Skillings, the paper says. I knowed I'd heard the name, Miss Holland," whispered Morry.

"Well, for pity's sake, who is the man? Mr. Burlingame's gone to find him now, I believe—though it's all foolishness!"

"I don't know him, ma'am."

"I thought you just told me you did?" she cried.

"No'm. I said I knowed the name. I meant I'd heard it before. And—don't you remember when that drunken man was in this morning—that Cap'n Horrocks that made us all laugh so, Miss Holland?"

"For mercy's sake! I never thought of it. He *did* say something about a man named Skillings."

"Yes'm. I heard him."

"Can it be possible that the lost canal-boat really *has* something to do with this mystery after all? Did I have an

explanation of it right at hand this morning, and did not know enough to grasp it?"

This she said to herself, while Morry watched her with his beadlike eyes.

"Dear me, Morry! How can we find that Captain Horrocks? I don't know how to reach Mr. Burlingame. I never mentioned that funny old man to *him*."

"No'm. I know you didn't. Lemme find that sea captain, will you?"

"What can you do toward finding the man?"

"I kin try, Miss Holland," cried the boy eagerly. "Just you lemme try! I know where those sort of men hang out along the wharves. I'll find somebody who knows him, and will tell me where he lives. Then I'll run back and tell you."

"You know a good deal that a boy shouldn't, I believe, Morry," she said gravely. "I don't know about letting you go to such places."

"Huh! Nothin' will hurt me. Men don't pay no more attention to boys like me than they do to flies—'nless we git in their way. Then they swear at us. You lemme go, Miss Holland!"

But something besides his pleading urged her to say yes. Her curiosity and wonder were aroused. Was there really another link in the chain which Burlingame seemed to think was being forged between the lost canal-boat and the missing men?

She wanted to know the truth or falsity of the suspicions so suddenly aroused in her mind, and Morry's proposal was too tempting to resist. The instant he saw her decision dawning in the expression of her face, he seized his cap and ran out.

"If I don't find out before the office closes, I'll come to your house, Miss Holland," he whispered shrilly, before disappearing.

"There! the little rascal only wanted to get away for the rest of the afternoon. I'll bet there is a ball-game somewhere!" exclaimed this very proper young lady. "I wish—I wish *I* could run away as easily and go to a ball-game—or something!"

But it was nothing like a ball-game that turned up to take her hastily from the office a few minutes later. It was a message from Brayman over the 'phone.

"For heaven's sake, Miss Holland, tell me what to do? The men are all going to strike. Malloy has been talking to them all day, and he's undermined the whole lot of them, I believe.

"Everything's at a standstill. I haven't done anything to the scoundrel, because you forbade me. But I wish I'd sent him to the hospital this morning along with that fellow who had his leg smashed."

"Your judgment has not improved, I see, Mr. Brayman," she replied sarcastically. "I'll be over immediately," and she hung up the receiver without further delay.

She took with her the money she had drawn from the bank that afternoon for the especial purpose of paying off the men she had determined must be discharged. Matters had finally come to that pass where the trump card which she had shown Mr. Porter in secret must be played openly to beat Malloy—if it could!

Aye, there was the rub! It might not turn the trick after all. What influence Malloy might have over the old employees of the company she could not know until it came to the pinch.

He was an old figure in the Burlingham trade. He had worked for the Sampson Company before Guild and his associates came into the town at all. He had left the Sampson Company with Guild, and had probably hired most of the old and regular employees of the new building corporation.

If, having turned traitor to his employers with the expectation of going back to his former job with the Sampson Company, he had promised the Burlingham Company's regular men work there likewise, Malloy's influence, she knew, could not be easily combated.

Work really was at a standstill when she reached the Arcade site. Brayman met her with flushed face and plain evidences of wrath.

"You don't realize what you have put upon me here, Miss Holland!" he burst out at once. "I have no standing with the men—I am merely a spotter; and then you question my judgment and good sense.

"I want you to understand that I have handled bigger gangs of men than this before I ever heard of Burlingham, or any of its two-for-a-cent building companies; but a man with his hands tied by a—— by a——"

"By a woman?" she suggested, in a honeyed tone that her looks belied.

"It doesn't matter whether it be a woman or a man, as long as the person doing the tying knows practically nothing about the business," he returned grimly, and this time refusing to drop his gaze before her.

"So *you* have revolted, too, have you?" she observed with scorn, and pushed on to where she saw Malloy, red faced and with swinging arms, addressing the crowd of workmen.

But Brayman was after her at once.

"You mustn't go over there alone, Miss Holland!" he cried in sudden fear.

"I'm in less danger without a hothead like you in my train," she declared.

"No, you're not. I'm going with you," and he picked up a long-handled wrench and set out doggedly in her footsteps.

As she passed one of the engines she beckoned to the engineer.

"Mr. Fitzpatrick, blow your whistle until you see me raise my hand for silence. I've got to talk to those men."

"Glory be, miss!" muttered the engineer. "But it's you thot has the pluck!"

She pushed her way with apparent unconcern into the crowd. The shrill voice of the whistle instantly drowned Malloy's words, and caused every man to turn to find out what it meant.

They saw Miss Holland approaching and made a lane for her to the spot where the foreman stood.

"What!" cried Malloy, and although his voice was drowned, she read the words on his lips. "Has this damned petticoat come here again?"

Some of the rougher men laughed. All seemed to talk at once. But the whistle made most of the comment inaudible.

When she knew she had gained their attention she turned and signaled Fitzpatrick. The whistle stopped so suddenly that she began to speak before Malloy had recovered from his surprise.

"As I told you this morning, men, I have come to weed out the recently hired employees of the Burlingham Building Company. I find that Malloy has been hiring hands haphazard, without regard to their fitness for the work, or their knowledge of the trade. One accident has resulted from this already. I am ready to pay every new man his day's wage. Those who are not iron workers by trade cannot remain here another day. I mean exactly what I say!"

"Listen to the girl, boss!" yelled Malloy. "Don't ye mind her!"

He might have said more, but Brayman was right beside him. The young man hissed something into the ear of the foreman and the latter subsided instantly.

Miss Holland, without paying the least attention to this byplay, went on:

"The Burlingham Building Company want journeymen structural ironworkers and bridge builders. We want men who understand their business and who have a standing among their mates that cannot be disputed.

"Those of you who answer these qualifications know that an attempt to make you work with greenhorns endangers your lives—and endangers the life of your union!"

She had hit the keynote there. A murmur went up from the listening throng. Somebody cried: "Go on!" and then there fell silence again.

"I will tell you now that I have agreed to a new rule of the union and it is a rule which I shall adhere to as long as I am acting manager of this business."

There was a laugh here, but it was quickly quelled. The men were interested.

"And I shall endeavor to have the rule continued in force after Mr. Guild returns. That rule is that no new man can hereafter be engaged to work for us on this, or any other building, as a structural ironworker, who does not carry a card from the Structural Iron & Bridgeworkers' Association.

"That does not mean that we shall take any and all men whom the union may send us; we shall select our employees as before. But only such men as carry the card of your union shall be engaged, unless the supply of union men should fail."

She was interrupted by a roar of

voices. It was plain that she had flung a bomb in their midst. The union men were cheering, while those who were outside the trade, and knew they had no business here, showed their discontent.

Malloy, his face ablaze, leaped to the front.

"She can't do it! she hasn't the power! She's foolin' youse!" he shouted.

It was another hand than Brayman's that put the foreman suddenly aside. A quiet gentleman, wearing eyeglasses and a flower in his buttonhole, stepped squarely before the mouthing foreman.

"Porter! Lafe Porter!" went up the cry.

The labor leader smiled. When the noise subsided he said quietly:

"Friends, I am here to say that 'she *can* do it!' Miss Holland has satisfied me that she means what she says, and that her word is to be taken by us as final. And no man," he swung suddenly and pointed a long finger at Malloy, "can remain a good union man and try to balk her effort to establish this rule."

He said something else to Malloy, but nobody heard it except the foreman himself. That wilted conspirator sullenly obeyed the command by coming forward once more and saying:

"The old men on the job, and the other union men, can go back to work. These others will be paid off," and then he turned his back on the men he had hired to accomplish the secret purpose.

"Mr. Brayman will attend to the paying off," added Miss Holland calmly, handing the money to the young man.

"And you can find somebody else for my job, miss," said Malloy, with lowering gaze. "I'm through."

"Very well. I will take your resignation under consideration, Mr. Malloy," she replied, and walked quickly away.

When she reached the street she heard many of the men cheering again, and she knew that this time they were cheering her.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHERE IT ALL STARTED.

MR. PORTER appeared beside her before she was a block away. He was smiling cheerfully, but he had a serious word to say to her; and although that word was the drop that embittered her cup of satisfaction, she was wise enough to accept it in the friendly spirit in which it was spoken.

So she entered the offices and sat down at her desk in a very grave frame of mind. For some time she remained with her hands in her lap, doing nothing but thinking of the words of the labor leader, knowing that they voiced her own best judgment.

Should she yield to what she knew was wise, and for the betterment of the corporation? Or should she allow her own petty spite to darken her clear sight and good sense?

Perhaps a harder struggle had not gone on in her mind since she first accepted this burden of responsibility. Finally she shook herself, muttering:

"It seems to me as though I have done nothing, from the beginning, but give in to that man! And I dislike him—I *hate* him!"

But when she called a stenographer to her and dictated the following order for immediate transcription, her face and manner was calm:

> Until further published notice, Mr. Brayman will have complete and entire charge and oversight of the work on and about this building. Foremen and others will look to him for orders.
> THE BURLINGHAM BUILDING COMPANY.

This was typewritten and she had it taken at once to the Arcade site and posted where it would be read by all the workmen.

"He'll think I've done it because I'm afraid he'll resign in the middle of the mess," she told herself. "But I don't care. It is the right thing to do—the best thing for the company's interests. I'm not running this to please myself, goodness knows! I—I just don't know what I *am* running it for, I guess," she added.

The hour of closing came and neither the detective nor Morry had returned, so she went home in much perturbation of mind over the mysterious canal-boat, Lillie Lee, and the old man who called himself "Cap'n Joe."

Heretofore she had been glad to get home at night. Home meant a refuge

from the trials and objectionable work of the office.

But now her responsibilities followed her, and she was "hard ridden by de black dawg," according to Florida. "Dat chile done got sumpin' on her mind," declared the black woman to Mrs. Holland.

Kate looked wise and nodded across the table, as though to say: "And *I* know what it is!" and Mary, remembering her younger sister's accusation of the morning, actually blushed.

That blush made her angry, and she was snappy to everybody all through dinner, and called Florida a foolish old woman for suggesting "a cup ob sas'fras tea"—the old servant cure-all for every childish physical and mental ill.

Mary Holland's nerves were really in sad need of a tonic of some kind, for she started at every sound, and a dozen times between dinner and eight o'clock went to the window or door.

She was really hoping against hope that either the detective or Morry would come; but Kate had her own ideas, and she finally slipped out by the side door and was out when the doorbell was finally rung.

It was Morry, flushed, dirty, and eager.

"And hungry, too, I'll be bound!" exclaimed Miss Holland, looking at the boy commiseratingly.

"Well, ma'am, I ain't had the time to go home for supper. It was special business you sent me on, ma'am. I knew you'd want to hear."

"Did you find the man?"

"I found out where Cap'n Josephus Horrocks lives—yes, ma'am."

"Come out to the kitchen and have your supper, and you can tell me about it there," she said, and so they invaded Florida's quarters, greatly to that person's disgust.

"Tell me first of all, Morry," Miss Holland began, "did you see anybody hanging about the front of the house here?"

The boy looked up with that birdlike tilt of his head, his beadlike eyes snapping.

"I ain't seen a livin' soul, ma'am," he affirmed.

"Sure? Nobody in a long coat and slouch hat?"

He jerked his head from side to side emphatically, with his mouth full. Finally he sputtered out: "There ain't nobody there—sure!"

"Well, what did you learn about Horrocks?"

"Why, I didn't find him. I guess he's gone on a toot. They say he does once in a while."

"So I should judge."

"He's an old canal man. He used to be cap'n of a boat. He lives with his daughter 'way over on the North Commons. I know the house. Sundays, we boys go up that way fishin', an' skylarkin'."

"Can we get there to-night? His daughter will be at home, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. She's his housekeeper. She'll be there."

"Are you sure you can find it in the evening?"

"Why, sure! You take the Fifth Street line and change at Margaret Street, an'——"

"Hurry and finish your supper," she interposed, "and we'll go. I'll make this all right with you, Morry."

The boy grinned as she turned away and one of his grimy hands sought his trousers' pockets where now *two* half dollars reposed. Miss Holland went upstairs to put on her hat and wrap. As she came down Kate was just returning from her ramble.

The younger sister almost ran down the older on the stairs.

"Oh, May!" she gasped.

"Where have you been, Kitty?" demanded Miss Holland, with gravity.

"I've seen him. I know who he is now. You—you've been fooling me, Miss Smartie!"

"What do you mean?" cried Miss Holland.

"You know whom I mean. And you are going out to meet him now, I do believe. Oh, aren't you sly!"

"Kitty! If you repeat such a thing to me again, I shall surely tell mother. I don't know but I shall tell her, anyway, as soon as I get back."

"So you *are* going out?"

"I am," her sister returned coldly, and passed on.

But her heart was beating with something like fear. What did Kate's excite-

ment mean? Had she seen the shadow again? Yet Morry had declared he saw nobody as he came in.

She went quietly to the side door, slipped out, and crept through the garden to a point where she could see up and down the street. No suspicious person lingered within her view.

So, shaking off this disturbed feeling, she went back, found Morry finishing his supper with a monstrous wedge of pie, and together they left the house, hurrying toward the Fifth Street corner.

Again and again Miss Holland turned her head to see if they were being followed.

"Are you sure you see nothing of that man?" she questioned her escort again.

"Sure!" declared Morry, grinning in the dark.

The traitor knew very well that the shadow had gone on before.

It was a pleasant summer evening, but almost starless. When they left the Margaret Street car at its terminal, there was nearly a mile to walk—up the river road and then, when they reached the cut where the gravel pits lay, a climb up a steep bank and so, by a footpath, over the high common toward the scattered lights of a few small cottages far back from the highway.

Miss Holland had recovered her nerve and chatted cheerfully with her escort. She had seen no suspicious-looking person in the cars, nor on the street; and the Margaret Street line cars ran so seldom that she did not believe any ill-disposed person would try to follow her on the car behind the one she had secured.

From the high ridge of the common she glanced back once to the highway, shadowy and uncertain, winding townward. A carriage was coming swiftly along the road, the hoofs of the horses ringing smartly on the macadam.

It stopped at the gravel pits below the hill and she did not hear it again as she passed on with Morry to the house which he pointed out as being the domicile of the wooden-legged old canal man, Captain Horrocks.

Morry knocked and almost instantly a young woman came to the door, shading an oil lamp in her hand.

"Is this Miss Horrocks?" Mary asked quickly.

"For the land's sake! I thought it might be the captain. Yes, I'm Etta Horrocks. Won't you come in?"

"You can wait out her, Morry," said Miss Holland decidedly, and followed the captain's daughter into the house.

It was a tiny place, but the room into which Miss Etta ushered her visitor was neatly kept and, indeed, rather tastefully furnished. But the hostess gave Miss Holland little time to scrutinize her surroundings.

"You've the advantage of me, miss," she said, eying the visitor sharply after placing her in a chair. "I never saw you before."

"My name is Holland, Miss Horrocks."

"And I never heard of you before."

"I am the confidential clerk for the Burlingham Building Company. Your father was in there to-day——"

"Ah! I suspected it. He's a horrid old man!" declared Miss Etta, nodding her head emphatically. "I can't keep him straight now that we're on land. Afloat, it was different."

"Afloat?"

"Before we left the canal, Miss Holland. He was captain of a canal-boat. I always went with him. Mother used," she said simply.

"I came to see you——"

"About keeping him away from your offices, I s'pose? I knew how 'twould be if he got down into town. And Mr. Crest an' the rest of them have been so kind, too."

"It isn't that at all, Miss Horrocks. If I had known that your father was talking about when he came in to-day, I should have been glad to see him. But I didn't."

"What he was talking about?"

"The Lillie Lee. The canal-boat that——"

"Oh, Skillings' boat that Mr. Crest and the others hired the other night? You don't mean to say *they* know what has become of it?"

Evidently the situation was getting tangled, and Miss Holland at once entered into a detailed explanation. What she learned in return explained a part of the mystery which had been puzzling her so for three days past.

Miss Etta, who was a most practical

young woman, put it plainly and briefly thus:

"Why, we've known those boys since they first came to Burlingham. Mr. Zeigler and Guild longer than that. *They* were hands on our boat, before father gave up canal-boating and settled down here.

"Of course, we didn't know Mr. Bates till afterward. The first year after the four came to town, father still had his boat. It was moored down to Doxie's, and they came down and took dinner with us, and brought Mr. Bates with them—or Mr. Crest brought him.

"Then they made up a sort of society, agreeing to meet once a year, on the anniversary of their arrival here (they landed from father's boat, you know) and have a plain dinner such as I could cook.

"These dinners were to be held on some canal-boat. If they got rich they were to have champagne after it. If they didn't get rich, as Mr. Zeigler said, the dinner would be a godsend to them, for if I *do* say it, my cookin' is satisfying!

"When father sold his boat they arranged with him each year to find another that was tied up for that night. I guess Mr. Crest rather tired of the anniversary; but Mr. Zeigler and Mr. Kessler didn't.

"I cooked the dinner this year, and fixed it in Simon Skillings' boat down at Doxie's, and father looked after it till the young men came. I know he saw them go aboard—he said so——"

"But the letters?" interrupted Miss Holland.

"Oh, yes. I wrote 'em. They called me their 'scribe.' I typewrite for a grocerman up yonder on the hill afternoons, and some of the letters I wrote up there, and some down here. I notified them all according as Mr. Zeigler told me. Yes, I marked 'em so they'd know what they was, and not give 'em to clerks to open."

"But," cried the confidential clerk, in amazement, "what became of the five men after they went aboard the Lillie Lee? And what has become of the boat itself?"

"For the land's sake! Don't ask me!" cried Miss Etta. "Those poor young men—as nice fellows as ever I see. It's dreadful!"

"Nothing really *bad* could have happened," Miss Holland said doubtfully. "The boat couldn't have been sunk there at the wharf?"

"Ain't water enough scarcely to float her at Doxie's, let alone sink her."

"Then the boat's been taken off somewhere, and they are prisoners aboard her."

"My goodness gracious! do you think so? Why, if the Lillie Lee had gone up the canal again we, or Simon Skillings, would have heard about it."

"Then some enemy with a river tug has captured the canal-boat and towed it away, with the five aboard. It is a plot to ruin the Burlingham Building Company—I *know* it is. I—I have believed it from the first." This was hard for Mary Holland to say, even if Fred Brayman was not within earshot.

But she felt that she had made a great and important discovery. If she could only see Mr. Burlingame and start him upon the right track.

She was sure that the five officers of the building company, while holding their little banquet in the canal-boat, had been captured by the enemy and, canal-boat and all, spirited away. Who that enemy was, she did not stop to state to Miss Horrocks.

"If we can help you in any way, Miss Holland, just let me know," declared the captain's daughter, from the door of the cottage. "The captain will be sober to-morrow all right."

"Thank you," and Mary Holland turned to find Morry in the dusk of the summer night. But although she called his name several times, the boy did not appear.

"The little rascal!" she reflected. "He has grown tired and gone home. Well, I know the way," and she tripped swiftly over the common toward the public highway leading into town.

Her mind was so busy with the discoveries of the past few minutes that she did not think to be frightened until, running down the steep path to the road by the gravel pits, she plunked squarely into the arms of a burly figure that seemed to have been waiting for her.

She screamed, and sought to tear herself away from him, but the man hung on.

"I've got her!" he growled, evidently to a companion at no great distance. "Bring up the carriage. Ha! stop that, ye little wildcat!"

With one hand he seized both her wrists and she was helpless. She knew who it was. It was Jim Malloy.

Her mind was active enough then. She knew what this seizure meant. The old foreman was acting in concert with the parties who had captured the officers of the Burlingham Building Company.

She would be made a captive now, and the young corporation certainly would be at the mercy of its rivals!

She screamed—once, twice! Then Malloy's other hand was slapped over her mouth with cruel force. She almost fainted with pain and fright.

A closed carriage suddenly loomed before her and another man leaped down from the driver's seat to come to Malloy's assistance. But ere the second villain reached the struggling girl an evidently unexpected person took a hand in the proceedings.

There was the thunder of feet on the steep path behind them, and Miss Holland heard the impact of the blow which reached Malloy's neck. She was released as the man fell to the road with a frightened cry.

She herself was caught in another's arms before she quite slipped to the roadway, and Brayman's trembling voice said:

"Oh, by Jove! I hit him after all!"

But the blow had not been a proper one. Malloy scrambled to his feet and ran like a scared rabbit. The horses, too, frightened by the disturbance, broke into a gallop and tore down the road, townward, leaving the second conspirator standing in the middle of the street.

"Morehouse, by thunder!" exclaimed Fred Brayman, still bracing the girl with one arm. "I thought you'd be up to another dirty trick. I guess we've balked you this time."

"But he knows where Mr. Crest and the others are—I know he does!" cried Mary Holland hysterically.

"And he'll be made to tell after this night's work," declared Brayman. "Oh, we've got you dead to rights, Morehouse."

The vice-president of the H. B. Sampson Construction Company had rapidly recovered his nerve. He struck a match and coolly lighted a cigar.

"Well," he said, with a nasty laugh, "you'll have a nice time proving anything against *me*. I happened along the road in my carriage, heard the girl scream, jumped out, and find her in *your* arms. A—er—lovely spot for two sweethearts to hold a tryst, I must say."

"Oh!" Miss Holland broke away from Brayman's restraining arm. "Do you hear him?" she cried, stamping her foot. "You—you—oh, Mr. Brayman! strike him for that."

"No," said Fred Brayman quietly. "I won't strike him. If I hit the cur I might kill him. We'll just go along to the car, Miss Holland. I'll see you home. We'll attend to Mr. Morehouse in the morning."

And so, having disobeyed her in punishing Malloy, he disobeyed her again in not punishing this other. Brayman offered her his arm, which, after a moment's hesitancy, she meekly took, and they walked away toward the city.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHO WINS?

MRS. HOLLAND was waiting up for Mary upon her return. The younger girls had evidently been sent to bed that she might have a quiet chat with her eldest daughter.

"I have always encouraged you children to confide in me, dear," the mother said, when Mary sat down beside her in the little parlor. "Everything about yourselves, I mean.

"Of course, business is different. I don't expect to understand the world, and the work you have to do, dear. But more particular things—your friends, and—and anybody whom you have an interest in——"

Mary's head dropped to her mother's shoulder. She was glad there was no light, for she felt that her cheeks were on fire.

"There isn't anybody, Mumsie!" she cried.

"Are you sure, daughter?"

"Well, I don't want there should be!" she declared, almost angrily.

"Who is this Mr. Brayman? Kitty says she has met him at a friend's. They say he built a railroad bridge in Mexico and another in Manitoba—that he is a very smart young man. Are—are you ashamed of him?"

"Why, mumsie, I—I *couldn't* be ashamed of him," she cried. "I—I really don't know him well enough."

And, as "mumsie" was a very wise woman in her way, nothing more was said regarding the Burlingham Building Company's general utility man.

Mary Holland did her best not to think of him, either. She was more than half sure that Morry had betrayed her to Brayman; but she was glad he had been on hand at the gravel pits, just the same.

"I'll have to pay the boy for it," she told herself; "but I'll never trust him again, the little rascal!"

In the morning, however, so many things happened, and began to happen so soon after her arrival at the office, that she could pay no particular attention to Master Finkelstein.

First of all, Etta Horrocks came in to see her in great excitement before she had had a chance to go through the morning's mail.

"I got word from Cap'n Joe," she began. "It seems he isn't drinking so much, after all. He's off with some detective hunting for that canal-boat."

This delighted Miss Holland, for it showed that Burlingame was at last on the right trail. A little later Brayman telephoned in from his place near the Arcade Building that he had learned on good authority that J. H. Morehouse had started for the East, and was expected to spend several months in Europe.

"Shall we stop him?" Brayman asked.

"No! let him go. I'm only too glad to know that he is out of the way," the acting manager of the Burlingham Company answered.

Business went on smoothly after that until about noon a wire came from Burlingame, sent from a little town up the river:

> On track of Lillie Lee. Will have her before night.

Although this was the only word received from the detective that day, Mary Holland went home with a lightened heart. Part of the way Brayman walked with her. It seemed that he boarded only a block or two from the cottage on Grant Avenue.

The fact made it quite reasonable for him to drop over later in the evening, waving a telegram in his hand.

"They've got home!" he cried. "This is from Vic Crest. See here:

> "All safe and sound. See you in morning. Tell Miss Holland."

He read this gaily and then quickly crumpled the paper and threw it away. He only stopped a minute—just long enough to be introduced to "mumsie" and the girls. But after he had gone Kate rescued the despatch from the wastepaper-basket and gravely unfolded it.

"Just as I thought!" she exclaimed with disgust. "I never saw such sly people. That last sentence wasn't there at all. Mr. Crest didn't say anything about his telling Miss Holland!"

Mary ran up to her room then, and heard no more of her younger sister's comments that evening.

She did not hurry to arrive early at the office the following day. Oh, it was *good,* after all, to know that some of the responsibility of the business would rest on other shoulders. She didn't feel like a business woman at all this morning.

Crest, Bates, Kessler, and Zeigler were there when she came in. They welcomed her so warmly that she felt like crying instead of laughing at the predicament in which they had been placed for three days.

The door of the canal-boat cabin had been nailed up while they were enjoying themselves, it seemed, and their first warning of treachery came when they felt the boat in motion. They could not get out, and there was nobody on the boat with them.

The Lillie Lee had been unmoored, a hawser passed from her bows to a tug, and the old canal-boat was towed miles up the river and left in a lonely creek where they might not have been found for a fortnight had it not been for Burlingame and Captain Joe.

Fortunately, Miss Etta's "satisfying" viands had supplied the cravings of their

hunger, and perhaps their generous supply of wine had kept up their spirits. Though, naturally, they had suspected the reason for the trick and feared that the Arcade contracts would be broken, or something else quite as destructive to the business might happen during their absence.

But their delight at the way in which the confidential clerk had conducted matters was expressed in no measured terms. That is, all expressed this delight but Guild.

When Cronin F. Guild came in from a visit to the Arcade site, where he found Brayman in charge, his face was like a thundercloud. His four associates and Miss Holland were in the president's office.

"This is a pretty mess!" exclaimed the superintendent of construction, glaring at the girl. "By heavens! if we had been gone another day, she would have ruined us.

"Do you know what she's done? Held up the work; thrown out a whole carload of steel; and discharged Malloy, our best and oldest foreman. On top of that, by thunder! she's sold us out to the union so that we're completely in Lafe Porter's power."

"Oh, not quite so bad as all that, I guess, Guild," said Crest quietly.

"I tell you, yes. What have I always said about having a girl in her position, anyway? Pah!"

"Come!" exclaimed Bates, with some heat, "try to behave like a gentleman. I don't like you, Cronin Guild, and you're getting on my nerves."

"Sh!" advised Crest, still softly. "We'll take up these charges one by one.

"Malloy, I understand, discharged himself. He resigned. I have Mr. Porter's word for it. And he has left the city, anyway, for he is a blackleg and might find himself in jail if he remained.

"The men he hired and who were discharged were not journeymen ironworkers. The agreement Miss Holland has made with Mr. Porter I shall vote to continue. I think it both wise and just."

"But that load of steel she threw out——"

Miss Holland here spoke in her own defense.

"I understand that every piece of steel going into that Arcade Building is to bear the stamp of the inspectors."

"Oh, I knew all about this stuff. It's all right."

"The mill would make no explanation to me."

"Well, they wrote to me about it, I suppose. I knew all about it," Guild said, rather lamely.

"Have you this letter of explanation?" asked Crest.

"No. I don't find any letter in my mail," grumbled Guild.

Miss Holland stepped out for a moment and brought back the still unopened letter addressed to him, bearing the card of No. 2 Mill on the envelope.

"Is this it?" she asked.

Guild seized it.

"What are you doing with my private correspondence?" he demanded with an oath.

"By Jove! I'll have to hit that cad!" exclaimed Mainwarring Bates.

Crest held up his hand.

"No officer or employee of this company can have private correspondence with any concern with whom the Burlingham Building Company does business. Will you let us see that letter, Mr. Guild?"

Guild hesitated. Crest turned to Miss Holland.

"We will excuse you, Miss Holland," he said pointedly, and the confidential clerk, being a woman, rather pitied the superintendent of construction as she went back to her own desk.

There was a little impromptu dinner that night in the offices of the Burlingham Building Company. Crest insisted upon Miss Holland remaining, and she had to send a note home to her mother explaining her delay.

"Why, it would be like the play of "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out, if you were not here, Miss Holland," Zeigler assured her. "This is in your honor."

But it was Victor Crest who toasted her.

"To Miss Holland, because she's a woman, and therefore we must respect her; but here's to her again, because she's proved that a woman's every whit as good as a man in an emergency, so we admire her!"

"My sentiments!" exclaimed Mainwarring Bates.

"She's a brick!" declared Kessler.

"If there wasn't already a Mrs. Zeigler—and the finest woman God ever made," began the fat treasurer; but they howled him down.

Guild was not present. Stoefel drank the toast as he did everything else—apologetically. They looked to Brayman.

He shook his head.

"The toast belittles woman, Mr. Crest," he said soberly. "She is always not only man's equal, but his superior. Let us be mighty glad she does not often usurp man's offices; if she did, I am afraid man would have to migrate to another planet."

The others laughed, but Miss Holland did not know whether to be angry with him or not. She was really still undecided when he started, without as much as "by your leave," to walk home with her from the offices later in the evening.

They did not talk much, but strolled on side by side, up the better-lighted streets, finally turning into Grant Avenue and approaching the Holland cottage.

"Poor Guild has resigned from the company. It takes effect on the first of the month," Brayman said, apropos of nothing.

"And you?"

"Well, Mr. Crest and the others seem to think so much of your opinion that they have asked me to become their superintendent of construction, with a chance to purchase Guild's shares."

"You have had some experience, I learn?" she said, with apparent calmness.

"Oh, a good bit. I took this job here because there seemed nothing doing for the railroads just now. Guess I'll stay."

"I shall be glad of that," she declared, and now her voice shook.

"Oh, will you?" and his tone might have meant a dozen things.

She did not know whether he was laughing or not. It was dark when they came to the gate and halted.

"I—I want to thank you for the other night, Mr. Brayman," she whispered, with her face aside. "You—you are a brave man."

"Thanks!" he said dryly.

She turned upon him impulsively and put out both her hands.

"Don't you want to be friends with me?" she cried.

Brayman backed slowly away and put both his hands decidedly into his pockets.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I've been playing for a higher stake than that, Mary. Do I win?"

THE END.

Bagley's Coagulated Cyclone.

BY HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY.

A great scheme to cool off a sweltering population and what caused it to miscarry.

"WILLIAM," says Bagley to me one day, "I've got a notion."

"Have you?" says I. "Well, throw it down and sit on it till I get away."

"It's a right smart notion," says he, "and there's money in it."

"Money?" says I. "What do we care for money? Ain't we got everything our hearts desire? And ain't that little mine of ours, up in Idaho, turning out gold faster than all three of us can dig holes to bury it again? Why can't you be contented with your happy lot?"

"It's not for mercenary gain that I am carrying this notion," says he, "but with the idea of bestowing benevolent alleviation upon the afflicted and suffering populace of the stricken city of Saint Louis *et al.*"

"What's the matter with the populace of Saint Louis?" I asked.

"They're suffering from the heat," he answered.

"Well, why don't you fan 'em?" says I.

"That is exactly what I want to do," says he. "With the aid and abetment

of you and Smith, I propose to establish a new and prodigious industry that will bring the fair names of Kansas and us promoters into international prominence."

"Land's sakes!" says I. "What is your notion?"

"To manufacture and retail summer breezes," says he.

"Well," says I, "that's startling enough; but, coming from you, I'm not the least surprised. Explain your notion."

"As you have probably observed," says he, "our little ranch lies right on the verge of the cyclone belt. The peculiar construction of those two ranges of hills yonder causes 'em to corral any cyclones that may happen along at the farther end, directs their courses along between the two ranges, which gradually converge, until the cyclone finally shoots out between those two buttes yonder and across the plain, over a well-defined path from which they do not diverge until they are some miles past the ranch.

"Every week or two one of those twisters bounces out from the hills and goes rollicking across the broad and verdant pastures of this little State of Kansas. I watch them until they fade into the distant landscape, with an aching heart, at thought of the wasted energy that is stored up in them, and which might be used to turn the wheels of commercial industry, *et cetera,* if they could only be subdued and brought under the restraining hand of civilization."

"What do I care?" says I. "What's all that got to do with manufacturing summer breezes?"

"Why, don't you see?" broke in Smith. "He's going to catch them when they're young, and bring them up by hand!"

"Oh, you go to blazes!" snorted Bag, and walked off in a huff.

He didn't mention his "notion" again, but for the next two weeks he was the busiest man in the county. He would be out of bed and off to town before sunup, and if he wasn't in town he'd be over at those buttes, measuring off distances with a tape line and drawing diagrams on paper.

"What do you suppose he is trying to do?" I asked Smith.

"I can't imagine," answered Smith. "Unless he is trying to figure out some way to build a corral so that he can cut out the young cyclones from their mas, when they come through that pass.

"I stole a cub bear once," he went on reminiscently, "and its ma came right along and expostulated. She couldn't talk English, but the way she laid hands on me was scand'lous. She got her cub back all right, and I learned considerable about the ways and methods of beings that move in the West. If an old lady cyclone ever takes after Bag—oh, my!"

One morning Bag was up and off earlier than usual. About three hours after he had left, while I was washing the dishes, I heard Smith yell, and ran outside to see what was doing.

"What on earth is that?" asked Smith, pointing across the fields.

It was a wagon train, that appeared to be about ten miles long—at least, we couldn't see the tail end of it. They were headed toward the buttes, with Bag on his pony, leading like a general.

"He must have every wagon in the county, by the looks of that train," said I. "What do you suppose he's up to now?"

"I can't imagine," answered Smith. "Let's go over and find out."

We jumped on our ponies and cantered over. The first of the wagons had arrived at the buttes, and Bag was bustling around, bossing and directing the men, who were busy unloading barrels from the wagons and placing them on the ground in the path followed by the cyclones.

Every barrel was full to the brim with flour paste, as I discovered on investigation.

"What on earth——" I began, as Bag went past.

"You shut up; I'm running this show," he snapped, and that was all we could get out of him.

We finally had to go home more mystified than ever.

We watched the proceedings from our front piazza. When they were done unloading, there was a string of barrels two rods wide and all of half a mile in length set along the cyclone path.

We were nearly bursting with curiosity by the time Bag got home, and both of us went after him; but all he would say was:

"You just sit still and wait until a cyclone comes along, and then you'll see."

"But there may not be one along for a month," complained Smith. "Why don't you tell us now?"

"Nope," he answered; "you'll have to wait."

But we didn't have long to wait, for about noon a regular old Sam Twister came rip-snorting through the pass. She went to those barrels like a cat goes to a saucer of milk, and they didn't last half as long.

"Just about one mouthful, wasn't it?" snickered Smith.

"Don't get too premature with your observations," growled Bag. "Just you watch."

"Oh, I see!" says Smith. "you're trying to poison her."

"No, I ain't, I—look! She's stopping now! Come on!" he yelled, starting for his pony, and it wasn't two minutes before all three of us were just a-splitting it over the prairies.

I wish you could have observed the antics of that cyclone. By the time we had got started she had stopped dead still and was spinning around to beat all, making dirt fly in all directions. Then she started to wobble, like a top does when it begins to slow down, and then, all of a sudden, over she went, with a crash you could have heard twenty miles.

When we got there I saw how it was.

You see, when the cyclone licked up that paste she became saturated with it from top to bottom. Then, tearing along through the atmosphere at the rate she did, and with the hot sun beating down on her, she began to dry out in double quick order, and when we reached her, there she lay, stiff as a starched shirt and as helpless as a kitten.

"Bag," said I, "you're a wonder. How did you ever think of it?"

"It runs in the family," he replied. "My parents were both thinkers. Now you see what I meant by manufacturing summer breezes, don't you?"

"Well, no," I answered. "I can see that you have the cyclone corraled all right, but how does that make a summer breeze?"

"Why, don't you see?" he explained. "We'll cut this cyclone up into blocks about a foot square. By pouring water on one of the blocks you can loosen the paste and gradually liberate the cyclone; you can control the strength of the breeze by the amount of water you use, and you can produce anything from a zephyr to a hurricane."

"It's the most remarkable thing I ever heard of," I said. "And do you intend to retail these chunks to the people in the city?"

"Yes," he replied. "The uses to which it can be put are unlimited; anything from a stationary fan for a saloon or barber-shop to an auxiliary windstorm for a sailing-vessel. It will run locomotives, street-cars, automobiles, in fact anything that is moved by steam and electricity."

Others, who had witnessed the remarkable performance of the cyclone from the distance, now began to arrive, and Bag hired them on the spot. Some he sent after axes, saws, and teams, while others he set to work picking up fragments that had broken off when the cyclone fell.

We soon had a large force of men busy cutting it up and hauling it to the ranch, and by night we had the entire cyclone transferred. All told, we must have had five hundred cords piled up in various parts of the yard, and considerable was carried away by our neighbors, to keep as curiosities.

We sat up that night and speculated on the possibilities of our captive. It was remarkable, the multitude of uses we discovered for that cyclone—a thing which had hitherto been considered an engine of destruction and worse than useless. It was late when we finally retired.

I don't know how long I had been sleeping. I was wakened by Smith calling me.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Did you hear that thunder just then?" he asked.

"No," said I. "Did it?"

"Yes, I guess we're going to have a storm," and he hadn't any more than

got the words out of his mouth than it began to rain pitchforks.

I am not going to tell you what happened next, because I don't know myself. I had a hunch that something was coming, and before I could get out of bed it came.

First, the house began to rock and rattle; and then—crash, bang, r-i-p, slam! And away we went!

It was pitch dark, and I couldn't tell a thing about what was doing.

It seems to me that we went straight up for about a mile and then the house bursted, like a sky-rocket, and flew in all directions, leaving me up there all alone—and blame lonesome, I can tell you.

The next thing I knew I hit an alfalfa stack with such force that I went halfway through it before I stopped—and I stayed there, too.

There was one large cyclone, divided into several thousand sections, cavorting around little old Kansas that night, and nobody knew it better than I did. I stayed right where I was.

Next day I found that I had come fifteen miles, Bag went twenty, and Smith twelve. And we each came down in a separate county.

We have built a new house on our ranch, better than the first, where we are now living. But nowadays, when Bagley gets a "notion" he never mentions it to us, for if he should there would be another cyclone on the spot.

SAMSON THE SECOND.*

BY LAWRENCE G. BYRD.

A story in two parts.

In which is set forth how a certain modest young man became suddenly distinguished in a way whose trend was doubtful.

PART II.

VIII.

"NOW YOU SEE IT, AND—NOW YOU DON'T."

A DOZEN different ideas swept through Remsen's troubled brain during those few minutes. He was fertile enough of imagination; but many of the schemes of which he thought were so rash that he dared not attempt them.

He believed that if he could get a grip upon that safe he could carry it back to the factory alone; but the robbers would not be likely to flee at the approach of one man. With this enormous strength which had come to him so marvelously should also have come a ferocious presence.

Remsen did not stop to philosophize at the time; but the fact remains that humanity only fears that which *seems* terrible. The bully, who is always at heart a coward, usually wins out, rather than the man with high-born courage.

And Remsen had little courage. He had a fear of personal injury, and a greater fear of doing some awful damage with the marvelous power obtained from the energy accumulator.

He thought of raising his voice and shouting for help, but that would only (in all probability) bring the safe-robbers down upon him. He didn't care to run the risk of a personal encounter.

He could not stampede the horses, for one of the robbers held to the lines while his three mates worked like fiends to tumble the safe out of the broken cart into the police patrol-wagon.

Remsen even thought of dodging across the street, seizing a wheel of the latter and "yanking" it from the axle. That would surely put the vehicle out of commission; but he did not fancy getting so close to the robbers. They were most certainly a desperate gang.

The moments were flying, and the thieves, after breaking the sideboard of their wagon, were about to tumble the

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safe into the body of the police vehicle. All this without a move being made upon the part of the officers who had run on to the factory.

The driver, knocked from his seat when the patrol-wagon was captured, had not recovered sufficiently to take an interest in anything.

The horses were headed away from the factory; the thieves would not, of course, drive off in the direction taken by the police. And now that the quartet were so near the accomplishment of their ends, Remsen dared not leave the spot to run to the factory for help. The police-wagon, with the safe aboard, would soon be on its way.

Remsen peered along the street in the hope of seeing some help arriving, or of discerning some means to balk the thieves. It was maddening to think that he possessed the strength of an immortal, yet was hampered from using it by the impotency of a weak human being.

It takes either a very reckless or a very unselfish nature to risk life and limb for the salvation of another man's possessions. That safe had no personal interest for MacLean Remsen, and he did not propose to stop lead for it.

The excited robbers were straining every nerve and muscle to shift the strong-box to the captured wagon. Their muttered oaths and short commands to each other were all the sounds Remsen heard, except the beating of his own heart.

Not another person seemed stirring in the neighborhood. The police were not returning. If anything was done at all, he must do it alone.

Suddenly his eye caught an object half a block away, which he had not noticed before, or at least it had not struck him as being of any help in the present situation. It was a tall pole, lately erected, one of two placed on either side of the street to hold between them a political banner in the forthcoming campaign.

No cable had been stretched to connect the two poles as yet. They stood there like bare masts, their tops above the roofs of most of the houses on the block.

Remsen heard a crash as the safe toppled over into the police-wagon. And at the moment a shout sounded up the street in the direction of the factory. The police were returning, and had perhaps already missed their vehicle.

The falling safe must have broken the floor of the patrol-wagon; but it did not go through it. The horses reared and snorted. One of the robbers spoke aloud:

"All right! Git aboard, you fellers! Quick!"

Remsen heard this as he darted along in the shadow of the fence which bordered his side of the road. For with the crash of the falling safe he had been animated to action.

He reached the tall pole before the eager horses started. The base of the staff was in shadow, and the chemist was unnoticed by the robbers.

Remsen cast himself against the pole and pushed with all his strength. He had remembered the lamp-post which had bent under his weight earlier in the evening. Could this pole withstand his wonderful power?

"Let 'er go!" cried the leader of the gang of safe-looters, and the horses sprang forward.

A pistol-shot sounded up the street, and a man staggered into view—Reaghan, the driver of the police-wagon.

"Stop! stop! Look at that pole!" yelled somebody in the wagon, and the horses were dragged back upon their haunches amid oaths and cries from the robbers.

The tall flag-pole came down swiftly, its butt splintering off short at the ground, snapping as quickly as a rotten twig.

Remsen jumped aside just in time to save himself.

The top of the pole scraped down the face of the warehouse across the road, while the splintered butt "skidded" across the walk and smashed into the fence.

The street—sidewalk and all—was completely blocked in half a minute. No wagon could pass that barrier!

Reaghan's pistol barked again, and the robbers saw that they were trapped. The patrol-wagon could not be driven past the pole, and to turn it would be to run into the arms of the enemy.

Remsen, fearful of his own safety, and knowing the usual fate of "the innocent bystander" when a shower of pistol-bullets falls, darted behind the high stoops of an empty house, and there crouched during the happenings of the next few moments.

The police patrol-wagon vomited the robbers instantly. They left the horses to their own sweet wills and tore away from the scene in four several directions. One passed Remsen so closely that he could have touched him.

The police pounded down upon the deserted wagon in a solid phalanx; but seeing the scattering ruffians, they took up their pursuit with valiant cries and another fusillade of shots. Even Reaghan, after speaking to the well-trained horses, stumbled on after his mates, his smoking pistol still in his hand.

The excitement seemed to spur Remsen's thought. The safe was all right now; at least, the police would recover it for young Waite. But when the boy's father returned and learned how, because of Charlie's neglect, thieves had got into the factory and taken the safe away bodily, his estimation of his son's worth as a business assistant would surely drop far below the zero mark.

"The boy is bound to get it good and hard," thought Remsen. "And he's had lesson enough as it is. I—wonder—if—I—could——"

He ceased speaking, came out of hiding, and crossed the road to the police-wagon. The horses started nervously, but he spoke soothingly to them. He went to the rear of the vehicle and looked in at the safe, lying on its side.

The noise of the pursuit had died away. So thinly inhabited was the neighborhood that even the pistol-shots had drawn no spectators.

Remsen, with a swift glance over his shoulder to see if he was observed by any one, reached into the wagon and seized the safe. It was only thirty inches high or so, but it was as heavy as so much lead.

The chemist, however, lifted it very easily in his arms. It seemed to him to weigh about as much as a wooden box of the same size—empty.

"It's a cinch!" he muttered. "I'll fool 'em all. If young Waite hasn't told the police too much, this trick will work."

He raised the safe with ease to his shoulder and started back toward the factory. As he neared the corner he heard swift footsteps approaching, and became panic-stricken again. Suppose anybody should see him carrying the iron box?

He dropped the safe in a dark corner of the fence, and when he let go of it its corner dug into the soft earth for half a foot.

Remsen sank down behind it, panting with excitement, and saw Charlie Waite, hatless and with a club in his hand, turn the corner and sprint along the street toward the broken down express wagon. He was evidently anxious about the safe.

But Remsen did not call him. He had no more desire to display his wonderful power to Waite than to any other person. He grabbed up the safe, adjusted it on his shoulder again, and darted around the corner.

His way to the factory was clear then, and the door was wide open. He *did* feel his exertions some when he reached the place. The weight of the safe was gradually telling upon his strange powers of endurance.

Nevertheless, he staggered up the flight with his burden, and finally placed it in the duskiest corner of that landing outside the offices. The single gas-jet flickering here scarcely illuminated this part of the loft.

Almost immediately he heard a sharp step upon the outer stair, and recognized Waite's voice.

"Is that you up there — hey?" the youngster demanded. "Where you been? And where did the cops go? And what's happened the safe? Oh, this business will be the death of me!"

He came up as far as the top stair and dropped down, panting.

"If they've got away with that safe, the governor will give me the frosty mit—sure thing! And how the dickens did that pole fall down? And the police wagon is down there, too, and I'd like to know how——"

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Remsen, "you want to know too much. Don't bother your head——"

Waite jumped up at that, mad as a hatter.

"Say!" he bawled. "Don't you get me riled now! I know I'm strictly a D. F.; but I'm not a rascal. I've bothered my father enough, off and on, and now I've gone beyond the limit. But don't you intimate that I don't care, for I do!"

"Sure?" demanded Remsen quietly.

"Yes, I'm sure—confound you! This safe business will finish me. To think of leaving the factory without a watchman and letting a lot of scab burglars run off with it! And I thought you were going to watch them all so fast?"

"I did," said Remsen briefly. "But it wasn't *my* safe, you know."

"Oh, you're a dandy!" exclaimed Waite. "I never saw you before to-night, but you are about the smallest potatoes I ever came across. You don't seem to care at all. Don't you see what it means to *me?*"

"Well?"

"Jumping Jerusalem!" yelled Waite, stamping his foot. "I'd have tried to help a yaller dog out of such a mess——"

"I have," interposed Remsen.

He turned around coolly and pointed into the dark corner.

"There's your safe. I hear the cops coming back. Brace up, you fool! Give them a song and dance about the robbers not getting the safe out of the building, after all. *Do you understand?*"

Transfixed by Remsen's words, staring wide-eyed and amazed at the safe, Waite was dumb for several seconds. The rattle of the patrol-wagon grew rapidly nearer. The police, as Remsen warned him, were coming back.

"Wake up!" exclaimed the chemist, seizing his arm.

"Ouch!" shouted Waite at that. "Jumping Jerusalem! I'll be black and blue to-morrow. You'll break my arm next. My heavens, man! I never saw such a deceiving looking person in my life. You're as strong as a bull."

Then he walked quickly to the safe and laid an investigating hand upon it.

"Do you mean to tell me that's been standing here all this time?" he demanded.

"It looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Gee!" repeated the young fellow. "Then I *am* surely drunk. I haven't got over it yet. If that safe was here——"

"Sh! they're coming," Remsen whispered. "I don't want to see 'em. Don't let 'em go through the factory. Tell 'em it's all right. Do you hear?"

Waite nodded, but looked as though he was in a trance as he turned toward the head of the stairs.

Remsen dodged around the corner of the partition into the big room where there were no lights.

He certainly did not care to get mixed up in any police investigation. Had there been a possible chance to escape before the reappearance of the officers, he would have done so; but the time was too limited.

And after he had concealed himself, he was sorry, too. If the police became suspicious and insisted on searching the place, his plain attempt to hide from them would arouse any amount of suspicion.

MacLean Remsen was in a most unhappy state of mind when the lieutenant of police and a couple of his men, all three red-faced and panting from their fruitless chase after the robbers, appeared at the top of the flight of stairs. But it was then too late for the chemist to step forward and take a voluntary part in the proceedings.

IX.

FOR GOOD AS WELL AS EVIL.

YOUNG Waite was a cooler hand than Remsen. If you asked him, he would probably have called it "brass" that enabled him to recover from his amazement at the safe's presence in the factory, and meet the police with some ease of manner.

"Well, did you get 'em?" he demanded of the puffing lieutenant.

"Get 'em—no!" growled the officer. "We didn't get 'em; nor we didn't find that safe you was talking about."

"Oh, they didn't get the safe out of the factory," cried Waite, in haste. "I thought they did; but here it is," and he pointed to the iron box in the corner.

"What's that?" was the official chorus.

"Sure! They got ready to lower it; and then my coming must have scared them off."

"But you said their wagon broke down with it," declared the lieutenant.

"And the wagon's lying there bu'sted now, with that skinny horse," added one of his subordinates.

"If they didn't have the safe out there, what did they try to get away with our wagon for?" demanded the third policeman.

Waite backed away from them, and his face displayed nothing but surprise and wonder.

"I declare! I must have been crazy when you were up here if I said the safe was gone," he observed, shaking his head.

"Well, you most certainly said it," and the lieutenant's tone was very suspicious.

"I saw something in that broken-down wagon when we drove up here first," said the second policeman. "It might have been a safe."

"And Reaghan said the patrol-wagon is bu'sted, as though something heavy had been dropped into it," growled the third.

"Look here!" exclaimed Waite, his face paling, but carrying off the bluff very well otherwise, "do you suppose I've been out there and carried back the safe in my arms? Just try to lift that!" and he pointed at the iron box.

One of the officers placed his hand against it and tried to move the thing; it would not budge. The lieutenant peered closer.

"It's been banged about some," he said, with conviction. "Look how it's scratched."

"They did that wheeling it out of the office, I suppose," Waite said quickly.

"Well, I declare! It beats my time," remarked the lieutenant, in disgust.

"I tell ye what, lieutenant," growled one of his subordinates, "it looks as though we was beat all round. Nice report we'll have, to go back and say them guns come nigh getting away with the wagon. If that pole hadn't happened to come down——"

"Somebody'll have to look into that in the morning, too," said the third bluecoat. "The pole must have been perfectly rotten — a menace to life and limb. Lucky it fell at night."

"Well, young man, I'll come over here and see your father about this business when he returns. It looks fishy to me," declared the lieutenant.

"I know a fellow on the city news association," young Waite said mildly. "I'll call him up and tell him about this. It will make good reading."

"You will, heh?" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"Yes. About the robbers doing up one of you fellows, and getting away with the patrol-wagon, too. They always say you yap coppers over here are no better than country constables."

"Say! you'll wish you hadn't," cried the other. "You just let us give this story out as we see fit, or——"

"You keep away from here and say nothing to my governor, or——"

The lieutenant suddenly smoothed out the frown on his brow. He began to smile grimly and put out his hand.

"Shake!" he said. "It's a bargain. You never mind about your reportorial friend, and I'll smooth this matter over so that your old man will likely never hear of it."

"Good!" was Waite's response, and then the police filed slowly down the stairs, and he followed to lock the factory door.

When the wagon had driven away he came up the flight again on the keen jump.

"See here!" he exclaimed earnestly, as Remsen walked slowly out into the circle of light cast by the single gas-jet on the landing. "I am not intoxicated now—nor am I quite a fool. What manner of man are you? You must be the very devil himself to move that safe back here by your lonesome. And if you had a gang to help you, who were they, and where have they gone? Come, answer me, sir," and he frankly barred the way to the stair-flight.

"What nonsense!" drawled Remsen. "Your safe's been here all the time, of course."

"So's your grandmother!" burst out Waite. "That safe was never in that corner when we first came into the building to-night. It's been badly knocked about, and there is earth sticking to it.

If those cops hadn't been as blind as bats they would have seen it.

"No, sir! That safe was in that broken-down wagon when we came along to the factory an hour ago, and the robbers tried to get it away in the patrol-wagon after the officers came up here.

"Oh, don't you stand there and smile that way! Jumping Jerusalem! I'd be afraid of you if you weren't such a skinny little dub. But you'll tell me how it was done before you go from here——"

"And have *me* tell your father how neglectful you were of his interests?" interposed Remsen, still smiling. "Be satisfied with the fact that the safe was not stolen, after all."

"But, by heavens, it *was* stolen! Look here! Here are the marks of the castors where those fellows rolled it out of the office to the doorway yonder. But there are no marks over into this corner where it stands now.

"That thing was lifted bodily and dropped here—you can't fool me! Now, how was it done? Those fellows never brought it back here. And four men, anyway, could not carry that safe up those stairs. I tell you, the devil's in it!"

"He's done you a good turn, then," remarked Remsen lightly. "Let it go at that."

"No, I won't. There's something mighty queer about you. You've some power that no man I ever heard of possessed before. Why, look how you held that cab—an electric cab with the full-speed lever turned on."

Remsen began to get a little angry at the young fellow's insistence.

"See here," he said, "where I came from up-country we used to have an old saying that you'd be the better for remembering: 'Never look a gift horse in the mouth.'"

"Oh, I'm grateful enough," rejoined the other sullenly. "You've done me a mighty good turn. If you got that safe back here, it is a thing I can never forget. But how was it done? What does it mean? Why, I'm twice your size. I could break you in two——"

"I wouldn't try it!" snapped Remsen sharply.

Waite's plain speaking began to gall, and nothing made the chemist so angry as references to his small size and evident lack of muscle.

"Why, you know I could!" cried Waite, and suddenly stepping forward he reached out to seize the slighter man.

Remsen was exasperated beyond endurance. He doubled his fist quickly and struck out; but fortunately bethought him before the blow landed, and leaped back himself to lighten the stroke.

Waite got it in the chest—luckily not too low. The blow sounded like a baton on a hollow drum, and the factory owner's son was driven across the room and slammed against the partition with a force that must have jarred his teeth. He fell in a heap on the floor, but although he was panting laboriously for breath, Remsen saw that he was not seriously hurt.

"Now, my son," he said, standing over him with a smile, "don't you be deceived by appearances hereafter. You never can tell how far a toad will hop. You've got a lot of things to learn yet, even if you are at college. And a good one to begin learning is to keep your mouth shut. I wouldn't relate this night's experiences to anybody, if I were you."

"Oh, gee!" panted Waite from the floor. "I—I won't—'nless I—I want to go—to the foolish house. You're a wonder."

"Why, you're waking up!" sneered Remsen, and started for the stairs. "Now, good night to you!"

"But won't I ever see you—you again?" cried Waite, trying to struggle up.

"Not if I see you first," returned Remsen, and he hastily descended the stairs, went out at the door, which he slammed behind him, and hurried away from the factory.

Yet he did not quite mean that last speech.

Charlie Waite had interested him, and back in his mind Remsen had a scheme connected with this new acquaintance.

Waite would always be grateful to him; if the energy accumulator proved to be of practical use, Waite and his father might be interested in it. Capital would be needed to begin the business of

furnishing stored energy for mechanical purposes, and Charlie had let drop the fact that he knew a deal about machinery himself.

"This may have been a lucky adventure for me," Remsen told himself, as he caught a car back to the ferry. "Unless the working of that machine of poor Meyer's is much more simple than it seemed on first examination, I'll have to take somebody into my confidence. The only thing is, I must use care and allow nobody to suspect the great force which has entered into me. I've been using my strength foolishly. I've been intoxicated with the idea that I was stronger than any other person in this wide world.

"Why, with that idea as a basis I could and would do untold damage. Surely, this great power may be used for good as well as evil. I'm not at all sure that balking those burglars and taking back the safe were *good* acts.

"Carrying that safe has tired me some, too. I could feel that before I got it up the stairs. Can it be that the force with which I was charged is being gradually dissipated? It is being used up by my exertions, perhaps. Nothing more natural."

He reached the New York side of the river just after midnight. The last twelve hours had certainly been the liveliest he had ever experienced. It seemed as though enough had happened since he started from the laboratory to find poor old Meyer to fill an ordinary year.

He must go home and to bed now, for in spite of this wonderful power which had come to him his living must be made, and as yet he saw no way of making it other than at the laboratory of Jenness & Smythe.

When the accumulator was made to perform its work as its inventor doubtless had intended, then, and not till then, would fortune be within his grasp. Remsen was too cautious a fellow to throw over his job without having a safe hand-hold elsewhere.

He left the ferry-house and hurried to the Second Avenue corner, taking a car down-town and transferring to one that passed the door of Mrs. Case's boarding-house.

He felt a little shaky about his reception there. If the landlady had seen the mess he had made of the lock of his door she would be up and waiting for him with her hammer ready, late as it was!

"And that iron balustrade, too," he thought. "I weakened that. Great Scott! I pretty near yanked that handle off, too!"

This as he swung himself aboard the Fourteenth Street car. The brass clutch had shaken under his grasp.

Yet Remsen was confident the amount of energy with which he had been charged was now greatly reduced. Every exertion he had put forth had doubtless dissipated some of the force gathered by Meyer's machine; and since he had stopped the buzzing accumulator he surely had performed some wonderful feats of strength.

"Heaven only knows how many horse-power I secured through that shock," he murmured. "Sufficient to start that truck with the engine on it, to lift that sewer-pipe, to hold the electric cab, to push over the flag-pole, and to carry that safe back into the factory.

"Talk about the labors of Hercules! Why, that old fakir wasn't in it with me. I could—— Hullo, what's this?"

Just after crossing Third Avenue the car had stopped suddenly. Remsen stood up and looked ahead through the front door. A great brewery auto, loaded with tier upon tier of kegs, was blocking the tracks.

It was a huge machine, and its driver was plainly finding some difficulty in turning it about. A crowd had stopped to watch the performance, for although the theaters were now out, quite a few people loitered on the sidewalks.

The big auto puffed and "chugged," bumping back and forth over the tracks and behaving as badly as a balky horse. The motormen of the waiting cars, and the boys on the walk, guyed the driver of the beer wagon unmercifully, and doubtless his temper was rasped. He suddenly switched on more current and ran his machine back rather recklessly.

Right behind his huge wagon was the iron awning before one of the theaters, extending the full width of the

sidewalk, and upheld by ornamental pillars.

Doubtless the auto driver did not remember the presence of the awning until the corner of his wagon smashed into one of the supporting posts. The post snapped across like a pipe-stem, and the heavy awning came down with a crash.

Instantly the air was rent with screams. The other supporting pillar had given way, and several of the spectators were buried under the ruins. The crowd rushed in from every side. Desperately a few tugged at the broken awning to raise it. Remsen saw one brave fellow creep in under the mess of ironwork and drag forth a victim who was too badly hurt to help himself.

The shrieks of the injured, pinned to the sidewalk by the wreck, spurred the chemist to action. He leaped the cargate and ran across the street. The men frantically trying to lift the heavy awning were making no progress.

Fifty men could not have raised it, for they could not utilize their strength properly—the leverage on the broken awning would not be sufficient to budge it. But *one* man could do the trick, and, forgetting the attention he would surely attract to himself by a public display of his wonderful power, Remsen laid hold of the corner of the wreck.

At last there was something to do of real worth. The chance had come to exercise his mighty force for good, and he would not shirk his duty.

"Be ready, you fellows, to drag 'em out!" he yelled, and, setting his feet wide apart, he lifted slowly.

There were other men lifting, too. Perhaps they thought, in that moment of excitement, that their puny strength availed as well. But the slight, delicate-looking young man at the corner of the awning was the one who raised that mass of twisted and broken iron so that the victims of the accident might be drawn forth.

Remsen felt that the strain was awful. At first, when he lifted the wreck, he knew that the force which had inspired him since the stopping of Meyer's accumulator was nowhere near as strong within him as formerly.

And as he continued to bear up the weight of the awning, the "pull" of the load became momentarily heavier. He panted for breath; there was a tightness in his chest, the ligaments of his arms began to strain, and his back to bend.

"Quick!" he gasped.

"All out!" shouted a policeman.

"Crash!"

The awning fell again. Everybody had let go together. Remsen staggered back from the wreck, and fell weakly against another man.

He was caught and kept from slipping to the ground.

"You're done up, mister!" exclaimed the man.

Remsen nodded. He felt a sharp pain in his chest, and then something warm filled his mouth. He kept his lips tight closed and staggered to the other side of the street, away from the crowd.

There the blood ran from his lips in an ugly stream. The hemorrhage was over in a moment, but he was left as weak and shaky as a rag. All the wonderful energy which had filled him for the past few hours was gone. He had expended the last ounce of the force in raising that awning.

"It—it was some good, after all!" Remsen muttered.

Then the street, and the people, whirled about him in a Dervish dance, and he fell.

X.

SAMSON SHORN.

REMSEN found himself in an iron bed, one of a long row of similar beds, in a great, high-studded, sunshiny room. He was picking at the hem of a sheet and muttering something about the weight of the factory safe which he had been carrying up-stairs the moment before in his dreams.

He stared about him wildly for a moment, then recognized his whereabouts, and groaned.

"Do you want anything?" asked a white-capped nurse, bending over him.

"Yes; I want to get up," grunted the chemist. "It must be afternoon."

"It is," and the nurse smiled.

She wasn't a bad-looking girl at all.

"What's the matter with me?" he asked.

"You were brought here after an accident on Fourteenth Street last night," she said.

"I remember. The iron awning fell, and I lifted it until they could get the injured folks out. Guess I strained myself a bit."

The look in her eyes showed that she believed his mind wandering.

"Lifted it?" she repeated. "You were under it, I guess. Your chest was injured. You ruptured a small artery. But the doctor says you can get up and go home whenever you like. Only you must be careful in future about any overexertion or extra strain."

"Oh, Lord! that's what I've always been told," groaned Remsen.

He stretched forth his arms. They felt wearied. His hands seemed stiff and unfamiliar. A general lassitude appeared to hold him.

But it was not an unfamiliar feeling. It was quite natural for him to feel this way. Only during the exciting hours of the last evening had he lost completely this feeling of weakness.

"And it's all over! The dream is gone; the combination's bu'sted," he thought sadly. "For once—for a few short hours—I have been a Samson. And now Samson is shorn of his strength!"

He lay there some moments in this lethargic state, and then, in a flash, the thought of Meyer's accumulator came to him. He was weak again; he had frittered away the wonderful energy with which the machine had endowed him in a few short hours.

But the machine itself still remained!

What the energy accumulator had done once, it could surely do again. He would start it going, wait until it had collected from the atmosphere a sufficient amount of the wasted energy, and then become charged with the revivifying force once more.

He would not take so great a quantity into his system this time; he would become just an ordinarily strong man.

Lying in hospital was not what he wanted; he must get to the machine, start it going, and get relief through its means. Besides, there was wealth in the mechanism for him—a fortune so vast that thoughts of it made Remsen's head swim.

He called for the nurse, begged her to send for his clothes, and after the screen was arranged he crawled out of bed and slowly dressed. He was as weak as though he had barely recovered from a long illness.

They let him go, after he had reported to the doctor. But once out in the afternoon sunshine he was almost sorry that he had ventured forth. His legs felt wabbly still.

He walked the block to Fourteenth Street with difficulty. There he was glad to board a car and ride home. He was not equal to going over to the East Side to Meyer's old cellar just then.

When he came into the boarding-house Mrs. Case pounced on him.

Remsen was not feeling equal to a defense, and listened to her tirade in silence—luckily.

"Oh, Mr. Remsen, where *have* you been? I've been worried to death about you. And you look bad. I want you to go right up to your room and see if you have lost anything.

"Such a thing never happened to me before in my life. Never since I have kept this house have I had a particle of trouble in that way. To think of it! A door smashed in, and things strewn about——"

"Er—Mrs. Case," began Remsen faintly, but she deluged him in words until finally he realized that the good lady thought a burglar had been in the house, and that she did not lay the broken lock to him at all.

When he told her that he had been to the hospital, she was very sympathetic, and insisted upon his going up-stairs and having Mary bring up his luncheon.

"I read all about it in the paper this morning. Here it is," the landlady said, thrusting the journal into his hand.

When he was alone, Remsen read the account of the accident. No mention was made of his own part in lifting the wrecked awning. The fact that he had made a display of such wonderful muscular power was not remarked.

He glanced through the columns of the paper while he waited for his luncheon. He had taken part in several strenuous incidents the night before which should have found their way into the grist of the news association.

Ah! here was the cab elopement at the Waldorf. No names given. The boisterous friends of Charlie Waite were put out of the hotel by another door before it was known by the management that there was any difficulty over the cab fare.

The paper said that the abandoned cab was finally found on Thirty-Fourth Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues, with its mechanism out of gear. It had to be towed back to the station.

And here was a little item that Remsen almost overlooked — down in the police-news column:

> Michael Casey, watchman for the Norumbega Construction Company, which is building the Massaquepa Flats, was found in the cellar of a neighboring building shortly before midnight, where he had fallen through the grating. Michael says he was "pushed" and did not "fall"; but two broken ribs will probably be all that saves him from a ten-dollar fine in the Jefferson Market Court. His remarks after he fell into the hole scandalized the neighborhood.

"Poor devil!" murmured Remsen. "That's one of the bad things I did. Lord! but I certainly did cut up for a few brief hours!"

Lastly he found the account of the "attempted robbery" of Waite's factory in Long Island City. It was a beautifully cooked up account.

The police had seen to it that no mention was made of the fact that the robbers had knocked out one of their men and had stolen the patrol-wagon. And the article said that Mr. Charles Waite, the son of the owner of the factory, had given the alarm before the burglars got the safe out of the building.

"Which may be true, by Jove!" muttered Remsen. "I swear I don't know whether I dreamed half of these things or not. Waite might have broken the electric cab, and that was the reason it stopped so suddenly when I told him to get down. Nobody seemed to notice that I lifted that iron awning in front of the theater. Perhaps I didn't. Maybe it was all of us lifting together. And the safe — well, I must have dreamed about that safe; and about knocking down the flag-pole. Can it be possible that I have imagined all this?"

This recurrence of the first thought which had assailed him following his discovery of his wonderful accumulation of strength frightened him now. Why, if he was insane he would not know which part of his experience was real and which imaginative!

This idea worried him so that after he had eaten he determined to make the journey to the cellar in which Meyer had lived, whether or no. He felt stronger, anyway, and his excitement and anxiety would surely keep him up.

Remsen had locked the cellar when he left, after the undertaker had taken away the inventor's remains. When he came to thrust the key into the lock of the door at the bottom of the steep flight of stairs, he was startled and angry to find that the fastenings had been tampered with.

The door swung open. The lock had been picked, or had been opened with another key. But as he had sent away all the valuable retorts and glasses, there surely was not much for a thief to get.

Except the machine! This thought smote suddenly, and, grabbing up the candle he had used the day before, he lit it and hastened to the farther end of the apartment.

His mind was relieved at first. The block of granite was still there, and so were the battery jars and insulated wires. At first glance the outlines of the machine seemed the same.

And then, with a cry of despair, Remsen darted forward, bringing his light closer to the mechanism.

The brass disk was gone, as were all the other bright parts of the machine.

The accumulator had been literally dismembered for the sake of the brass work used in its construction.

Remsen brought a police officer into the cellar, and, almost in tears, showed him the havoc wrought on his dead friend's invention.

"Sure, that's the work of a brass-coupling gang—no doubt of it," he said. "They'd stale the copper cents off of a dead man's eyes! I'll report it for ye; but some domned junk dealer has the brass parts of the machine now. Ye'll have to git new wans, sor."

Get new ones! That was the rub.

Remsen was no mechanic. He had a very vague idea of how the parts looked, anyway. And as for the theory or plan on which the accumulator was constructed—well, it was worse than Greek to him.

The revolving drums, the steel links, and the wire connections remained. But the battery had no effect upon the machine now; it was a complete wreck.

Meyer's sudden death had made it impossible for him to instruct Remsen in the scheme of the energy collector. He had left no paper—not a scrap of writing which might reveal to the world the secret of his wonderful invention.

Remsen had the remains of the mutilated machine removed to his boarding-house, where he kept it under lock and key.

Every night he studies the problem, and instead of becoming a strong and energetic man, as he dreamed, the boys at the laboratory tell him he is growing as cadaverous as old Meyer used to be.

He is sorely tempted to look up Charlie Waite, and take him into his confidence. But there is still the doubt in Remsen's mind whether or not the incidents of that marvelous night really happened just as he remembers them.

And would young Waite, upon cooler thought, believe that MacLean Remsen ever possessed the strength of a Samson?

Remsen is inclined sorely to disbelieve it himself.

THE END.

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS.

BY EDWARD P. CAMPBELL.

Pouncing on a suspicious character, how he proved his case, and—what happened later.

OUT of a dark passageway in the shadow of one of the new uptown hotels came sneaking a furtive figure, with coat-collar turned up and hat slouched down over his eyes. He was carrying in one hand a small leather satchel.

Detective William Price, of the Central Office, strolling by at the moment, caught one glimpse of the skulking form out of the corner of his keen, gray eye; but he made no sign.

No second glance did he cast in that direction; his face was set impassively ahead; the easy saunter of his step remained unchanged.

That is, he made no alteration in his regular progress until he had passed ten feet or so beyond the mouth of the narrow alley; then, turning sharply at right angles, he slipped into the concealment of a convenient doorway.

One minute Price waited; two, for a party of young people came chattering along the street just then—and it was evident no developments might be expected until they were well out of sight and hearing.

At last, though, the street resumed its ordinary nocturnal quiet. Out of the narrow passageway Price saw thrust a cautious head. Its owner hesitated a moment; then, straightening up, and turning down his coat-collar, he stepped out into the full glare of the electric street-lamp on the corner. As he came nonchalantly forward, he slipped his hand over his mouth with a quick motion, and removed a false mustache which had adorned his upper lip.

The detective crouched tensely in his retreat until the man came abreast of him, then, leaping out with a sudden spring, seized his quarry in a grip of steel. One hand shut down vise-like on the fellow's shoulder, while the other rapidly explored for the existence of a possible weapon.

Seemingly thunderstruck at first, the prisoner had hitherto stood motionless; but now he began to squirm and struggle with desperate energy. In fact, it was all Price could do to hold him while he was completing his investigation.

Reassured finally, however, that the man was unarmed, the officer soon brought him to submission with a mandatory twist of the arm.

"Here, cut out that resisting," he enjoined, panting. "You're under arrest, and you'd much better come along quietly."

The other gasped at the information, and wilted like a rag.

"Under arrest?" he repeated wildly. "Oh, good heavens, officer, don't do that. I would never have fought if I had known you were a policeman. I supposed, of course, you were a footpad, or something of the sort."

"It's funny you'd be afraid of your own kind of people," drawled Price cynically. "I guess that explanation won't go, my son. You knew what I was, all right, and you also know where you've got to go now. So, hand over that bag, and trot along lively."

But the prisoner still hung back.

"Surely, you are not going to take me to the station-house," he protested. "I admit things look a little peculiar; but it is all a mistake. There is nothing in the satchel which is not my own property. Oh, please let me go, officer. I tell you, you are making a terrible mistake."

"Yes, an awful mistake, indeed," jeered Price. "People are so in the habit of snooping around disguised, when they've nothing aboard except their own property. You can tell that to the sarg—— Ah! would you?" jerking him back; for the fellow, feeling the stern grip relax on his shoulder for a moment, had attempted to get away. "Quit your talk now, and come along without any more funny business, or I'll give you what you might not like."

There was apparently nothing else to do, and accordingly the captive, having been haled across Broadway and over to the West Forty-Seventh Street station, was soon ranged up before the desk of the sergeant.

"Hello, Price! What have you got now?" languidly inquired that functionary, picking up his pen.

"Can't say for sure, sarg," replied the detective; "but," complacently, "unless I'm away off in my guess, I would say it's the guy who's been cleaning up all the apartment houses here in the precinct, and causing us so much trouble. Anyhow, I picked him up sneaking out the side way at the Helvetia, with a false mustache on his face, and this in his mitt."

He held triumphantly up to the other's view the satchel which he had taken away from the prisoner.

"H'm!" commented the sergeant. "Couldn't want much better evidence than that. Caught him with the goods, eh? Well, he's got a tough mug on him, all right," leaning forward to scrutinize the face of the accused. "Know who he is?"

"No-o," grudgingly admitted the detective; "but I'll take my affidavit that he's an old-timer. He started to play that 'slip out of your coat and get away' trick on me as slick as anything you ever saw in your life; and you never did hear a finer line of talk than he can put up. Why, he almost had me 'conned' myself with his guff about how it was all a mistake to arrest him."

"And I still insist that it is a mistake," protested the man at the rail indignantly. "If you fellows will only give me a chance I can prove it to you in about two minutes. This bag that he talks so much about——"

"Shut up!" peremptorily ordered the sergeant. "We'll hear that little fairy story of yours later, if you want to tell it. Just now I propose to register you up. Come, what's your name?"

The prisoner hesitated a minute. Then, with an odd little twinkle in his eye, he replied calmly:

"Jack Donner."

The sergeant glanced up sharply, and let his homely face relax into a broad grin.

"Well, you certainly are a cool one," he commented admiringly. "Did you catch that, Price?" turning to the detective. "This chap gives the name of the thief in that play 'Stolen Diamonds,' which has been making such a hit over at the Vanity Square. And," speaking again to the prisoner, "where do you hang out when you are at home?"

"Well," in the same quizzical tone, "I can be found almost any night at No. 211 West Forty-Second Street."

"But that is——" the officer started to exclaim, only to break off with sudden comprehension. "Oh, I see," he grinned again. "That's the number of the Vanity Square Theater itself," he interpreted over his shoulder to his less sophisticated companion.

"But," he drew himself up, "let's be getting down to business. Hand over that bag, Price, and we'll see what kind of a haul Mr. Donner has been making this evening. Stolen diamonds, is it again?" he questioned jocosely of the suspect, "or have you been picking up some other little trifles?"

Before "Donner" could answer, however, the clasp of the satchel opened, and with a startled exclamation the sergeant let the thing slip from his fingers and fall to the floor. Simultaneously there came a sharp little yelp of discomfiture, and out from the receptacle jumped a small, white, curly dog.

Immediately the prisoner snatched up the little animal, and began soothing its ruffled feelings.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" growled Price, with disgusted chagrin. "The fellow's nothing but a dirty dog-snatcher, after all."

"Now, look here," snapped out the captive irately, "I've been called about all the hard names to-night that I choose to stand. I suppose," with a reluctant smile, "under the circumstances I can't blame any one very much for taking me in as a suspicious character, although had I been given a chance to explain there would have been no necessity to parade me over here to the station as was so officiously done. However, that is all over and done with, and I bear no hard feelings; but I do distinctly decline to have insult added to injury by being called a dog-snatcher. As anybody ought to be able to see with half an eye, the dog is mine."

"Yours?" demanded the sergeant. "Why, then, were you carrying him around in that peculiar fashion?"

"Yes," put in Price, clinging to his suspicions, "and why did you get yourself up in disguise to do it—false mustache, and all that sort of thing?"

"Well," answered the prisoner, "it does look strange, I'll admit; yet really it's quite simple when you come to know the facts. This dog, you must understand, I won in a raffle some days ago. I merely bought the chances out of good-nature, and would have given my prize away, but my wife got stuck on the little fellow and refused to part with him. Hence all the trouble.

"We are stopping at the Helvetia, you see, and the management there refuses to stand for dogs of any kind; so we have had to resort to all manner of subterfuges to keep the presence of ours from being known. Every evening for a week past, in order that the dog might have a walk, I have donned a disguise after my return from the theater—for as you no doubt have surmised, I gave you the name of the character I am playing when I said that I was *Donner*—and, with this hand-bag for a cover, have smuggled Fido in and out of the hotel by way of the servants' elevator.

"Oh, you fellows may smile," ruefully. "It sounds very funny, in all probability; but I can assure you it was far from amusing when a chap was doing it with his heart up in his mouth all the time for fear that he would be spotted and fired out of the house."

Both Price and the sergeant were in fits of laughter by this time over the woes of the unfortunate dog-owner; but the man at the desk finally controlled his mirth sufficiently to inform the prisoner that he was discharged.

"I'll tell the boys," he added graciously, "that in the future if they pipe a sneak-thief coming out of the Helvetia they needn't bother to bring him in."

"Thanks," rejoined the other dryly; "but I don't think I care to indulge in any further chances. Fido shall be given away to-morrow. And, sergeant," he concluded solemnly, "if you ever hear of me taking chances on another dog raffle I wish you'd see to it that I get ten years at hard labor."

He proffered cigars all round, deposited his pet once more in the satchel, and with a final good night took his departure.

About ten minutes later a cab clattered hurriedly up to the station-house, and a man and woman, visibly excited, burst in at the door.

"Officer," bewailed the woman, "I have been robbed. When I came home from the theater to-night I found that our rooms had been rifled, and my beautiful pearl necklace, worth three thousand dollars, stolen!"

"Where was the place?" inquired the sergeant, spreading open his blotter.

"At the Helvetia. Our rooms are on the seventh floor, and the fellow evidently made use of the servants' elevator to get away. The elevator boy remembers taking down a man with a black mustache, who carried a hand-bag, not more than half an hour ago. Oh," anxiously, "do you think there is any possibility of overtaking him?"

The sergeant had a smile he was unable to repress, behind his hand.

"That was not the thief, madam," he announced confidently. "We know all about that chap who came down on the elevator, and I can assure you very certainly that he was not the person who took your pearls. And now, will you please give me your name, so that I can at once start the investigation in proper form."

"My name," said the lady, "is Mrs. Hamilton Baxter. My husband, as you may know, is playing *Jack Donner* in 'Stolen Diamonds,' at the Vanity Square."

"Oh, yes," assented the sergeant; "I know him all right. In fact, he was in here not fifteen minutes ago."

"What's that?" demanded the man with Mrs. Baxter. "You evidently don't know what you are talking about. I am Hamilton Baxter, I would have you understand, and this is the first time I have ever been here in my life."

"You, Hamilton Baxter?" gasped the sergeant, his eyes nearly popping out of his head. "Er—why——"

He was starting to flounder hopelessly, but the astute Price cut in and saved the day.

"Oh, he's thinking of another actor who paid us a visit to-night," he hastily interposed, "and a jim dandy he was, too. But," breaking off and rising to his feet, "that's got nothing to do with recovering your pearls. Let's be moving over to the hotel, and you can tell me the story as we go along; for do you know," he added, "I am beginning to think there may be more in this story of the strange man on the elevator than we at first supposed."

Left to himself, the doughty sergeant bowed his head in deep self-abasement.

"And to think," he muttered, "that I didn't have the gumption to see if there was anything else in that valise besides the dog!"

THAT TIRED CLOCK.

DEAR little Kittie, just turned three,
If any mischief there could be,
  Was certain to be in it,
  If left alone a minute.

The parlor clock, folks found one day,
Face down! A very curious way,
  For clocks that should be going
  Straight up-to-date a-slowing!

"Why, Kittie, did you put it so?"
Asked mama. "See, it does not go,
  Nor stand the way it ought-er,
  Mischievous little daughter!"

"I thought 'twas tired!" said the sprite.
"'Cause it goes always—day and night!
  Just laid it down upon the shelf,
  So it could stop and rest itself!"

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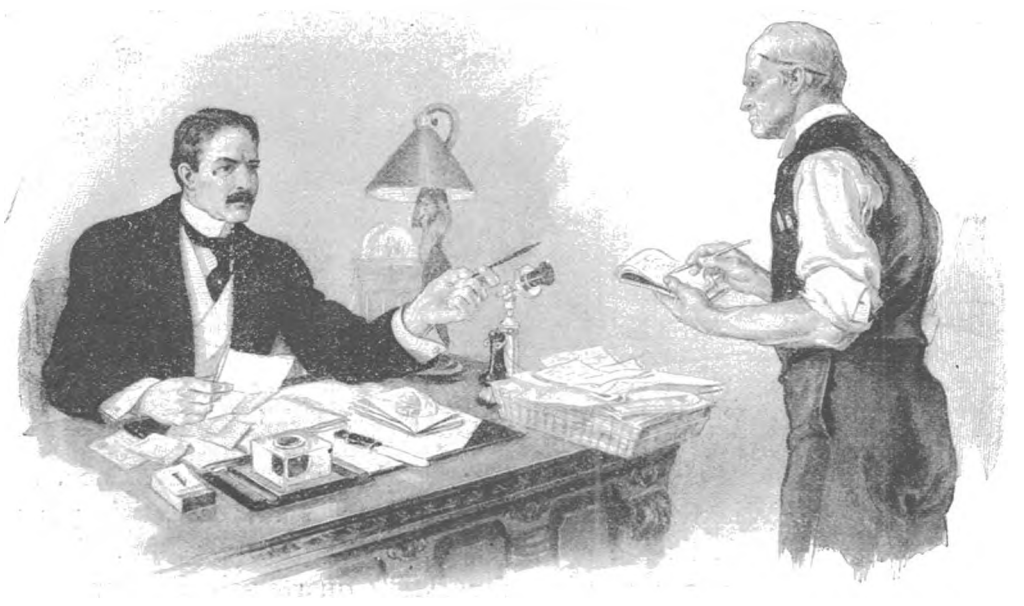
SEE YOU CAN HANG IT UP

C1



The Making of a Man

A Hint to the Poorly Paid.

Successful, valuable work, whether physical or mental, depends upon your thinker—your power to concentrate, and to act.

A man succeeds in measure as he is fitted for his work.

Keen, active brain, and steady, reliable nerves to carry out its orders, depend upon the kind of food you eat.

Literally millions of successful workers in all parts of the world have found by trial that

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is the perfect food that makes and keeps them sturdy, and able to command money, fame and power.

"There's a Reason"

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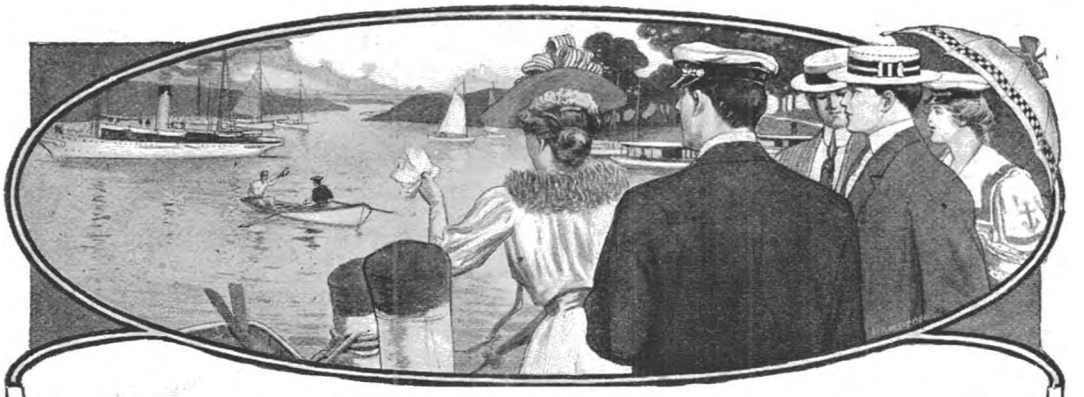

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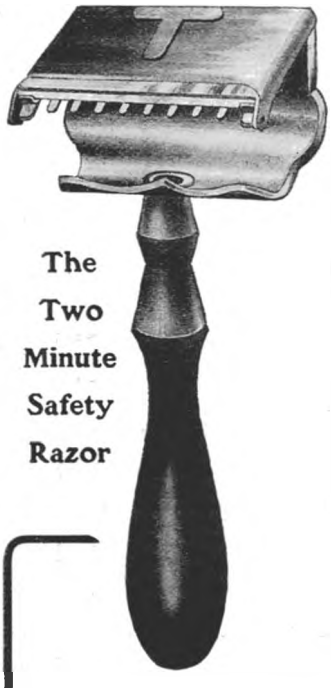

With This Razor You Cannot Cut Yourself

SHAVE without the possibility of cutting yourself. Sounds like a pretty large promise, doesn't it? Nevertheless, there's a razor that will give such a shave—**The Two Minute Safety.**

You simply cannot cut anything but your beard no matter how carelessly or how rapidly you may shave. That's one of the unique points of the **Two Minute Safety Razor**—one of the things that make it different from all others.

That's why it's a boon to suffering shavers everywhere, and why we like to talk about it. The idea is **so simple.** We can explain it so it is clear at a glance. But when you understand, we think **you will want to convince yourself** by a trial of the razor.

NEARLY all the trouble with safety razors that are not safe comes from the **unprotected blade corners.**

No matter how well guarded the blade is at other points, if the corners are exposed, they are more than likely to take a slice in turning the razor another way or making a hasty stroke.

That trouble has been effectually guarded against in the Two Minute Safety Razor by a **simple protection** at the blade corners.

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You open the top of the razor holder just as you would a book. Lay in a blade, close the lid, and there you are, ready for business.

The blade corners are **covered by little guards.**

The Razor without the Pull

No matter which way you run the razor, how quickly you turn it, or what kind of stroke you make, the knife **will not cut the skin.**

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This blade protection, however, does not prevent you from getting a **good shave, a clean shave,** a shave as **close as you desire.**

Two Minute Safety blades are made of **Sheffield razor steel,** cut, formed, tempered and ground by hand by expert workmen.

These blades have the **double beveled cutting edge** used only in the best razors.

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The Two Minute Safety gives you not only a **safe** shave, but the **easiest** shave you ever had. This is due in large part to its peculiar construction, by which the steadiness of the old-fashioned razor is obtained.

The old-fashioned razor, you know, has a **thick back** to support the thin cutting edge—to keep the blade from trembling as it goes through the beard.

In the Two Minute Safety Razor the whole blade is clamped down on a flat surface firmly under the cover. It has **no chance to tremble.** The blade thus held moves through the stubby growth so smoothly you can scarcely feel it. And yet it takes everything above the skin in its path.

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The blade lying on a perfectly flat surface **never cracks.** The double bevel cutting edge makes the **TWO MINUTE** blades **stay sharp** twice as long as other blades.

The Two Minute razor is as easily and as quickly washed as a table knife.

The peculiar form of the holder prevents the dropping of lather on the clothes.

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Write to-day for free booklet—"From Lather to Powder in Two Minutes." It will give you some valuable points on safety razor shaving.

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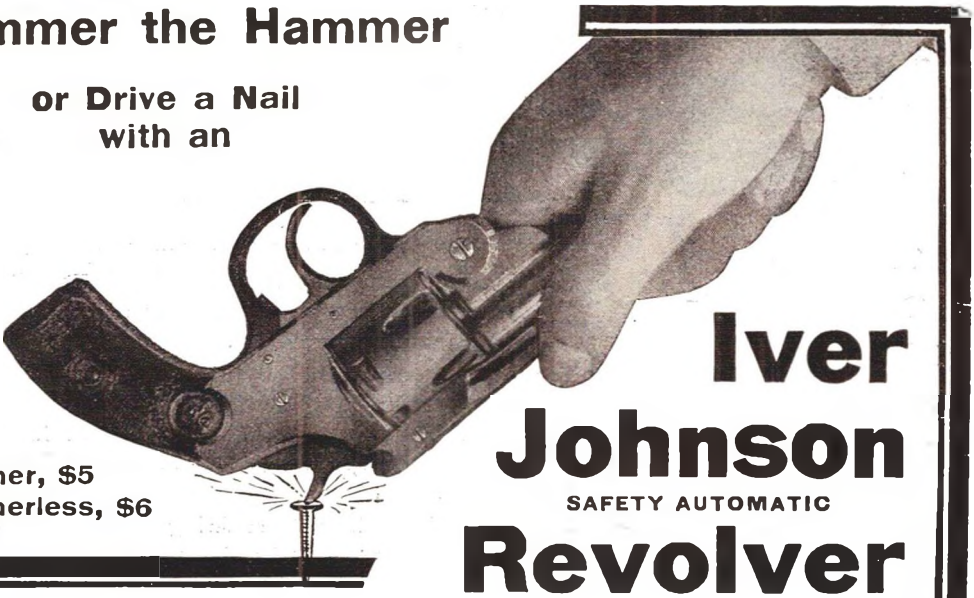
or Drive a Nail with an



Hammer, $5
Hammerless, $6

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SAFETY AUTOMATIC
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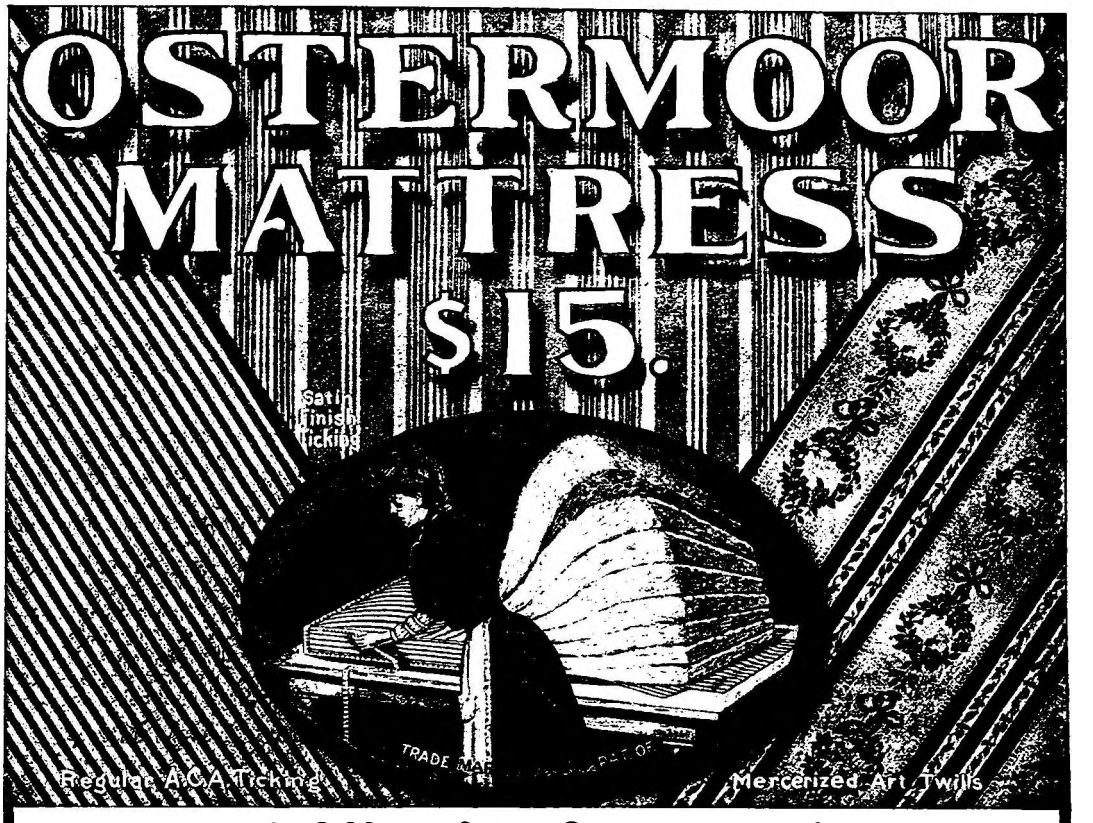

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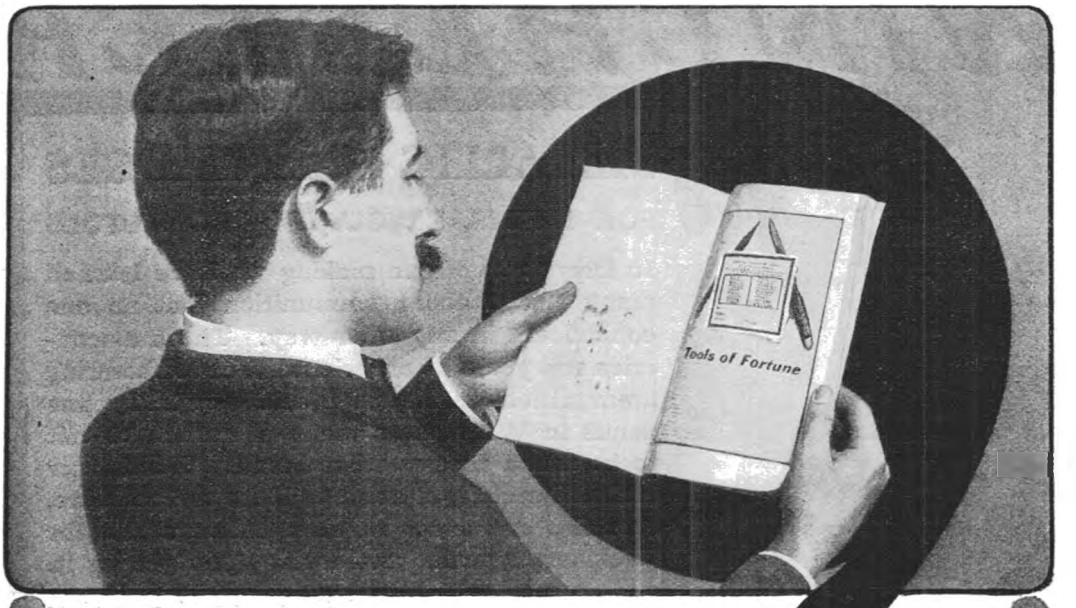

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All the features of the famous *Marlin* 12-gauge are present in the Model 16. The solid top and side ejector—the automatic hang-fire safety recoil block—the "Special Smokeless Steel" barrel—the solid matted rib on the frame—the beautiful hang and finish—but each part is made a little smaller, a little lighter and a little neater.

All the parts of the breech and the closed-in action are made of the time-tried *Marlin* steel drop forgings and are very strong.

The barrel is guaranteed to pattern over 240 pellets No. 7½ shot in a 30-in. circle at 35 yards. No quail or woodcock can get through a pattern like this, and for grouse, prairie chickens, teal, wood ducks, squirrels, rabbits, etc., this gun is unsurpassed.

Write TO-DAY for our Catalog, which describes in detail the Model 16, as well as the full *Marlin* line of guns; mailed free for six cents in stamps.

The Marlin Firearms Co., 7 Willow Street, New Haven, Conn.

REVERSIBLE

Linene

Collars and Cuffs

Have You Worn Them?

Not "celluloid"—not "paper collars"—but made of fine cloth; exactly resemble fashionable linen goods. Price at stores, 25c. for box of ten (2½ cents each).

No Washing or Ironing

When soiled discard. **By mail, 10 collars or 5 pairs of cuffs, 30c.** Sample collar or pair of cuffs for 6c. in U. S. stamps. Give size and style.

REVERSIBLE COLLAR CO., Dept. 6, BOSTON, MASS.

SUMMER SUSPENDERS

If you cannot wear a belt without suspender support you will enjoy the light, cool and comfortable feeling of **Bull Dog Suspenders.** No hot weather sagging—no slipping of buckles or tangling of harness. No fraying of cords or breaking of ends annoys the man who wears the simple, sensible and serviceable **Bull Dog Suspenders.**

They stand the hot weather test—the severest test of suspender quality—**That's why they OUTWEAR THREE PAIR OF THE OTHER KINDS.**

Put a pair on your back, and, our word for it, you'll always wear them hereafter.

50 cents

50 cents

In regular size, extra lengths, also youth's size and light and heavy weights.

Your dealer will cheerfully sell them if he is not out of them. If he is, we will send a pair postpaid for 50 cents.

HEWES & POTTER

Dept. 12, 87 Lincoln St. BOSTON, MASS.

Bull Dog SUSPENDERS

C15

A Classified Advertising Department

FOR

MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

We have decided to give the small advertiser an opportunity to use the enormous circulation of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE for the very small sum of $10.00, and to do business in every State and Territory of the United States at a lower rate in proportion to circulation than he can secure in any other advertising medium of national circulation.

Up to the present time the minimum space acceptable for MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE has been one inch, or 14 agate lines, the cost of which is $42.00. In order to fully appreciate the importance of our new $10.00 offer, it must be understood that the circulation of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE is much the biggest of any general magazine, having averaged 700,000 copies monthly for the first six months of 1906.

Rates for Classified Advertising in MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

Card of four agate lines (minimum size accepted, and containing about 32 words, including address), one time - - - $10.00

Each additional agate line up to 12 lines (maximum size accepted), one time - - - - - - - - - - - 2.50

All advertisements set in uniform style and classified under suitable headings. No discounts for time, space, or cash will be allowed from these rates.

Payment for all classified advertising to be strictly in advance, cash with order. Remit by check, express or postal orders.

All copy must be subject to our approval, and no undesirable advertisements will be accepted. Advertising forms close on the 25th of the second preceding month—that is, October forms close August 25th.

To the Small Advertiser

If you have a good proposition, and if you are equipped to fill orders, why don't you do a national business, instead of only a local business? MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE will take your offer into every State and Territory of the United States for only $10.00. A trial of the magazine field—the whole country as covered by MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE—is no longer a great expense.

FILL OUT AND SEND US THE COUPON BELOW.

CLASSIFIED ADV. DEPT.,
MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE,
175 Fifth Ave., New York.

Enclosed find $_____, for which insert the following _____ line advertisement in the October issue of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE.

(Arc., Sept. '06.)

(Allow about eight words to a line.)

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____
7 _____
8 _____
9 _____
10 _____
11 _____
12 _____

The Delights of Happy Childhood

Wouldn't you be happy if you could have all you wanted of the daintiest and most delicious "goodie" you ever tasted, without having someone tell you, you mustn't eat any more of it? That's exactly what you can have when you eat

Quaker Rice
(Puffed)

There is something about Quaker Rice that makes it decidedly different from the ordinary cereal—the more you eat of it, the more you want. Its dainty lightness, delicate flavor and delicious crispness make you marvel at the ingenuity that has transformed common rice into such a wholesome and appetizing food.

Quaker Rice retains all of the goodness of the rice kernel, and by a special patented puffing process, cooks it thoroughly and adds to its palatableness, making it truly the delight of happy childhood.

Quaker Rice should be heated for a minute in a hot oven, and then served with milk, cream or sugar. Or, you will find recipes on the package for making dainty Quaker Rice confections. Quaker Rice is so easily digested and so pure and wholesome, that the children can eat all of it they want.

Quaker Rice is sold by grocers everywhere at 10 cents the package.

Made by the Manufacturers of Quaker Oats. Address. Chicago, U. S. A.

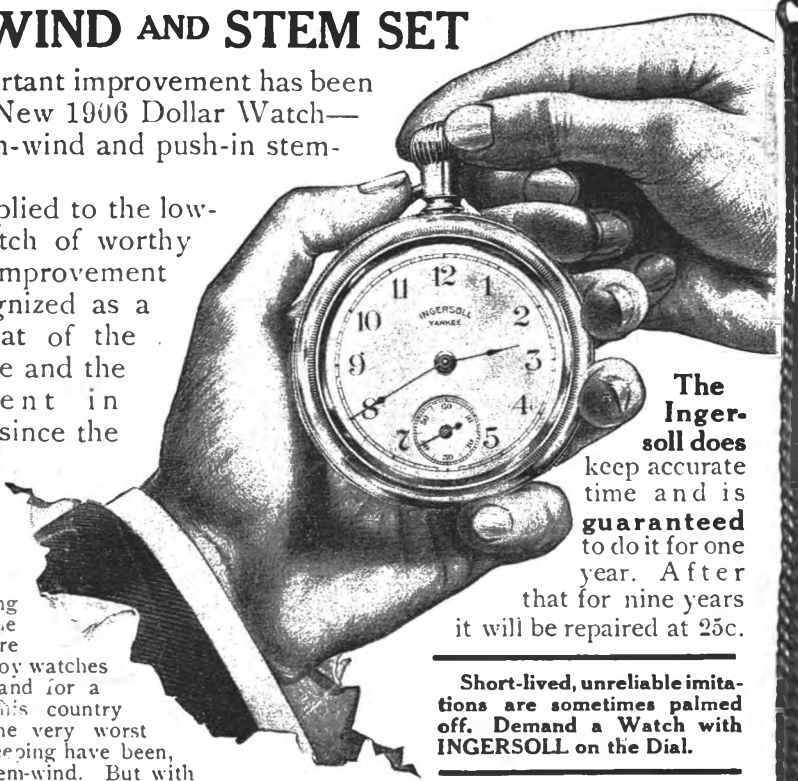
Ingersoll

Dollar Watch

STEM WIND AND STEM SET

An important improvement has been made in the New 1906 Dollar Watch—it is now stem-wind and push-in stem-set.

Being applied to the lowest priced watch of worthy quality, this improvement must be recognized as a mechanical feat of the first magnitude and the greatest event in watchmaking since the first Ingersoll was made and sold for one dollar.



The Ingersoll does keep accurate time and is **guaranteed** to do it for one year. After that for nine years it will be repaired at 25c.

Short-lived, unreliable imitations are sometimes palmed off. Demand a Watch with INGERSOLL on the Dial.

There is nothing startling about the stem-wind feature itself; fifteen cent toy watches are stem-winding and for a decade both in this country and in Europe the very worst watches [illegible]timekeeping have been, and are to-day, stem-wind. But with *Ingersoll quality* established by fourteen years of experience during which nearly *Twelve Million* Ingersolls have been made and sold—with this quality—and the price considered, the addition of this expensive feature is a great development, important to the buyer.

At the expense of watch-quality "features" are easy, but only the invaluable patents, the tremendous output (over 8,000 daily), the organization and the experience of years make a watch like the Ingersoll possible at One Dollar. Imitations can resemble it outwardly but it is the works inside that make the watch.

Ingersoll Watches are sold in your own neighborhood by some good merchant. You will most likely see the Ingersoll sign in his window or on his counter. But if not locally obtainable, postpaid by us for $1.00. There are other Ingersolls at $1.50 and $1.75. Ladies' Ingersoll, $2.00.

Sold by 50,000 Dealers.

Every Genuine Ingersoll Watch has the Name INGERSOLL on the Dial.

The Ingersoll Dollar Chain has more gold than any $2.00 chain. Made in 12 patterns. Circular Free. Sold everywhere or postpaid for $1.00. Look for the Ingersoll guarantee tag on each

Robt. H. Ingersoll & Bro.

46 JEWELERS COURT.
NEW YORK.

THE MUNSEY PRESS, NEW YORK