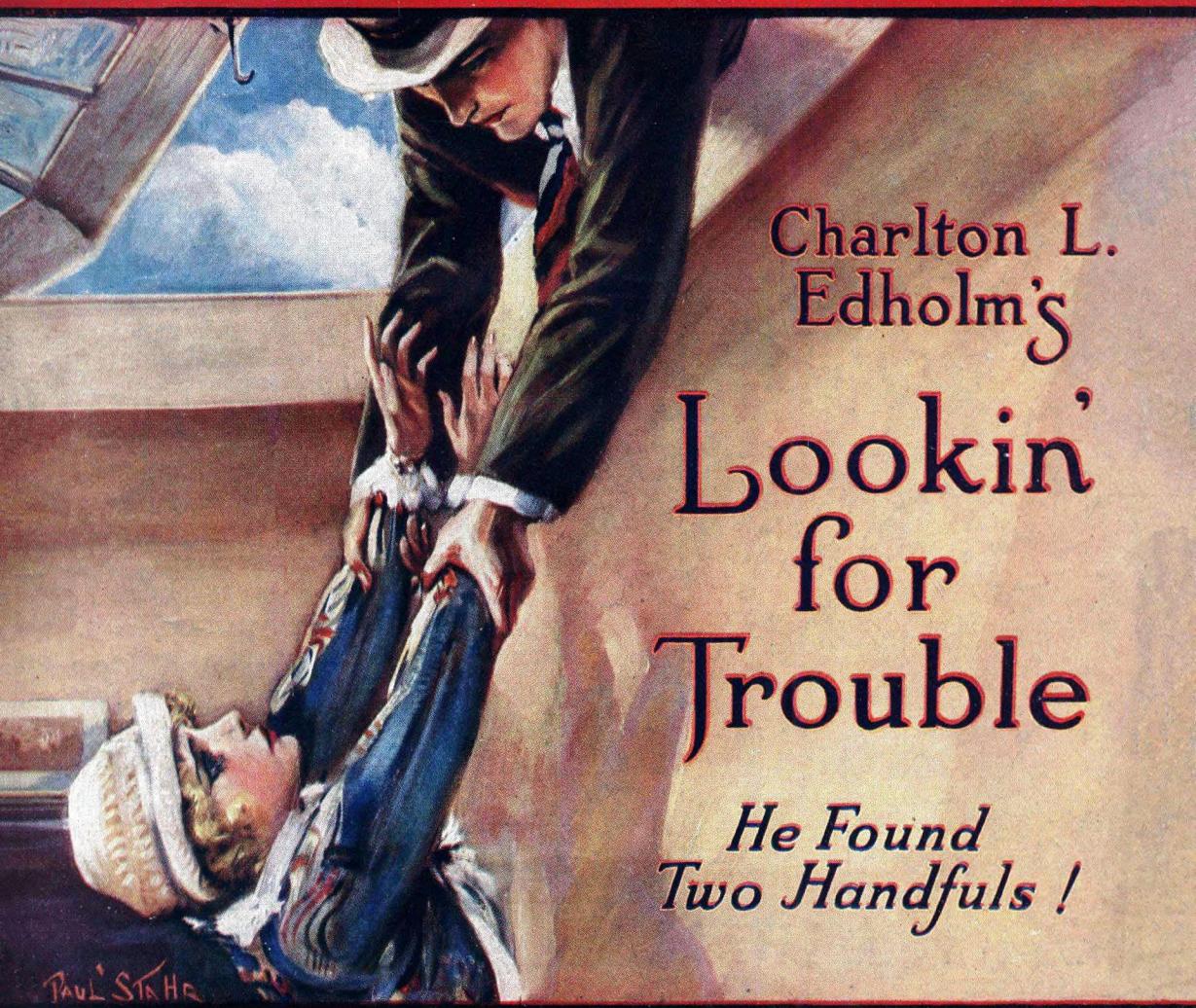


# ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY



Charlton L.  
Edholm's

## Lookin' for Trouble

*He Found  
Two Handfuls !*

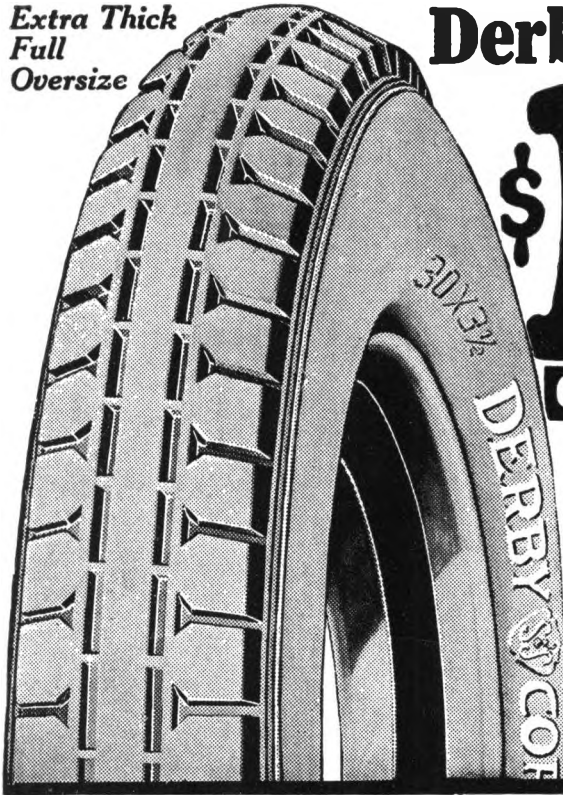
10¢ PER  
COPY

MAY 9

BY THE  
YEAR \$4<sup>00</sup>



**Extra Thick  
Full  
Oversize**



# Derby CORD Tires

**\$1.00**  
**Down**  
**Balance**  
**on Easy**  
**Payments**

Yes, only \$1.00 down now brings you the genuine Derby Cord tire on approval. This is your opportunity to equip your car with *brand new, first grade* genuine Derby Cord tires at lower than list prices of advertised brands and on small monthly payments without feeling the expense. Read:

## Guaranteed 10000 Miles

The genuine Derby Cord tire is guaranteed to be absolutely first quality. If any defects should develop, we will replace or repair the defective tire on the basis of 10,000 miles of service. The Derby tire is branded with the Straus & Schram name and backed by Straus & Schram ironclad guarantee. We know how the Derby is made and we say — no matter what brand or what price, there is no better tire than the Derby. The Straus & Schram Derby Oversize Cord is an **EXTRA HEAVY, EXTRA THICK, FULL OVERSIZE** cord tire. Compare it for size and weight with ANY other well known makes sold for cash at higher prices.

## Derby Special Non-Skid Tread

Our exclusive Derby Non-Skid Tread is extra thick and semi-flat, providing nearly twice as much wearing surface as the ordinary rounded or flat tread. So tough that it will show almost no wear after thousands of miles of service. The tread is scientifically designed to give the highest non-skid efficiency. The friction surface is of unadulterated new rubber, carefully vulcanized to prevent separation. The Derby Cord tire has that handsome all black color now preferred by motorists. Terms as low as —

Yes, on this wonderful new plan, you can pay for your tires on easy monthly terms as low as

**\$1.50 a Month**

\$1.50 a month — 6 months to pay. You need not wait until you have the cash. Get as many tires as you'll need for your car this entire season and pay while using them — only \$1.00 down, balance in six equal monthly payments. You won't feel the expense on this monthly payment plan and you'll be free from tire trouble all year.

## On Approval **Send Coupon**

Only \$1.00 with coupon brings the Genuine Derby tire to you on approval at our risk. If not satisfied after examination, send it back and we will refund your dollar plus transportation charges. Send the coupon today while these lowest rock-bottom prices last.

**STRAUS & SCHRAM, Dept. T 2275, Chicago, Ill.**

I enclose \$1.00. Send me on money-back approval and subject to your 10,000-mile guarantee the genuine Derby Cord Tires and Tubes I have ordered below. If I am not satisfied, I may return the tires at once and you will refund my \$1.00 including transportation charges. If satisfied, I will pay the balance of the total amount of my order in six equal monthly payments.

You can buy 1, 2 or 3 tires and 1, 2 or 3 tubes up to \$50.00 worth for \$1.00 down on this coupon, balance in six equal monthly payments.

Derby Cord Tires, No. \_\_\_\_\_ Total Price \_\_\_\_\_  
How Many \_\_\_\_\_ Fill in Tire No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tubes, No. \_\_\_\_\_ Total Price \_\_\_\_\_  
How Many \_\_\_\_\_ Fill in Tube No. \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping Point \_\_\_\_\_

Post Office \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

## Our Prices (6 Months to Pay)

Clincher Cord Tires.			Number
30 x 3	Standard Size	\$ 9.95	Z8234A
30 x 3½		11.95	Z8235A
30 x 3½	Oversize	13.80	Z8236A
30 x 3½	Giant Oversize	14.85	Z8238A

Note: We particularly recommend our 30 x 3½ Giant Oversize Derby Cord — a bigger, better, stronger tire. Gives greater comfort and greater mileage and the price is only a few cents more per month! It's the best investment in the end.

Straight Side Cord Tires.			Number
30 x 3½	Oversize	\$14.80	Z8237A
31 x 4	Giant Oversize	21.90	Z8239A
32 x 4		22.95	Z8240A
33 x 4		24.25	Z8241A

## Inner Tubes

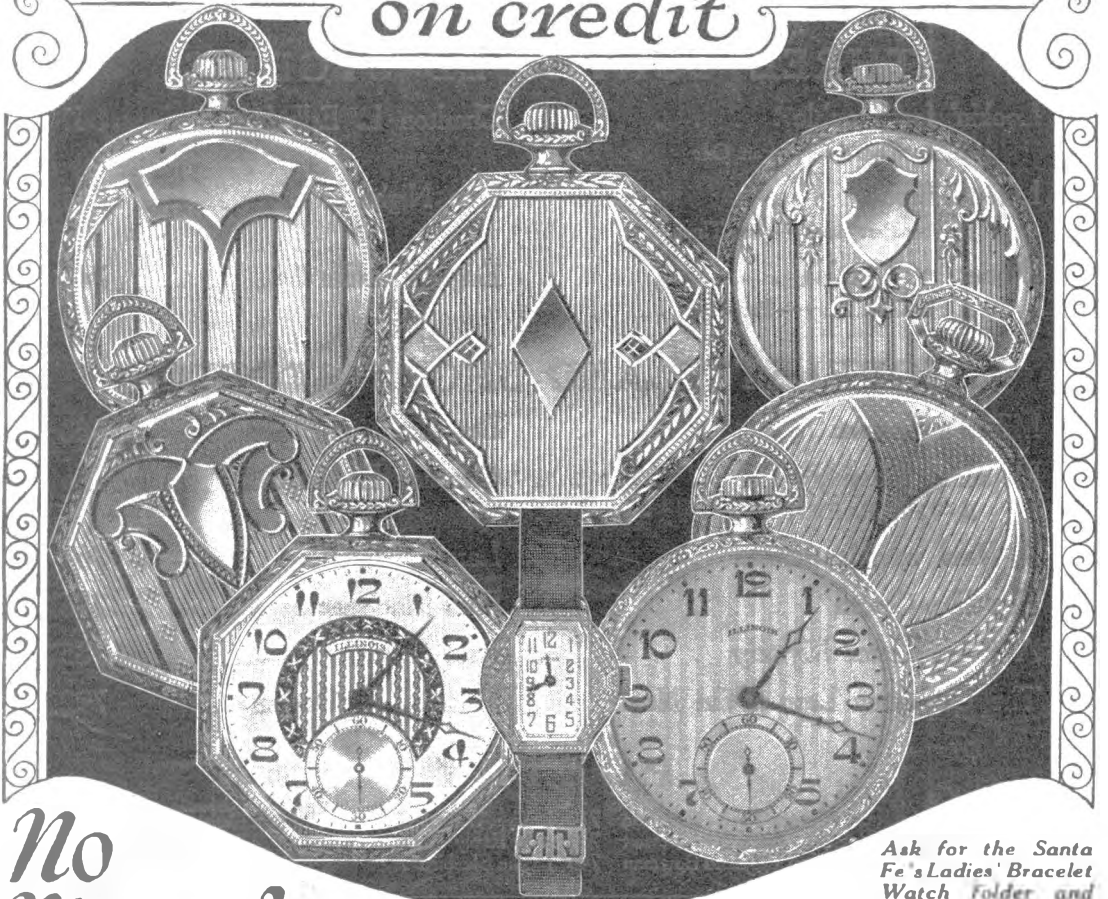
Order a New Tube With Your Tire. We offer gray inner tubes, extra strong, especially built to eliminate leaks. Also extra heavy red inner tubes which are 50% heavier than standard weight tubes and give extra service. All tubes made of best materials, thoroughly tested. Experts will tell you it's best to have a new tube with a new tire.



Size	Gray Tubes	Red Tubes
30 x 3	\$1.05 No. Z8242A	\$2.40 No. Z8247A
30 x 3½	1.85 No. Z8243A	2.55 No. Z8248A
31 x 4	2.30 No. Z8244A	3.15 No. Z8249A
32 x 4	2.40 No. Z8245A	3.30 No. Z8250A
33 x 4	2.65 No. Z8246A	3.50 No. Z8251A

**Straus & Schram**  
**Dept. T 2275, Chicago, Ill.**

# 21 Jewel Santa Fe Special on credit



**No  
Money  
Down**

Ask for the Santa Fe's Ladies' Bracelet Watch folder and Diamond folder.

WE will send this famous watch direct to you, express prepaid on **FREE** Approval. Examine watch and be convinced it's the best watch buy you ever saw. You save  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  your money by purchasing a Santa Fe Special Watch. We trust you—wear watch while paying for it.

**Mail Coupon for FREE Watch Book →**

Clip the coupon, fill out and receive the **FREE WATCH BOOK**. All the newest watch case designs in white or green gold, fancy shapes and thin models are shown. Read our easy payment offer. Select the watch you would like to see, we will send it to you on approval, express prepaid. Wear the watch 30 days **FREE**—return at our expense if not fully satisfied.

**SANTA FE WATCH COMPANY**  
557 Thomas Building Topeka, Kansas  
*The Home of the Great Santa Fe Railway*

**SANTA FE WATCH CO.,**  
557 Thomas Building,  
Topeka, Kansas

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

Name.....

Address.....

# ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CLXVIII

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NUMBER 5

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## KENNETH PERKINS'S SEA PRIZE

An opulent romance of piracy in familiar waters of our own day. Here are beauty and valor shanghaied on a ship with a conscienceless skipper and an evil crew. As vivid as the Gulf sunsets, as mysterious as the Louisiana bayous, as thrilling as the hurricane—a masterly story of the old devil sea.

First of Four Parts Next Week.

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HOPEFIELD HOUSE, HANWELL, W. 7, LONDON, ENGLAND**

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

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

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If you are now earning less than \$40 a week, I will guarantee you at least 50% more pay after you finish my training or refund every cent you pay for tuition. AMERICAN SCHOOL, the 27 year old, million dollar educational institution, stands back of this guarantee with all its resources.

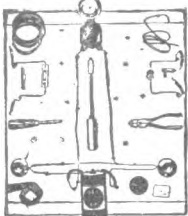
## Go Into **ELECTRICITY!**

The world's greatest, fastest growing, most fascinating industry will pay you \$3500 to \$12,000 a year when you are an **ELECTRICAL EXPERT** trained to BOSS electrical construction or electrical power plants, to direct the work of ordinary electricians. Prepare for these positions, at home in your spare time, with Dunlap JOB-METHOD training, the most complete and up-to-date home instruction in Electricity.

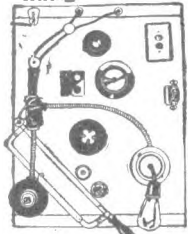
You Get

### 4 Electrical Outfits

Dunlap JOB-METHOD training is built around four complete Electrical outfits which I send you without extra charge. With these valuable instruments, tools and materials, you learn by doing actual Electrical jobs. You get the theory while getting the practice. My JOB-METHOD of instruction makes it easy for you to understand the most difficult subjects.



Wiring



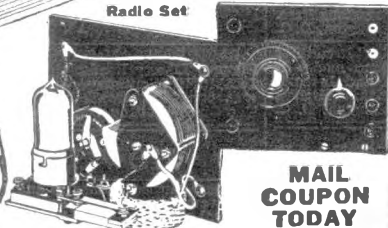
Wiring



Radio Set



Motor and Meter



**MAIL COUPON TODAY**

### 22 Electrical Engineers

from Westinghouse, General Electric, Commonwealth Edison, Western Union and other great corporations helped me to build this wonderful home-study training. So in every department of Electricity you get your training from a *specialist and an authority!* These executives know what training you need to hold down the BIG-PAY positions in Electricity, and they give you just that training.

### BOSS Electrical Jobs at \$60 to \$200 a Week!

New projects in Electricity total hundreds of millions of dollars. No other industry offers such a golden future to trained men, trained as I train you. Electricity rewards not only the occasional genius like Edison and Steinmetz. This giant business also pays rich prizes to thousands of men who master electrical principles as I help you master them in my JOB-METHOD instruction.

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Electrical Division  
**American School**  
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**CHICAGO**

Please rush free book, guarantee of a 50% raise and complete information.

Name .....

St. No. ....

City.....State.....



# Classified Advertising

## The Purpose of this Department

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

## Classified Advertising

### Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$5.00
Argosy-Allstory	2.50	less 25 cent discount
Weekly		
Play'n's	1.00	
Minimum space four lines.		

June 13th Argosy-Allstory Forms Close May 16th

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**AGENTS—\$35 CASH WEEKLY AND A FREE SUIT TO EACH AGENT FOR TAKING ORDERS FOR OUR HIGH-CLASS MADE TO ORDER TAILORING SUITS FROM \$14.95 TO \$39.50. NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED. WRITE FOR OUR FREE SAMPLE OUTFIT. PROGRESS TAILORING COMPANY, DEPT. E-109, CHICAGO.**

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

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**AGENTS—Be independent, make big profit with our soap, toilet articles and household necessities. Get free sample case offer. HO-RO CO. 2718 Dodier, St. Louis, Mo.**

**BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.44 profit. 10 orders daily. Samples and information free. World Monogram Co., Dept. 9, Newark, N. J.**

**LET US MAIL YOU A FREE Bottle of our Life Tonic Elixir, Face Powder, Vegetable Oil Soap and Terms to Agents. All Big Repeaters. LACASSIAN CO., Dept. 45, St. Louis, Mo.**

**Make \$17 Daily. Finest Guaranteed Extracts, Food Products, Toilet Preparations, Perfumes, Household Necessities. Credit. Sample case Free. Write for amazing offer. PERKINS PRODUCTS, B-25, Hastings, Neb.**

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**WE START YOU in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. W. Hillier Bagsdale, Drawer 95, East Orange, N. J.**

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**EARN \$110 TO \$230 MONTHLY. EXPENSES PAID AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR. Position guaranteed after completion of 3 month home study course or money refunded. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. Write for Free Booklet CM-30. STAND. BUSINESS TRAINING INST., Buffalo, N. Y.**

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**\$6—\$18 A DOZEN DECORATING PILLOW TOPS AT HOME. Experience unnecessary. Particulars for stamp. TAPESTRY PAINT CO., 128, LaGrange, Ind.**

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

**\$50 A WEEK EVENINGS. Mail Order Business. Booklet tells how. Sample and plan 25c. Free—9 articles worth \$5. E. BRADFORD CO., Shawnee, Okla.**

## AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

**SONG WRITERS—IF YOU HAVE SONG POEMS OR MELODIES write for my proposition now. Send a letter or postal card today to RAY HIRSHLER, D-5, 4040 Dickens Avenue, Chicago, Ill.**

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

**Short stories, novels, newspaper articles, poems, sold, criticised, revised. Send for FREE details and advice. Have successfully handled thousands of manuscripts. Expert services. Established 1911. Ad. Pub. Co., P. O. Box 406, San Francisco, Calif.**

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KAY LABORATORIES, Dept. B-506  
186 No. La Salle Street, Chicago, Illinois

## The JUNE MUNSEY

A new policy is inaugurated with the June number of *Munsey's Magazine*. Hereafter all the fiction in the magazine will be printed complete in each issue. The change will undoubtedly be welcomed, for the modern reader is less and less willing to wait several months for the conclusion of a continued story.

The chief features of the June *Munsey* are a complete short novel of New York life, "Who Is Sylvia?" by Gertrude Pahlow, and a complete novelette, "The Human Sphinx," an absorbing mystery story by Ellis Parker Butler. The magazine will also contain a wealth of short stories by some of the leading writers of the day.

## The JUNE MUNSEY

will be on sale at all news-stands on  
Wednesday, May 20.

## A Genuine Beauty

## SILK

## Satin Dress

## with Lovely SILK

## Spanish Lace

Becomes \$4.98  
EVERY TYPE OF FIGURE C.O.D.

One of the prettiest and most popular styles of the season. It is rich in appearance, daintily made and gives a charm few dresses are capable of doing. We've made the price so attractive that no woman who desires beautiful things can overlook this simple, handsome dress. It's one you will be proud to wear. Gray haired matrons are wearing them as successfully as young maids, large or small. The beautiful lace panel loosely fitted in front gives a most striking effect and new fashioned sleeves finished off with the silk lace are graduated full to the cuffs. Dress is furnished in newest shades of blue, rust or brown, also black, in sizes 16 to 46. Also sizes in stouts 47 to 53 for 50c extra. We'll send this dress entirely on approval.

### Send NO MONEY

Just send in your order now and pay postman on arrival. Order by No. 181 and give Size and Color wanted.

ALL GOODS GUARANTEED OR MONEY REFUNDED  
Lee Thomas Co., Dept. 794, Chicago



Sizes 16 to 53

COLORS:  
BLUE  
RUST  
GRAY  
BROWN  
BLACK  
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Washington School of Cartooning  
Room 465 C, 1113-15th St., N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.



## 66 Miles on 1 Gallon

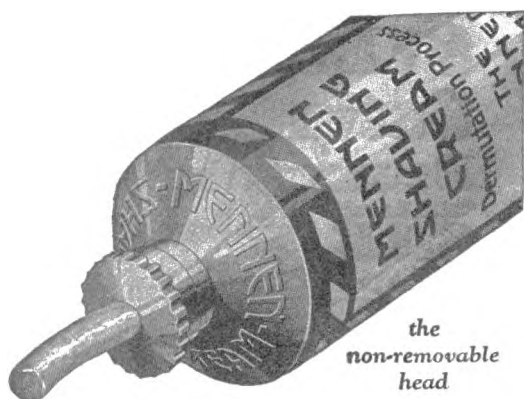
## Wonderful Vapor Humidifier

For All Make Autos. Spare or Full Time Agencies Wanted Everywhere

## 1 FREE TO INTRODUCE BIG PROFITS TO ANY MAN WITH CAR

CRITCHLOW, Inventor, AA-25, WHEATON, ILL.

WHEN you start a serial in the *Argosy-Allstory* you only wait a week to go on with it. Start one this week, and you'll buy every number until it's concluded. Ten cents a copy—all news-stands.



## \$100 for a name

Marlowe sang "the topless towers of Ilium." I sing the topless tubes of Mennen. I want a good name for the new non-removable, non-refillable, non-leakable device that now makes the Mennen Shaving Cream container as inimitable as its contents.

Others have tried to denature the capricious cap. Mennen has abolished it.

Just move the Mennen knob a quarter turn and a hole magically appears. After you've squeezed out enough cream, another quarter turn closes the hole as tight as a drum. No threads to engage; no bother of any kind.

It's a knock-out—as far ahead of other sealing devices as Mennen Shaving Cream is ahead of the procession.

We've called this new patented feature "the plug-tite top." We want a better name. If you can suggest one we like, we'll send you a hundred dollars. If more than one submits the winning name, each one will get the century check.

To everyone who sends a suggestion we'll mail a complimentary tube of Mennen Skin Balm, the cooling, healing after-shave cream that's fragrant and greaseless.

Let me hear from you. Contest closes July first. Use the coupon, if it's handier.

*Jim Henry*  
(Mennen Salesman)

Jim Henry, c/o The Mennen Company  
377 Central Ave., Newark, N. J.

I suggest the name \_\_\_\_\_

My name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

# \$100

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YOU use silverware and linen, hang up curtains and pictures, wear fabrics carefully cut and adorned—all for the purpose of coloring the drab facts of food, shelter and clothes.

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*Advertising reduces the cost  
of products that add pleasure and  
comfort to living*



# FLYNN'S

## The Greatest of Detective Story Magazines.

In this magazine you will find great fiction by these famous popular writers: Fletcher, Reeve, Freeman, Lincoln, Enright. It is also the place to find the great true stories—the autobiography of William J. Flynn: stories of the great exploits of Scotland Yard, the Parisienne Service de Surete, the Vienna Police, and the Berlin Meldwesen. Also stories of great mysteries, sensational criminal exploits, all over the world.

Its departments are unique and popular. SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS is better than crossword puzzles. HEADQUARTERS GOSSIP is the place where William J. Flynn draws on his store of experience to comment on the detective and criminal news of the day to point the moral or adorn a tale with reminiscence. The BUREAU OF CORRESPONDENCE is the place where the readers meet to talk over the magazine or the subjects that the magazine suggests; to ask questions and to contribute their bit of information.

May 9th issue features:

### The Room Above

By John Daye

The beginning of a new mystery detective serial in which a murder appears to have been committed by a young woman who is seen by two or three people leaving the house. Each one wants to prove her innocence, but each step only piles up clues and evidence higher against her. It is a startling picture of the way in which circumstances may conspire to brand the innocent with the mark of Cain.

### Antoine Derues—Supercriminal

By Louise Rice

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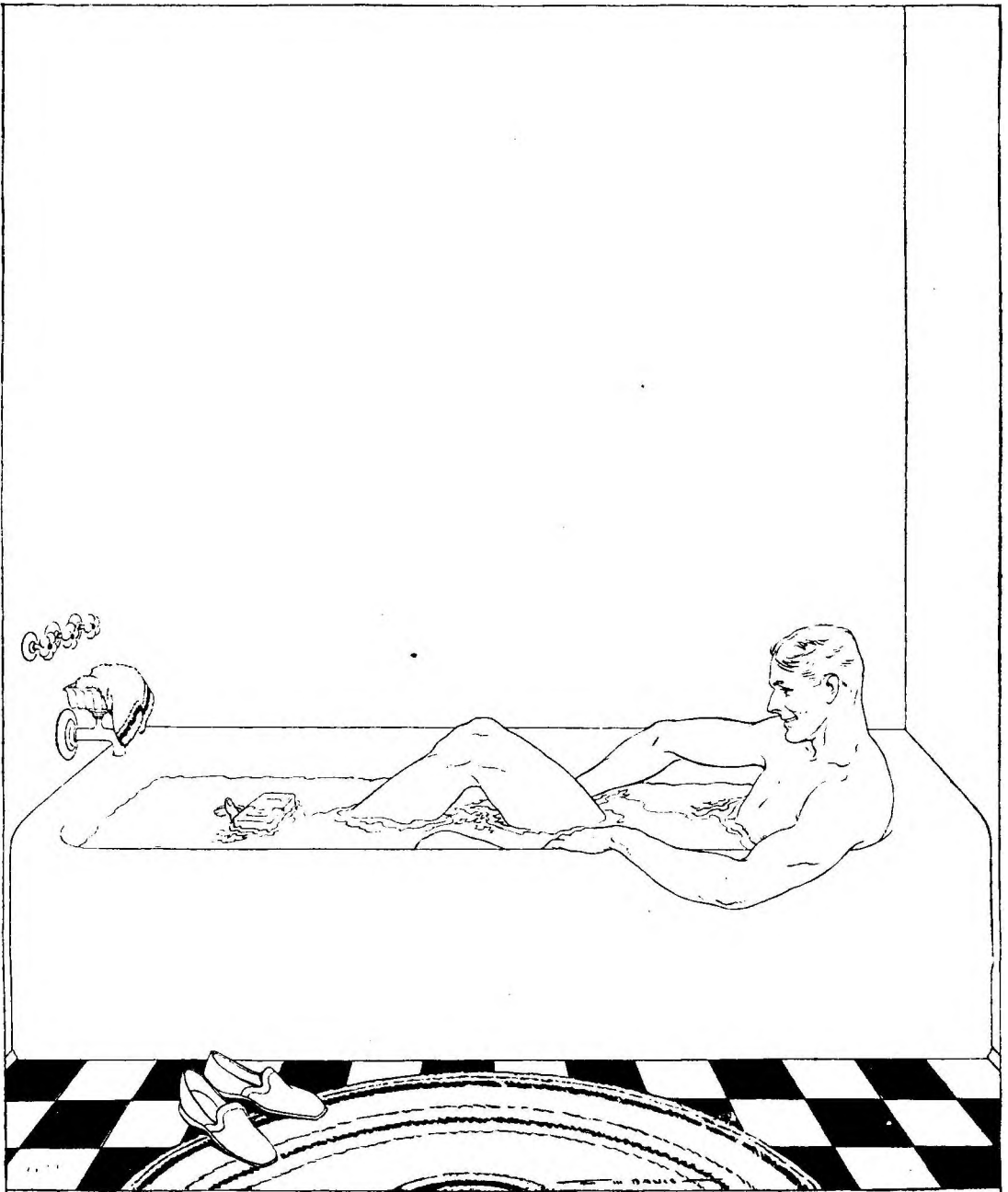
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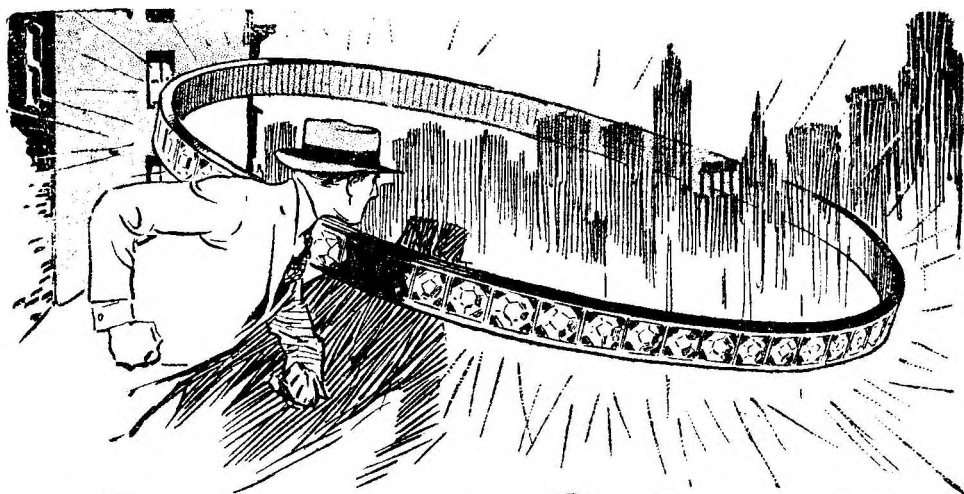


# ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CLXVIII

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 1925

NUMBER 5



## Lookin' for Trouble

By **CHARLTON L. EDHOLM**

*Co-Author of "The Dancing Doll."*

### CHAPTER I.

#### A ROUGH DIAMOND.

**E**THELBERT PERCIVAL BUCHANAN LOGAN had tubbed, shaved and arrayed himself like a lily of the field, for like them he toiled not, neither did he spin.

Punctually at the hour mentioned in the telegram his door bell rang and there stood his Uncle Dudley from Oklahoma.

To say that Percival was astonished at his uncle's appearance would be like saying that the Woolworth Building was more than two stories high. It also would be like saying that Jack Dempsey could outfight Jackie Coogan. In short, to say that Per-

cival was astonished, would be putting it mildly. The poor boy was flabbergasted.

For Uncle Dudley, of Oklahoma, was the possessor of untold millions, and Percival, who knew him only by his beautifully lithographed checks, had pictured him as a benevolent looking capitalist with a silk hat and white side whiskers, a formal cutaway and nicely pressed striped trousers.

He was planning to make a great hit with Miss Laurencine Palmer by introducing that distinguished old gentleman to the heiress who had entangled his young affections.

But at the sight of the uncouth figure in his doorway, with a grizzled beard that was stained yellow with tobacco, shapeless old clothes that might have come originally

from a secondhand store, and a felt hat with sweat stains on the band, the young man had a fearful foreboding that the aristocratic Laurencine might not care for his Uncle Dudley.

"Howdy, boy! Howdy!" exclaimed the visitor, reaching out a long, horny hand and engulfing the soft palm of his nephew.

"Come in, Uncle Dudley," said Percival. "Sit down and I'll get you a little pre-war stuff. Then we'll go out for breakfast."

"I et all I could hold more'n two hours ago," was the reply. "But I reckon I could use a little of that antidote."

As he threw back his head and set down the empty glass he added: "Cain't be too keerful. Never can tell what minute a rattlesnake may bite you!"

The old man cast a critical eye about his nephew's quarters, but refrained from comment, and the two set off in search of breakfast, for Uncle Dudley declared that his appetite had come back and that he could stand a little snack.

Percival avoided the gilded hotel where he usually took breakfast. He could imagine the look of pained surprise on the face of the head waiter at the sight of this weather-beaten specimen from the frontier.

Instead they went to a chop house where the uncle ordered canned peaches, fried eggs "straight up," a large beefsteak and buckwheat cakes, and after his third cup of coffee demanded in a loud, aggrieved voice what the waiter was thinking of to forget to bring the toothpicks.

Percival insisted on paying for this repast, although it wrecked his one remaining ten-dollar bill.

He did this cheerfully, however, for he was building his hopes upon Uncle Dudley. If that relative did what was expected of him, the boy would continue to get along without a job.

Inserting three or four toothpicks in his hatband as a reserve supply and wearing another toothpick in the corner of his mouth, where it wiggled up and down as he conversed, Uncle Dudley then led the way to Fifth Avenue in order to survey the wealth and fashion of the metropolis.

Percival trailed along miserably. He glanced furtively in every direction and

thanked his lucky stars that at this hour in the morning none of his set would be abroad. They would guy him unmercifully if they caught sight of his weird companion.

But Uncle Dudley was quite unconscious of the fact that the silk stockinged girls with filmy crêpe de Chine were stenographers or other toilers.

"Gosh! This town is full of the ee-lite. I reckon there is more ee-lite right here than you'll find between El Paso and Yuma."

"Oh, rather!" cried Percival with feigned enthusiasm. "Fifth Avenue at Forty-Second Street is recognized as the social center of New York."

They watched the traffic swirling madly up and down town, then turned back in the direction of the visitor's hotel, taking in all the sights.

At the Woolworth store Uncle Dudley stopped short, before the array of glass necklaces and ten-cent rings adorned with red stones as big as pigeon eggs.

"So this is Tiffany's! Here's where all them society ladies buy their pearl necklaces and diamond tararas."

Percival glanced quickly at his uncle and detected a suspicious grin around the corner of his mouth that contained the toothpick. A horrible suspicion seized him.

Was the old man spoofing him after all? Could it be possible that this illiterate pioneer from the sun-baked desert had the crust to walk up and down New York's stateliest avenue, making sardonic comments and holding its glories up to ridicule?

Presently they were halted to let the traffic go by and Uncle Dudley admiringly watched the decisive actions of the traffic cop.

"That's a man-size job," he observed. "Ridin' herd on all them locoed gas buggies!"

"Our police are the world's finest," remarked Percival with a tone of civic pride.

"Whup! There's a skittish one tryin' to break loose! There, the cops stopped him! Atta boy! That's the way to talk to him!"

"Really something ought to be done about these lawless taxi drivers," remarked Percival as they proceeded.

But his uncle was thinking of something else. "Why don't *you* get a job as traffic



cop, my boy? If you've got to stay on in New York there's a regular job for a regular man. If I was younger I'd like that job myself."

"Me! A traffic cop!" The boy's tones were horrified.

"Sure! I've heard there's a lot of ex-punchers on the force here. That's why it's the world's finest!"

By that time they had reached the next corner right opposite the hotel and the old man's reply was interrupted in the quick rush of events.

A mustard colored taxi swooped around the corner. The blue-jawed driver was too contemptuous of mere pedestrians to sound a signal. He plowed into the crossing.

Women in filmy costumes and silk stockings gave little mouselike shrieks as they started back. A stout lady saved the child she was dragging, by a sudden frantic jerk. The old man with the dusty, gnawed-looking beard and a dark slouch hat with sweat stains on the band, felt the running board rasp on his shins as the yellow machine darted across his path.

As the taxi driver, after the custom of his tribe, leaned out to grin back at the frightened shoppers at the crossing, he uttered a growl about "jay walkers," which means a person who gets in the way of a motor car. His insolent stare fell upon a shabby figure that he defined as a "hick," which means the natural prey of a taxi driver.

The "hick" was a large-boned specimen with little meat on his bones—and that little stringy. He was bow legged and walked as if his feet were not happy on hot asphalt pavements. The skin of his face was wrinkled and parched like jerked beef, and from narrowed slits flashed the ice cold glitter of two hostile gray eyes.

Then quite unexpectedly the old man was on the running board. His movements were just about as slow and undecisive as a striking rattlesnake's.

A left hand, as yielding as a pipe wrench, twisted the chauffeur's collar until the eyes under the visor cap goggled with terror. The relentless hand pulled that driver's face to just the proper position and then *crack!*

The right hand of the venerable stranger,

open and edgewise, had crashed on the driver's blue-shaven jaw.

It was like a wallop with the edge of a washboard, for the open hand that delivered it carried no kindly cushion of fat over its bony structure.

The last the taxi driver heard was the gently drawled remark: "'Tain't right to drive so reckless through a passel of women—*crack*—and children—*crack*—and pore old men—*crack!*"

Crack number three was the one that sent the taxi driver to By-low Land. What happened afterward was unknown to him, for he awoke in the hospital.

The car came to rest with its radiator crumpled against a fire hydrant. One wheel sagged gently with dished spokes. The taxi resembled its driver. Both looked like cases for the repair shop.

As the trouble started, Percival ran for a cop and in short order a mounted policeman plowed his way through the swiftly growing mob of city people, always ready to snatch an hour or so from a busy metropolitan day to watch a sign painter at work or a couple of newsies having a set-to.

They were crowding hilariously about the stranger, trying to shake his hand, slapping him on the back and shouting "Attaboy! You done a good job!"

Voices were heard in joyous outcry. "Hey, Sweeny! Didja see that old bird sock the taxi driver?" "Oh, mamma! What a wallop he carries!" "Yeah, that's him. I'll say he's one grand old man!"

Unmoved by this glory, the rancher was biting a mouthful from a black slab of eating tobacco when the officer forced his mount through the crowd, leaned over the neck of his horse and asked sternly: "Hey, what's all this?"

But instead of wilting in his tracks, the old man emitted a joyous chuckle and thrust out his hand.

"Well, well, well! You no-account, hoss-thievin', egg-suckin' son of a flea-bitten greaser!" he whooped. "I'll be gol-durned if it ain't Spud Cassidy! Git offen that cayuse before it throws you, an' help me git this Lizzie-puncher to a hospital!"

"Dad Weathersbee!" The policeman's face was as red and happy as a Christmas

wreath. "What are you doin' so far from God's country? When did you leave Rattlesnake?"

"Jus' got in this mawnin'." Weathersbee extended his plug, from which the officer took a mouthful.

"I'm boardin' over yander." He indicated the palatial hotel across the street.

"Tell me what that stiff done to rile you, dad."

"Him? He didn't rile me none. Ain't he still breathin'? Ain't he goin' to git well again? I'm surprised at you, Spud."

The old man's voice was gently reproachful. "How can you talk so onreasonable? An easy-goin', peaceable old man like me don't get riled so easy. I was just tellin' that flivver pup to drive gentle. I can't a bear to see anybody get hurt."

He turned to look for his nephew.

"Run along, boy," he said kindly. "I'm too busy to play with you to-day. After I get through at the station house, I'm goin' down to Wall Street. Got to put the skids under my broker. That cuss is straight like a corkscrew and easy to handle like a greased eel. You come an' see me at the hotel fust thing in the mawnin'. I got something to say to you."

## CHAPTER II.

### A MILLION-DOLLAR PRIZE.

**P**ERCIVAL was admitted to his uncle's luxurious suite at ten the following morning. He saw the remnants of a breakfast on a tray beside the bed and a litter of newspapers all over the floor, but his millionaire uncle was not visible at the moment.

He stood listening.

Sounds of running water and a terrific splash told that something natatorial was going on in the bathroom and immediately a dripping head was thrust through the doorway and a voice charged with hearty welcome cried:

"Come along in, boy! The water's fine!"

Percy looked in and marveled. On the edge of the brimming bathtub perched a skinny, wrinkled figure, crouched like a frog and holding to the edge with bony toes.

At the sight of the visitor the bearded face wrinkled into smiles of glee.

"Whoopee!" shouted Uncle Dudley. "Yip, yip, *W'hee-e!*" and straightway he shot down the incline with a splash that hit the ceiling.

"Wow! This is the best thing I've uncovered in New York!" gasped the old man.

"You enjoy your bath, Uncle Dudley?"

"Do I? I'd like to stay right here till train time! Been at it since sunup."

"Do you think it's good for you to stay in so long?"

"Oh, I laid off long enough to put away a batch of flapjacks an' bacon an' read the papers. Then I come back for more. Watch this!"

*This* was a slide, head first, followed by a roar like a bull walrus as the old man's head went under. Two hairy legs waved in the air, then up came Uncle Dudley with water running from his beard.

"I'm glad you like your bath, uncle," remarked Percy, edging away. "I suppose you have a swimming pool on the ranch?"

"The ranch is all right. No better cattle ranch in Oklahoma. But when I want a bath at home I jest naturally soak myself in a washtub in the kitchen. Of course a little washing goes a long way out there. It's a clean country."

"If you like to swim I'll take you to the athletic club."

"Swim? I cain't swim no more'n a rabbit. No, sir! This is swimming enough for me. Look out! Here goes a sock-dologer!"

This time his venerable relative went in flat, with a shock that rattled the breakfast dishes.

Percy retired hastily, sopping the wetness from his Palm Beach suit with a handkerchief.

His uncle followed him and began drying himself vigorously with the bath mat.

"Gosh! I like this place!" he remarked. "This here's a regular he-man towel, three foot by five and it's got body to it."

He pulled it up and down his spinal column with a rasping noise, then continued as he writhed into his underwear of red

Manuel: "New York's not all bad, m'son. It's got a sprinklin' of reg'lar guys like that old-timer I met up with yesterday on Fifth Avenue. Spud Cassidy was a good puncher, and now he's sure one fine cop. Showed me where to get some of the smoothest likker you ever laid tongue to."

"There are plenty of piaces to get it, uncle. It's getting the price that turns your hair gray."

"That's so. This is no town for a poor man."

"You said something!" replied Percy with deep feeling.

"You make a noise like you was broke, my boy." By this time Uncle Dudley was stepping into a pair of dark trousers. From the hip pocket fell a billfold stuffed like a sausage.

Percy picked it up and handed it to the old man.

"*Muchas gracias!* Say, tell me again, what was that string of names your ma wished on you? I allus tried to forget them."

"Ethelbert Percival Buchanan Logan."

"Sufferin' snakes! Makes a body think of a train of Pullmans going by. How come she left out 'Dining Car'?"

"I'm not wild about those names myself. I didn't pick them."

"Sho' now! That's a raw deal to slip a kid. I say, a reg'lar man's got a right to a reg'lar name. Ethelbert! Percival! *Ouch!*"

"I never did care for Percival either."

"That settles it. I'm goin' to call you Buck. One of the finest young punchers I ever had was called Buck. I never saw him under the influence of likker—not to spoil his trigger work, that is. And always there with the goods! I remember how he bent his six-gun over a greaser's head. He's doing time for it right now. A fine lad!"

"I should love to have known him! Certainly you can call me Buck or anything!"

"Well, that's fair enough. Makes it easier to talk to you. Blamed if it would seem natural for me to swap idees with a body that I'd have to address as Percival."

"I like to have you call me Buck—and even if I didn't like it, I'd take the name to please you."

"You want to please me, hey?"

"Why, certainly! You see, Uncle Dudley, as I'm an orphan, no father, no mother nor other relatives in the world but just you—" The young man's voice trembled with emotion. "Why, you see, you're all that I've got left in the world."

Old Weathersbee regarded his nephew with a calculating gray eye. He took in the tall, well-proportioned figure under the faultlessly tailored suit, the amiable face with its little trimmed mustache, the hands large and capable, but quite a bit too soft, and looked at him critically while he weighed this outburst of affection, then remarked:

"I know just how you feel. I'm an orphan myself."

Startled by the suspicion of irony, the young man looked at his uncle doubtfully, then cried: "We've just got to stick together, Uncle Dudley! We've got nobody else in all the world to lean on."

He extended his soft white hand, but his uncle was busy adjusting his galluses and perhaps failed to see it.

"Huh!" he snorted. "I never wanted anybody to lean on! What's more, young man, I've been taking your measure ever since I met you, and as far as I can figure it out you've been doing too much leaning for a guy that's as husky and big-boned as yourself. Leaning is all right for a lad named Percival, but it won't do for a full-grown relation of mine that goes by the name of Buck! Savvy?"

"I think so, Uncle Dudley! But—what do you want me to do?"

Deep in his heart the young man felt a sickening sensation and the thought sped across his mind. "The hard-boiled old son-of-a-gun! Here's where he offers me a job on his ranch."

"I'm going to give you a chance to live up to your name," continued Uncle Dudley. "I used to think that a young fellow would have to go West to make a man of hisself. I was wrong. New York is a hard town. They don't make 'em no harder. Of course, it's got soft spots—you're one of them. But all in all it's a regular man-size proposition to go up against New York."

The nephew watched his aged relative



with fascinated eyes. From his pants pocket Uncle Dudley had extracted a pair of pliers with an attachment for cutting barb wire. As he continued his remarks, he thoughtfully trimmed his thick and horny nails with this instrument and the snip, snip of its sharp jaws punctuated his speech.

"New York's a cold and hard-hearted city—clip, clip! It's in such a hurry to get somewhere that it just naturally steps on your face—clip, clip—if you get under it. It has no time to waste on strangers—leastwise, unless they're two-fisted huskies with a wallop in each fist."

"Yes, Uncle Dudley, that's very true! I've often thought of that very thing myself."

"No, you hain't! All you've seen of New York is marshmaller sundaes and gals that feed on the same. You've never run against the real New York. If you had, I'd see the marks where somebody had stepped on your face, like I said."

"Oh, I say. Look here—"

"Don't horn in, Buck. I'm not through yet. Did you see the mawnin' papers?" Uncle Dudley waved his barb wire cutters toward the scattered sheets on the floor and continued with childish pride:

"I've got all the papers, and if you look at any of them, you'll find your Uncle Dudley's name, tail up, steppin' high with the bells on. How's that for a welcome to New York? Here I blow into town a perfect stranger, and the first thing the papers write a piece about me. Look for yourself."

"Is this it, uncle?"

**'NO WAR WITH JAPAN, AVERS  
WESTERN MAGNATE''**

"No, no, that ain't it. Here:

**'MILLIONAIRE'S FIST FELS TAXI-  
DRIVER, WHO WAKES UP IN  
HOSPITAL'**

"It's the story about my little argument with that locoed gas wrangler."

"Right at the top of the front page! That's splendid!"

The young man wrung his uncle's hand with enthusiasm.

"You did right, uncle. I have often wanted to hand one of those fellows a wallop."

"You *wanted* to?"

"Indeed I did."

"But you never *done* it! Why not? Because you didn't have the nerve. Instead of that, you run for the police. Buck, my boy, you're soft! You've got good stuff in you, for you're my own kin, but you're soft! You've been fed on marshmallers and sundaes and tea with lemon in it till you don't know whether you're a boy or a girl."

"Oh, come now, you should see me at tennis."

But the old man continued remorselessly: "You're soft, my lad, and money is a hard, hard thing to handle. I know, for I had to rope and hogtie my dollars like they was so many longhorns. When they struck oil on my ranch that was just the beginning of my troubles. I had to go up against every crook in the Southwest to get the money that was coming to me."

Uncle Dudley extracted five yellowbacks from his wallet, and the young man's eyes widened when he saw that they were one thousand dollar bills, new and crackling.

"I'm goin to stake you with this, Buck," remarked the old man. "And it's going to be the last money you ever get from me unless you make good."

"Oh, thank you ever so much! Of course, I'll make good." The nephew extended an eager hand.

"Now wait a minute. Hear what I've got to say. This five thousand dollars will stake you for a year. You don't have to worry none about making a living. All you've got to do is to break into the first page of the New York papers, the same as your Uncle Dudley done!"

"Oh, I'm sure I can do that!"

"Hold on now. There's strings tied to this. There are several ways that are barred. For instance, you can't win out on a foul. No cock and bull story about something that didn't happen will count. And no story of how you committed a crime will get you anything from me—nor any story of how you got tangled up with some actorine.

"It's got to be a good, clean, he-man stunt that's big enough to get Buck Logan on the front page of every New York paper. You do that inside of a year and I'll make over a cool million dollars to you. How does that strike you?"

"I'll take you up on that, Uncle Dudley."

The two men met eye to eye, and what the older man saw in the face of his nephew caused him to squeeze the boy's hand with a grip that hurt.

"I sure hope you make good, Buck! It's a large order I'm handing you, though it listens easy. Why, I reckon that in this city there's hundreds and thousands of the brainiest, nerviest men on God's green footstool that's doing their drundest to break onto the front page.

"Why? Because the first step to money and power is fame—and newspaper headlines mean pretty much the same thing.

"If a guy wants to be dog catcher or president, he works like hell to get on the front page. If he's got a new invention to talk to Mars, or a new cure for the mange, he hotfoots to the papers with it. If he wants to be called the Napoleon of Wall Street, or if his missus itches to trot with the society high-steppers, they lay for the editors with sirup or shotguns, to get their names in print early and often.

"And the glory chasers! The medal snatchers! The fame eaters! They never sleep. Those boys just naturally hanker for recognition like kittens for milk. They'd rather be headlined as crooks or pickpockets than not be headlined at all."

The old man paused for breath, adding:

"But it's tricky, this notoriety game. Them as want it mostly get left. Nine times out of ten, the biggest scare head goes to the poor, shiverin' cuss who has a troublesome conscience. He sees his name in print at the very time that he longs to burrow into the coal pile down cellar and be plumb forgotten.

"When you see a front page all splattered up with black type, it's not just reading matter to start the day. It's some scared murderer's crime brought to light; some poor skunk's swindle exposed; some woman's heart held up to be laughed at

by a passel of fools. And alongside that, some nit-wit's sudden snatch at glory. Buck, they ought to print the news in blood by rights, instead of ink."

"I get you. But I'll make the front page, uncle. You'll be proud of me."

"Hop to it, boy. It's your only hope."

The old man dexterously nicked the upper corners of the five one thousand dollar bills with his barbed wire cutters.

"It's just a habit I got into. I always earmark my big money before I turn it loose. It's the same earmark I use on my cattle."

Buck slipped the currency into his monogrammed wallet and prepared to leave. At the door he looked back. His uncle was stuffing his red-socked feet into a pair of tight, high-heeled boots.

"Remember, Buck," he said. "No front page story, no million. If you don't deliver the goods in a year, I'm goin' to leave all my money to Red Dempsey."

"Red Dempsey! I never heard of him before. Who is he?"

Uncle Dudley delivered a mysterious chuckle.

"It's an ornery, persistent, fightin' bobcat sort of a cuss that's aimin' to do you out of your money. The story is too rough for your young ears. I'll leave it at that. Maybe it's one of my old partners out West.

"Maybe it's an ex-puncher that thinks he's got something on me. Maybe that bird's in jail or out on probation. All I can say is, I'm sorry for the man that mixes it with Red Dempsey."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BATTLE COMPLEX.

AS he left the hotel Buck Logan felt that he was sitting pretty on top of the world. Five thousand dollars in his pocket and nothing to do but become famous inside of a year.

And for that he was to get a million dollars, and startling as that fortune seemed, it might be only the beginning. Perhaps his Uncle Dudley would show him how to invest it in oil lands so that he would make ten times that in another year.

But with a million dollars he could claim Laurencine. Had not the girl told him after his twentieth proposal that she would marry him in a minute if her father were satisfied with his fortune?

He called up Laurie as soon as he reached his cozy apartment on Thirty-Eighth Street. He would take her out to lunch and announce his change of fortune.

But her voice came to him over the telephone strained and unhappy. She could not see him that day. A nervous headache—and to-morrow she was starting with a motor party to Newport. So sorry, but it couldn't be helped!

For some reason Buck could not explain the wonderful adventure by telephone. But there was a ring of joyous excitement in his voice as he concluded: "All right, Laurie. When you come back you'll find your little playmate rich and famous. Good-by! Be good!"

He heard something that sounded like "Don't be a kill-joy" before she hung up.

Buck drew a long breath as he began to change into his oldest clothes. They appeared more appropriate for a fellow named Buck who was going out to beat up taxi drivers or otherwise leap into the limelight. He was not sorry that Laurie could not take luncheon with him. That would be a tame beginning for his new career.

His Uncle Dudley would have considered her a softening influence. She did not belong to his present plan any more than the platinum wrist watch that he dropped into his bureau drawer.

The young man gave one sweeping glance to the snug little den with its deep leather chairs, reading lamp, book shelves; his college pennant on the wall.

He was bidding it good-by for the present. Its comfort seemed too relaxing, too much like a warm bath. He must find rough and ready quarters with room to swing Indian clubs and set up a punching bag.

As he fought his way into a down town subway at Grand Central he wondered whether his Uncle Dudley had encountered the rush hour crowd during his short visit to New York. Maybe it was something like that that made the old man declare

that the great city was hard boiled. Good old Uncle Dudley! By this time he must be boarding his train for the West, for he was planning to leave about noon.

Buck wondered when he would be able to send him marked copies of the New York papers with that heroic story on the front page.

It looked as if his opportunity had come to distinguish himself. Hanging on a swaying metal loop was an old, old lady, and she looked pitifully tired and poverty-stricken in her dingy black gown.

There was not a vacant seat in the car. Buck was tightly wedged beside the poor old lady, who appeared almost ready to faint in the suffocating heat.

There were plenty of men occupying seats, vapid looking clerks, a couple of beady-eyed chaps, who looked like rum runners or pickpockets, a sleeping negro and a huge, red-faced Irishman with a shock of carrotty hair under his tilted derby.

This fellow was taking up at least two seats, for he was big-boned and meaty and weighed well over two hundred pounds. He sat with his large knees apart and glowered at the sporting page of the paper which he held with two fists that resembled small hams.

In the corner of his mouth was a dead cigar, which he munched like a bull chewing his cud while he read all about the latest ring sensation.

As Buck eyed the brawny shoulders that stretched this stranger's coat he thought to himself:

"This is where I make a million dollars—or the morgue."

He knew that he was a pretty fair boxer, but in a crowd like this there would be no chance for science; it would be a fight in the clinches.

Probably the big guy would squeeze the breath out of him with one arm while he did the Anvil Chorus on Buck's face with the other hand.

It was going to be painful—very painful. But then a million dollars was worth it. Besides, the big bully wouldn't kill him. The bystanders would drag him off by the time he would deliver a dozen good wallops.

Yet Buck's heart was sinking like a



wrecked airplane as he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Hey, you! You guy with the newspaper! Give that old lady a seat, you big stiff!"

Buck tried to make it sound loud and menacing, but the roar of the subway was louder and somehow when he started talking his throat seemed to squeeze up as small as a pipe stem.

It was horrible! The "big stiff" didn't even hear him.

Buck licked his dry lips and tried again. "Say, come out of it, you hunk of cheese!"

A round face, the color of a well-done brick, was turned up toward his own. Two fierce little bloodshot eyes squinted up at him questioningly. The loathsome dead stogie was ground by an outthrust jaw like the prow of a battleship.

"Was yuh talkin' to me?" growled the stranger.

Buck gazed at the small, squinty eyes and the shock of carrot hair and a panic seized him.

"Whew!" he thought to himself. "I wonder if Red Dempsey looks like that!" The idea of that rival claimant to his Uncle Dudley's millions gave him fresh courage. Perhaps it *was* Red Dempsey! No matter, he would defy him! And he opened his mouth to say: "Give that lady your seat, you big brute, before I smash you one!"

But to his horror not a word would come. His throat felt like an ash chute. His tongue was paralyzed. He could only gurgled fiercely.

But the burly ruffian had caught the idea. His eyes wandered from Buck's agitated features to the trembling old lady who was looking on with consternation.

Then it happened! The red-faced thug was on his feet, surprisingly light for such a heavyweight, his huge fists dangling at the end of gorillalike arms. Buck drew back, guarding instinctively.

He had all the sensation of dying on the gallows. He wondered whether a lucky shot to the jaw might save him yet. His formidable opponent, still holding the cigar stub in one corner of his mouth, spoke from the other corner.

"Why in hell didn't you tell me before

that there was a lady standin'?" Here, mother, you take my seat---and, say, young fellow, you can sit down beside her. I'm built so big that by rights I ought to pay two fares."

As he gently assisted the old lady into his seat he added to Buck: "Thanks for tellin' me, bo! I've got an old mother just like her in Flatbush. She's settin' in the parlor windy looking for me now. What do you think? Has Kid Mush got a chance against a fighter with brains?"

By the time Buck got off the car at Wall Street, the carroty-headed Mr. Mulligan was calling him by his first name. He had confided that he was a plumber, and was rushing the "swellest little peach you ever seen. Works in the Woolworth store. Her name's Millie." And he was trying to date up Buck and his own jane for a Sunday at Coney.

As Buck climbed the stairs from the subway he had the feeling that he was being followed. In front of Trinity Church he wheeled abruptly and found himself face to face with a pale, cynical looking young man wearing a light gray suit and a straw hat. Across his left cheek was a flaming birth mark, and as Buck confronted him the thought flashed through his mind like a lurid question mark:

"Is this Red Dempsey?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

GOLDEN HAIR, ANYHOW.

THE mysterious man with the birth-mark started back as Buck wheeled upon him.

There was an instant of tension as the two men stared at each other. Then the stranger broke the silence:

"Can I trouble you for a match?" he said.

Angrily, Buck fished a paper of matches from his pocket and the other man lighted a cigarette.

"Wait a second. Here's your folder. One's all I need. Say, do you happen to know who that red-headed guy was? That big rough neck you were talking to?"

"Why?"

"Oh, I'm just asking. I thought I saw a peach of a front page story gone to waste. Oh, boy! When I saw you throw a sassy look at that husky and talk to him like he was a piece of dirt, I thought something was going to break that would be good for a box on the front page."

"You're a reporter?" Buck's eye brightened.

"Yeah. That is, a sort of reporter. Say, young fellow, I don't know why that guy didn't poke you one in the jaw. I'd have handed you one myself if you'd talked that way to me. But Spike's awful tender-hearted about old ladies."

"Spike who?"

"Gee, I thought everybody knew Spike Mulligan, champion amateur heavyweight of Brooklyn. Spike's the guy that sent Gunner Svenske to the hospital with a broken jaw."

"Ouch!" Buck wilted and the tall buildings seemed to sway. "A regular heavyweight prize fighter? You don't say so!"

"I do say so. Some slugger! That boy ought to be a professional. When they carried Svenske out of the ring everybody thought he was dead."

Buck felt little beads of perspiration start on his forehead and his knees were shaky.

"I'm sorry that story didn't break," he gasped. "That is, in a way I'm sorry and in another way I'm not." He hesitated, then added: "Why couldn't you write it up, anyhow? Write it up as flirting with death."

"Well, I might at that. But I'm under contract with one paper exclusively. I don't think my paper could use it."

"What is your paper?"

"*Ladies' World and Needlework Review*," admitted the young man with a flush. "My name is Bob Bridges."

"And mine is Buck Logan. You'll see it in the papers yet."

"You keep on insulting prize fighters and I surely will." And he started off in the direction of Park Row.

Buck stood for a moment wiping the chill moisture from his forehead, then walked down Wall Street, ready for anything that might turn up. He passed the Sub-Treasury and adjacent buildings where marks on the

massive stone walls still showed where a bomb had done its deadly work a few years before.

He remembered how the streets had run blood that day and how the corpses were laid out like the dead on a battlefield, while the city roared and seethed with excitement and terror.

What a chance for glory!

If he could only be around when some startling outrage like that was about to be pulled off! If he could be the man to pluck the sputtering fuse from the bomb, or stay the hand that was raised to hurl it! That would be the sort of story that would spread his name big across the top of the front page.

While Buck did not precisely wish for anybody to plot a bomb outrage, he did hope that if it was going to happen anyhow, he might be around to grab some glory.

The young man stared meditatively at the marks on the wall, thinking noble thoughts. He came to with a jerk when a hoarse voice flavored with onions said:

"Be on your way, young fellow!" and a six-foot policeman gave him a nudge that was at once gentle but firm.

Buck did not stop to argue. He was looking for trouble, but not exactly that kind of trouble. Uncle Dudley had said distinctly that no crime story would count.

Surely it would be a crime to hit a six-foot policeman!

He walked on toward the East River.

A few paces ahead of him two young men were walking in the same direction carrying between them a heavy satchel with two handles.

Evidently the leather bag contained something important. The men might be bank clerks or pay roll messengers. Undoubtedly the bag was full of coin and currency.

The details of a dozen stories of pay roll bandits flashed through his mind. Buck hastened his steps a little and timed his pace to the men ahead of him.

They were rather weedy, sallow specimens, thought Buck. "Office workers! White collar slaves!" Why, those poor boys would never have a ghost of a show against the bandits who preyed upon their

sort. How grateful they would be if they knew that the unpretentious stranger, just a few paces behind them, was playing the part of guardian angel.

Buck decided that if he was going to look for trouble the proximity of loose cash was a good place to find it. He began to figure on what he would do if a couple of thugs jumped out of a taxicab and tried to rush those poor fellows with the bag.

Unfortunately he had no weapon. One couldn't very well stand off highwaymen with bare fists. If he only had a gun!

Then Buck remembered a clever stunt he had seen on the stage. The hero was perfectly defenseless except for his consummate nerve. But that was superb!

Buck recalled how the hero had thrust his hands in his side pockets and had run a bluff that he was about to shoot from two wicked guns concealed in his coat pockets, and at the same moment one of the messengers glanced back and saw the gesture, as Buck imitated that brave youth.

Like a flash the smaller of the two men surrendered the bag to his companion. His right hand slid to his hip, thrusting back the shabby office coat, and to his horror Buck saw that the muzzle of a black revolver, still in its holster, was covering his belt buckle.

The guard glared at him malevolently. Buck wondered whether it was really true that you did not feel any pain when a bullet hit you. He had read that you don't begin to suffer until they get you to the hospital and probe for the bullet.

Then it occurred to him that it might be a good idea to take his hands out of his pockets. He did so and at the same time stopped to look at a display of pipes in the cigar store.

The pipes were dancing before his eyes as if they had suddenly come to life, and Buck felt that his heart was dancing as madly as any of them. He hoped he wasn't looking as scared as he felt. He tried to appear quite ignorant of the gun that covered him.

He did not know at what precise moment the pay roll messenger took his hand from his weapon, resumed his share of the burden and departed.

Buck kept staring at the pipes until a salesman with a curved nose and an ingratiating manner came out from the cut-rate cigar store, took him by the lapel and asked him if he would not care to step in and look over the stock.

In his relief, Buck purchased a brier, although he had seven pipes at home and the purchase stripped him of his loose change.

Then he came out to the crowded streets once more and recommenced looking for trouble.

For a city that yielded a large and varied assortment of scareheads twice a day, New York appeared singularly placid. And this, in spite of the fact that he sought for adventure in the most likely places.

When a fire engine went clanging by, he loped full tilt after it in the wild hope that he might distinguish himself at a tenement fire.

The conflagration turned out to be a pile of rubbish back of a coffee warehouse on Pearl Street.

Undaunted and optimistic, Buck sat on a pier over the East River watching a dozen small boys dive off the barges.

They were as beautiful as young fauns in their glistening nudity, but the man who was looking for trouble eyed them gloomily and without the slightest appreciation of their graceful movements. By the law of averages, he figured that at least one of those youngsters would be taken with cramps or carried away by the treacherous current. They couldn't *all* be good swimmers.

Buck was at home in the water and would prefer to earn his money by dragging a drowning victim out of the river. Saving a child from drowning was always good human interest stuff.

But all that happened was a raid by a fat watchman, who bawled at the urchins to "Git the hell out of here!" and informed Buck that no loafing was permitted on the docks.

It was hard being a hero out of a job!

The young man disconsolately watched an open sewer manhole in the middle of Cherry Street, hoping that some tenement child might fall in and give him a chance at glory.



All that happened was that the dear innocents threw a cat down that black abyss. And even the cat wasn't a subject for rescue as it had been past earthly redemption for several days.

Buck reflected that all around him in this teeming city crimes of violence were being committed. Innocent victims were being held up and murdered. Terrible accidents of all sorts were taking place, but as far as he was concerned, life on Manhattan might have been one sweet Sunday school picnic.

Nothing happened to him more thrilling than getting a cinder in his eye from a power plant that was broadcasting soot and ashes.

Finally as the offices were closing for the night and the skyscrapers were belching out torrents of home-going humanity, Buck drifted with the throng toward Brooklyn Bridge and was pretty thoroughly jostled by the time he fought his way through the maelstrom where the subway, the elevated and the bridge traffic cause whirlpools and eddies in the living flood.

As he entered the footway of Brooklyn Bridge the sky was flaring in scarlet and gold while overhead were huge melodramatic clouds that rumbled ominously and hung low fringes over the river.

Like fantastic castles of romance the tall buildings of Manhattan loomed black against the sunset, their windows twinkling with thousands of lights. Around him roared the traffic of the city, the rumble of electric cars and the hoots of motors. Far below, the tugs and ferryboats emitted shrill warnings and jets of steam and smoke.

It was a lurid spectacle of overpowering force and turmoil. It seemed impossible that one could join in that tumultuous life for an hour without meeting some great adventure.

His drooping spirits revived as Buck saw a bedraggled wreck of a man plodding through the crowd ahead of him. The forlorn wail looked as if he had been badly worsted in the battle of life. His bowed shoulders were eloquent of defeat. His garments were shapeless and faded by the inclement weather.

But what attracted the youth's attention was the way the old man walked close to

the rail and occasionally stopped to peer down at the swirling waters beneath.

Buck slackened his gait so that he could watch the old man's movements.

The forlorn wreck looked at the water longingly, as if among its eddies he might find the peace that was denied him on earth.

Suicide!

What a noble thing it would be if at the fatal moment Buck could lay his hands on the unhappy victim of man's cruelty and snatch him back to safety.

The spectacular part of it, the detail that would make the story front page stuff, would come when the big policeman shoved the curiosity seekers aside, and in the presence of the admiring crowd Buck would acknowledge that he had saved the old man.

The wretched victim would sob: "Why did you drag me back to a life of hopeless starvation?"

Then Buck would spring it.

"You shall never want for food or shelter again!"

With these words, Buck would bestow upon the tramp one of his uncle's thousand-dollar bills.

The reporters would never overlook a story so full of thrills and sobs as that.

As the old man stopped in the middle of the bridge and painfully raised himself to lean over the rail, Buck sprang forward and laid an imperative hand on his shoulder.

Already the victim was leaning toward his doom.

"Stop! What are you trying to do?"

"Nothin', mister, s'elp me Gawd! I was just a tryin' to see if I could spit on that there Fall River boat."

And on top of that disappointment the heavens opened in a deluge amid volleys of celestial artillery.

By the time Buck fought his way through the home-going crowd to Manhattan, he looked like a cat that had been fished out of the river. His light summer suit was clinging to him and all the flakes of soot that he had accumulated near the power house were turned into long, dingy streaks. His panama hat was drenched and shapeless, his tie was a wet rag and the water churned in his shoes as he walked.

Buck had found trouble, more trouble than he was aware of at the moment—but glory!

What he craved at that instant was a large bowl of Irish stew and some hot coffee.

Fate led him to a one-arm lunch room with sawdust on the floor, an assortment of taxi drivers and Bowery bums gargling their coffee, and on her high stool behind the cashier's counter sat the most dazzling blonde who ever helped to raise chewing gum manufacturers to wealth.

As the girl carelessly flipped him a green slip of pasteboard she did not even deign to glance at the rain-drenched youth who was to play a leading part in the drama of her young life.

## CHAPTER V.

### A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

**S**HIVERING in rain-soaked clothes, Buck crouched in his one-arm chair, eating the steaming Irish stew, the soggy bread and the butter, which was remarkably limp considering its strength.

He was tired all through. Looking for trouble was exhausting. Failing to find it was discouraging. He slowly drank from a thick cup without a handle, and looked about at the Bowery types that were vacuum cleaning their soup bowls or finishing up the gravy on the plate with the flat of their knives.

In one corner was a dispirited bum, who looked like a professional panhandler. No doubt he had touched a few easy marks for the nickels to buy the greasy hamburger steak with onions that he wolfed so greedily.

Two other patrons appeared to be taxi drivers or gunmen. They wore soft striped shirts that were very dirty, but, nevertheless, of silk, and they sported diamond scarf pins and rings with large red and green stones.

One of them was finishing his meal with a banana, and to show his lordly disregard of conventional manners, he tossed the strips of skin on the floor with a flourish.

The blond girl at the cashier's desk scowled at his dirty habits, and was about to say something regarding his bringing up

when the tramp in the corner shuffled cringing to the desk and addressed her.

He was holding out his check with a dismayed expression on his unshaven features. His voice was croaking and apologetic.

"Aw, gee, lady!" he said. "I don't know what I'm going to do about dis check. Could you hold it for me while I go home and get some money?"

"What's the matter?" The girl eyed him sharply. "Come across with the thirty-five cents!"

"Aw, lady, say—"

"Quit stalling. Pay up or I'll call a cop." Her blue eyes flashed angrily and the color rose on her already rouged cheeks. She looked very determined, thought Buck.

The tramp seemed to shrink in his baggy clothes. "Honest to God, lady, I got the money home. I'll come right back with it."

"Do you mean to say that you haven't got thirty-five cents in your pockets?"

"Sure, lady, I had it. I had *more* than that. I'm a plasterer by trade and make fourteen dollars a day."

"You do, eh? Then give me that thirty-five cents and be quick about it!"

"I was tryin' to tell you, lady, that I ain't got it! I had ten dollars when I left home and now I ain't got it. My pockets was picked. Some dip went through my clothes."

The girl did not cease chewing gum as she regarded him coldly.

While the tramp eyed her with a gleam of hope in his fishy eyes she suddenly raised her voice high and clear above the rattle of crockery.

"Clarence!" she called. "Come here, quick!"

The tramp made as if to dive for the door, but he was not quick enough. Clarence appeared from somewhere as if by magic, his sleeves rolled up over his brawny arms that were red and glistening from dish water.

Clarence was built on the lines of a Fifth Avenue bus and was about six feet square. He had a small, close-cropped head, but everything else about Clarence was modeled on a monumental scale.

He had laid hands on the tramp, who seemed like a child in his grasp, although

he was in reality a rather husky specimen of the loafer type.

"Another panhandler, Clarence!" observed the girl, shifting her gum and adjusting the array of bracelets on her slender arm.

"Shall I turn him over to the cop, Miss May, or do you just want me to bump him on the pavement?" Clarence looked at the lady dutifully as if she were a queen and he the prime minister.

May patted her blond tresses with a hand on which shone four large two-carat Woolworth diamonds.

"His check is thirty-five cents," she observed. "See if you can't shake it out of him."

Instantly the dishwasher raised his victim by the scruff of the neck and the seat of the pants and turned him upside down and shook him vigorously, as if he were dusting a rug.

There was a jingle of silver, and dimes and quarters rattled to the tiled floor, rolling in every direction and pursued by stray nickels and pennies.

"I thought so," remarked May. "I just knew that dirty panhandler was trying to put one over on me. Set him down, Clarence!"

She addressed the terrified tramp, who was still dizzy from this sudden reversal.

"Pick it up!" she said. "That's right! Now give me thirty-five cents." She accepted two quarters and rang up the cash register methodically, handing him back fifteen cents.

"Now, beat it!" said May. "And if you try to panhandle me again I'll tell Clarence to soak you in the dish water. *Out!*"

"Is that all, Miss May?" inquired Clarence submissively.

"Yeah! That's all I reckon. God! These able bodied men who try to work on the feelings of us poor women is a crime."

Taking out her vanity case, May proceeded to add another layer to the powder on her nose and touched up the color on her cheeks a trifle.

Not for an instant did she stop punishing her portion of chewing gum. There was a decisive snap to her jaws that should have been a warning to that dead beat.

Finishing the last of his coffee, which was cold and sweet in the bottom of the cup, Buck walked over to the desk to pay his check.

The young lady eyed him sharply as he tossed it on the counter and made it a point not to return the smile he gave her.

"You certainly taught that tramp a good lesson," he said, feeling in his vest pockets.

The haughty blonde only looked at him fixedly, her jaws snapping in perfect rhythm as he fumbled for the change which was not there. Buck remembered that the purchase of a pipe had used up his loose money.

"Oh, say, I'll have to ask you to break a bill!" exclaimed the young man. "I don't know whether you can handle anything so big."

"I guess I can break any bill *you've* got," remarked May calmly, but his hand came out of his hip pocket with a startled jerk. The gold monogrammed bill fold was gone. The small fortune from his Uncle Dudley had vanished!

His jaw dropped, his face went blank. His eyes started from his head.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed. "My pocket's picked!"

"Huh!"

The girl eyed him without a change of expression in her beautiful face. She seemed just a trifle incredulous.

"I said I've had my pocket picked," said Buck. "Oh, this is terrible!"

"Another already! Say, don't you notice anything? Didn't you see what happens to stiffies like you? I should think you'd know better than to spring that old gag."

"But, really, you don't understand!"

"Oh, don't I? Clarence!"

"Oh, this is awful! You're worrying about a twenty-five cent check, but I've lost all I possessed."

"How much was in it?"

"Five thousand dollars!"

May looked at the youth in the soggy Palm Beach suit, his face and shirt streaked with soot and rain water, his tie wet and twisted like a rag fished from the gutter, his hair soaked and unkempt.

"I've got to hand it to you, young fellow," she observed coolly. "Honest, I take



my hat off to you! Five thousand dollars! Say, if I had your nerve, I'd hire the City Hall for a garage."

"You don't believe me?" Buck's tone was so hurt and imploring that May was moved in spite of herself.

"Say, you're a regular actor," she said. "You ought to go on the stage. But, listen, boy! Why don't you brace up and be a man? With your nice eyes and your pleasant voice and everything it's a shame to see you waste your time trying to bum your cats on the Bowery."

Buck felt the heavy hand of Clarence on his shoulder and wheeled to confront him, doubling up his fists in impotent fury. Boxer though he was, he had as much chance against this rhinoceros of a man as a rowboat before a battleship. Nevertheless, he was resolved to die fighting. Clarence would have to knock him unconscious before he would submit to being ignominiously shaken as that Bowery rat had been.

Clarence had advanced upon the young man without anger, but with the stolid determination of a snow plow attacking a small drift. He was not even preparing to fight with his fists. He was reaching out to pick up this nuisance and chuck it out.

"Let him alone, Clarence!" May's voice put an end to the hostilities. "Maybe the poor boy ain't all there! Anyhow, it's a shame to see him get hurt. He's got such nice eyes."

Clarence dutifully withdrew a few paces.

"Listen to me, boy," continued May. "I guess I'm just a soft-hearted fool. Don't kid yourself that I believe a word you say. I know you are just a little cheap crook that goes around stealing bottles of milk from the doorways and talking over silly nurse girls in the park, leading soft-hearted women astray."

"I never did such a thing in my life," protested Buck.

"All right! All right! Maybe you're as nice as you look, but I doubt it. Anyway, I'm going to give you a chance to reform. I may be too easy for my own good, but something tells me that you are not altogether bad."

"Won't you give me a chance to prove what I say?"

"S-sh! Don't give us a song and dance just because I said you was a good actor. I'm not going to send you to jail, though I reckon they've got your old cell swept out and waitin' for you. I've heard it said that a man may be down, but he's never out. I'm going to let you pay for your check by workin' it out."

Buck gazed at her dumb with astonishment.

"Hey, Clarence," commanded May. "Get a fresh apron from the drawer and tie it on our new bus boy!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### A NOVICE "FENCE."

THERE was no use making a fuss about it. Buck allowed himself to be swathed in a big white apron tied behind his shoulder blades by the none too gentle hands of Clarence.

"Shan't I just hand him a clout on the side of the head?" asked the dishwasher plaintively. "Just one little crack on the jaw so he'll know that we mean business?"

"No, no! Don't be rough with the poor boy. Think how he's suffered," answered May derisively. "He's just lost five thousand dollars!"

Clarence did not answer her mocking smile.

"I don't think he was makin' that up, Miss May. I think the poor guy believes it. He's a snowbird or a hophead maybe."

"All right! He's a bus boy now! What's your name?"

"Percy—I mean Buck."

"Have you made up your mind which it's to be, Percy or Buck?"

"Buck Logan!"

"That sounds all right. Buck up now and be a man! I'm giving you a chance at honest work for a change. Get a move on and escort them dirty dishes to the kitchen!"

As the unhappy young man picked up a plate here and a cup there he realized that while he was looking for trouble it had stolen up and hit him a crack on the back of the neck. His stake that was to last through the year had vanished. He knew

there was small chance of ever recovering that money. It might have been stolen in the subway or in the jam at the bridge. There was no hope of getting it back. He was broke!

It did not occur to Buck that he ought to be thankful to have a job handed to him. In fact, he had so little regard for his new job that May was presently moved to raise her voice and throw a remark in his direction.

"Say, young fellow, what do you think you are? A messenger boy?"

"What do you mean?"

"Show a little speed! Put some pep into it! My God, is that the best you can do? A cup in one hand and a saucer in the other!"

"I'm sorry, Miss May! I've never been a bus boy before."

"Look here; I'll show you!" Sliding her array of rhinestone bracelets up her forearm the girl left the cashier's desk and swooped down upon a row of vacant chairs. Deftly she stacked up the heavy stoneware, a pyramid of thick plates, saucers and ponderous coffee cups until she balanced a structure that rose above her bright curls.

"That's the way to do it. Take a man-size load and step lively." She addressed Buck over her shoulder and at the same moment one of her high-heeled slippers touched one of the banana skins that the taxi driver had thrown on the floor.

There was a moment of agonizing suspense. May forgot to chew for a few seconds while one foot skidded and the other tried frantically to keep her balance. Her eyes started, her cheeks paled, and for the first time she came near losing her self-possession.

The cause of this embarrassment was grinning with delight and, nudging his companion, whispered: "Get on to that, 'Tattoo!'" as May balanced crockery like a stage juggler.

The pyramid of plates and saucers and cups swayed back and forth and Buck held his breath waiting for the crash. Somehow, he felt that he was going to get the blame of it. He did not know why, but he expected to be the goat.

The tower of china leaned sideways and the heavy cup that crowned it gently detached itself from the edifice and came sailing down.

The taxi drivers snorted gleefully. The heavy-set fellow with the red face who had thrown the banana skin was almost hysterical.

"Hully gee!" he gasped. "Dat jane ought to be on de stage! Hot dog!"

But at that second the girl recovered her balance by a miracle of luck. Deftly she reached with her free hand and caught the falling coffee cup in mid air.

With the same movement she brought it down with a sharp crack on the skull of the red faced joker.

"Freshy!" observed May and marched with her load to the kitchen, her jaws once more working in perfect rhythm.

When she came back she made not the slightest reference to her near accident.

"Always take a man-size load," she said to Buck in a businesslike manner. "But first get a pan and brush and clean up after them two-legged hogs."

"Aw, say, Miss May, don't talk so rough. I didn't mean no harm!"

"I like that, Pugsy! Didn't you throw them banana skins there on purpose?"

"Honest to God, it was just an accident, Miss May. They skidded off me plate when I wasn't lookin'!"

"All right, prove it! You sweep them up, Pugsy!"

Buck had returned with a broom and dustpan and Pugsy immediately cleaned up his leavings.

Then the two taxi drivers prepared to pay their checks, lingering at the desk to kid May on her juggling act.

"That was sure hot stuff! You ought to pull down two hundred dollars a week at the Hippodrome," observed Pugsy.

"I never seen it done prettier! Not even in the Columbia Burlesque," added Tattoo.

"And you look like you was dolled up for the act with your jewelry on your arms and fingers, and your hair all curled and shiny. Gee! You're some queen, Miss May!"

But at that moment Pugsy's face lost its expression of a love-sick satyr. He no

longer smiled his leering, sensual smile. Tattoo had touched his elbow and whispered a single word in his ear.

"Dicks!"

Like a flash Pugsy's hand shot into his coat pocket and emerged with something silvery and glittering.

"Wear that for me, May," he whispered in tense accents and as he spoke he had added one more bracelet to the collection on the girl's slender wrist. Among the sparkling fabrications of the ten-cent store, that bracelet of platinum crusted with perfectly matched diamonds was lost in the general kaleidoscopic scintillation.

The girl stared at him in amazement.

Hardly had he withdrawn his hand when two powerfully built but otherwise inconspicuous men came through the door of the lunch room. They strolled casually to the counter where Pugsy and Tattoo still pretended to count their change.

"Well, here you are!" said the larger of the two strangers.

"Good evening, Mr. Lorimer!" Both Pugsy and Tattoo were unusually polite.

"Had your supper, boys?" asked Lorimer pleasantly.

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, that's fine. Better take a little walk with us." Detective Lorimer's voice was quiet, genial and unconcerned as if he were inviting them to have a glass of butter-milk.

"Aw, say, captain! What ye got on us? Why, we ain't pulled nothin'!"

"That's all right. Somebody pinched a ten thousand dollar bracelet from the Banning apartment on Park Avenue."

"My Heavens! Are ye tryin' to pin that on us?"

"Oh, no, boys, not at all. Come over to the office and we'll frisk you and listen to your alibi. Better come gentle. I don't like to be rough with you unless I have to."

"Sure, I'll come," said Tattoo.

"Let's go," said Pugsy. "Damned if the bulls don't try to blame us for every job that's pulled off in New York!"

The detectives strolled out with their prisoners as inconspicuously as they had entered.

They did not so much as glance at May's

jewelry although they gave her a friendly good night.

"For the love of Mike," gasped May. "Look what that guy wished on me."

Buck drew near and examined the bracelet which she indicated with one highly polished finger nail.

"It's the real thing," said Buck.

"What am I going to do about it?" asked the girl uncertainly, removing the trinket and studying it. "God, I hate to snitch, but I'm not hankering to do a stretch for Pugsy Brennen, even if he is a friend. Say, do you really think it's worth ten thousand dollars?"

"I'm sure it's worth that much," replied Buck. "Easily!"

"Holy gee. It's like a fairy story. To think of me wearin' real diamonds! Ten thousand dollars' worth! Say, how would it be to slope with these sparklers? I'm in bad already. Why not make a get-away and have the game as well as the name?"

The girl's candid blue eyes sought the young man's and his gaze was troubled as he looked into their azure depths.

They were at once so childlike and sophisticated. They puzzled him as much as did May herself.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FOR THE REWARD.

"I'M disappointed in you, May!"

The girl started and eyed him with astonishment. "How's that? Is that any way to talk to your employer, you poor scrub?"

Buck did not answer for a moment. He was studying those delicate girlish features, the blond curls so full of life and radiance, the delicately tinted cheeks and the lips that were dainty, even under their application of lip stick, and showed two even rows of white teeth as they parted so petulantly.

Above all he studied her eyes which had an expression that he could not reconcile with her avowal that she intended to steal the diamond bracelet.

"No, I would never have taken you for a thief," he remarked sadly.

"How do you get that way?" The words

were snapped out defiantly and the blue eyes blazed at him.

"Thief! Who gave you license to take that word in your mouth?"

"You did."

"I didn't!" The girl's voice was genuinely indignant, and Buck felt perplexed.

"Why, May, you just said you wanted to make a get-away with that bracelet."

"Well, I didn't steal it, did I? It was given to me."

"It's the same thing. It was stolen and you know it."

"What do you want I should do with it?"

There was a gleam of mockery in her blue eyes. "Give it back to Pugsy and Tattoo?"

"Of course not! Turn it over to the police."

"Gee! That's rich! Do you know what I would get for that—and do you know what the bulls would get?"

"Well, what?"

"I'd get the third degree and maybe pull down a sentence from some boob who calls himself a judge. As for the bulls, they'd grab a reward from the owner and get a lot of credit for jailing the notorious girl bandit, the master mind of Pugsy's gang."

"Do you believe that?"

"I can see it in the papers already." The girl's voice was sullen as if she had already experienced injustice.

"Well, that's no excuse for your stealing the bracelet," retorted Buck angrily. "Of course; it's none of my business. I'm not your guardian, but I certainly thought you were above stealing."

"What made you think so?"

"Your appearance. You look so fresh and innocent and pretty, like a wild rose."

There was a silence. The girl looked at him with eager eyes and parted lips.

"Go on," she said presently.

"It's a shame for a charming, refined girl like you to plunge into crime. You don't know where it may lead you. You're altogether too lovely to degrade yourself."

"Am I?" said May gently. "I'm so glad you think so. Haven't you some more reasons why I should give back the bracelet?"

"No," said Buck shortly. His tone showed that he was nettled.

The girl sighed. "All right! Maybe I was planning to give the thing back anyway."

"Oh, I knew you were just joking!" His voice expressed his relief.

"But listen," said the girl. "Do you realize that I am taking a big chance to double-cross Pugsy and Tattoo. Those guys are dangerous. If they find out what I've done they would just as soon bump me off. I tell you I'm taking a chance if I do as you say."

"I'll stand by you! I won't let those fellows hurt you!"

"My God, boy, they'd walk over you and not know you was there. Those fellows are *bad!*"

"I'm not afraid of them."

The girl regarded him with a new interest. "Honest, I believe you're not. Just the same you're letting yourself in for a peck of trouble for a stranger."

"I don't feel that you are a stranger to me, May. I—I don't know why I like you, but I do. It seems as if we had been friends from away back."

"All right, buddy, if you are my friend listen to what I've got to say and don't take me up wrong again."

"Now, if I give back this bracelet to Mrs. Banning of Park Avenue she'll hand me a frosty smile and perhaps slip me a ten spot or so. I know that kind. Those dames are upholstered in money and yet it hurts them to part with it."

"Yes—but—"

"Don't interrupt, kid! Now for that measley ten or twenty bones I take a chance on getting choked by Pugsy or knifed by Tattoo. *You* may not be scared of them, but *I* am."

"I'll have to quit my job and beat it out of here. I'd lose five times what that rich dame would slip me for a reward and I wouldn't even get her thanks—she'd always believe that I'd helped steal the sparklers in the first place."

"Then you're not going to give them back after all?"

"Let me talk, boy! Let me talk! Now suppose I freeze on to this bracelet and lay low for a while. I'll have to lay mighty low, for both the bulls and Pugsy's gang

will be after me. But in the meantime the more she thinks about her bracelet the more that old dame will hate to lose it and pretty soon she'll advertise a reward, five hundred dollars, a thousand, maybe two thousand or more, if the thing is really worth what you say.

"Oh, I can see you don't think it sounds very classy. You don't think that a sweet young girl like you say I am should hold out for a reward. But why shouldn't I be paid for taking the chances that I've got to take?"

Buck could think of no adequate answer. Perhaps it was not a very noble or generous sentiment, but it was practical. After all, why shouldn't the girl be properly rewarded for the risks she ran?

"All right," he said. "I'm with you! If you really plan to return this bracelet I'll help to keep it away from these crooks."

"You're on, boy! Shake!" And May extended a slender white hand and gave him a grip that was astonishingly vigorous.

"Whatever the reward is, we'll split fifty-fifty."

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes! Now don't be silly. You're taking as big chances as I am, and you need the money."

Buck could not deny that as he remembered that the pickpockets had cleaned him out.

"We'll hang on to this until the old lady makes a reward that is good and big," continued May with pleased anticipation. She was like a child looking forward to the circus.

"I'd like to pull down a thousand for my share," she added.

"What do you want with a thousand dollars, May? Do you want to doll yourself up in furs and glad rags?"

"I'm not saying what I want it for just yet." The girl's voice was serious now and purposeful. "I've got a particular use for a thousand dollars," she continued, and her eyes assumed a far-away expression as if she were seeing some distant goal.

"Some day I'll tell you why I need it, and need it bad. There's a fellow—a certain low down, miserable— Oh, hell—no

use going into that until I get my thousand! But when I *do*, somebody is going to be sorry for what he did to me!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TEN-THOUSAND-DOLLAR POSTIES.

**S**UDDENLY the girl thrust the bracelet into Buck's hand. He was startled at the abruptness of her movement.

"We're wasting time gassing like this when we ought to be making our get-away!" she said sharply.

"What is your plan?"

"I've got to go back to my room to get my money and a few things for traveling. I've got to beat it out of here in a hurry, for there is no telling that Pugsy and Tattoo will be held at headquarters very long. Those roughnecks may be turned loose already. They may be on their way here now, and if they see me, it's all off."

"All right, you go and get packed. What do you want me to do?"

"You look after the cash register, and when the boss comes in. Boozy Jake Maguire, you tell him that I was took sick and went to a friend's house. Then you hotfoot it after me." She mentioned a number on Charles Street. "And we'll say good-by to this burg for the present."

"All right; here's your bracelet."

"No, you keep it. If those tough guys met me on the street they'd get it away from me if they had to choke me for it. If they come back, or if the bulls should show up and ask questions, you tell 'em I went to a friend's for the night—better say a friend in Brooklyn. Tell them I was sick, same as you told Maguire. They're not likely to think that I'd be such a fool as to trust you with ten thousand dollars' worth of swag."

"Why do you trust me? After all, you don't know me from Adam!"

"I don't know why I trust you, buddy." May's voice was very soft and sweet as she paused at the door to smile her good-by. "I guess that a girl always falls for an innocent sort of kid that doesn't look as if he knows much."

And she was gone.



Buck had thrust the bracelet into his coat pocket and now as he slipped into May's place behind the counter a feeling of dread took possession of him.

Pugsy and Tattoo were about as hard-looking customers as he had seen, big-jowled, unshaven brutes with heavy muscles and the look of killers.

The young man began to wonder what would happen if they should insist on going through his pockets. It would be a daring attack, right there in the glare of the arc lights and in full view of the street, yet Buck knew that such audacious holdups were being pulled off constantly in New York.

He glanced nervously about the eating place to see whether the few remaining customers had any suspicions of what had happened. There were only three or four dejected-looking creatures in the far corners of the room. They were lingering over their coffee dregs and crumbs, glad of a chance to loaf a little longer in a comfortable dry place instead of being turned into the wet streets.

Apparently they had observed nothing. The boy at the serving table, a pasty-faced, half-grown youth, was fast asleep.

Buck looked about for a convenient hiding place for that diamond bracelet where it would be overlooked in case the robbers returned and went through his pockets.

His eye fell upon one of those fly-specked ornaments so common in cheap eating places, a flower pot with a bush of artificial, faded flowers, that stood on the corner of the counter near the gum vending machine.

Furtively he lifted the imitation plant from its bed of dry moss, dropped the bracelet into the flower pot, and replaced the unhappy-looking plant.

He had hardly done so when two customers entered. One of these strangers was a stocky, swarthy-faced individual with crisp curly hair. He looked like a laborer, but from the fact that he belonged to a race which seldom goes in for heavy manual work.

The other was a sandy-faced, thin-lipped chap with fishy gray eyes. He was dressed

in seedy, unpressed garments, and was a common type among the fifty-cent rooming houses.

The new cashier handed them their checks, and the strangers walked over to the counter and ordered roast beef sandwiches.

Then they exchanged a few words with the sleepy boy behind the counter and immediately came back to the desk where Buck was holding down his new job.

"Say, boss," said the black-haired customer. "Can you fix us up for a little hooch?"

Buck stared at him.

"It's all right," said the sandy-haired man. "We get it here regular, but the kid at the counter said that we'd have to get it from you."

"You want me to sell you some whisky?"

"Sure, just a little Scotch! Jake would let us have it if he were here. He knows us."

"Well, I don't know you. And besides, there is no liquor sold at this place. What do you think this is—a speak-easy?"

"Oh, come off! Don't try to stall us! We know you've got a case of Scotch around the place."

The sandy-haired man was edging behind the counter. "I know the locker where Jake keeps it. Right here!"

"Keep away," cried Buck with a determined ring in his voice. "If you try to come back here I'll knock your block off."

In his worry over the bracelet the young man could think of no other motive than a holdup on the part of Pugsy's friends. This must be a ruse to take him by surprise.

"Clarence!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

At that the massive bulk of the dishwasher loomed in the kitchen doorway, but instead of rushing nobly to the rescue, as was expected, he uttered a horrified, "Crisamighty!" and bolted the way he had come.

To Buck's relief, the swinging doors from the street opened at that moment and a fat man with a red nose and a backward slanted derby walked in with the assured

air of a proprietor. Under his arm he carried a square package done up in wrapping paper.

The sight of the men who were facing Buck had the same effect on Jake Maguire as it had on his dish-washer, but before he could dash out into the street again the sandy-haired man had seized him by the elbow.

"I guess we've got you with the goods on, Jake," he commented. "We've been collecting evidence against this joint for a long time, and I guess the wet goods you're carrying will give us a clear case."

Crestfallen and unhappy, the proprietor deposited his package on the counter and mopped his forehead with a colored handkerchief.

"Listen to reason, boys," he croaked hoarsely. "I've been payin' for protection right along. It ain't fair to jump on me like this, but I'm game. How much do you want?"

"We don't want anything you can give us, Jake. We've got orders to make an example, and you're it. Will you come over to the office and fix up your bail?"

"Sure, if it's your last word."

The other prohibition agent raised his voice and addressed the customers:

"Clear out of here! Closing time for this joint!"

As they slunk out he thrust his head into the kitchen. "The help's made a get-away. Did you want them for witnesses?"

"Naw," said the other. "We don't need them!" He scowled at Buck contemptuously. "We don't need you, either. Put an egg in your shoe and beat it!"

Buck had thrown off his apron, and now he stood gasping at the sudden turn of events.

"Do you want me to go?" he asked the proprietor.

Jake glared at him. "Who the hell are you?" he growled. With a sweeping movement he swung open the cash register and thrust the money into his pockets. "I don't know who you are," he snarled. "Where's May?"

"She's sick. It was May that hired me."

"Well, it's me that fired you! Savvy! Get out!"

Buck could not think of the next move. He lingered in perplexity. How was he going to get that diamond bracelet out of the flower pot that stood right between him and the officers?

While he hesitated, the matter was decided for him. One of the detectives took him firmly by the arm and led him from behind the counter.

Buck jerked loose and squared himself to fight, but with astonishing speed and energy the two plainclothes men threw themselves upon him and the next instant he was flat on the sidewalk. He had been given the "bum's rush."

It was a staggering reverse, but not a defeat.

Buck dragged himself limply away and stood in the shelter of an Elevated pillar. In a moment he saw the three men leave the coffee joint.

The proprietor carefully locked the door, having switched off the lights. With obvious reluctance he turned over the key to the sandy-haired detective.

After they had gone, Buck flattened his nose against the glass and could see in the shadows that the flower pot was still there. It stood untouched at the farther end of the cashier's counter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE GET-AWAY.

AS Buck stared disconsolately at the hiding place of the treasure valued at ten thousand dollars, he knew how a hungry man must feel who looks at the tempting array in a delicatessen window.

All that the starving man craves is separated from him by only a pane of glass—but that fragile barrier might as well be of steel.

He reflected on the amazingly bad luck that had befallen him—then realized with a start that it was good luck, after all. For he discovered that Pugsy and Tattoo were standing directly behind him.

His heart seemed to hit his palate with a bang.

He did not speak. He only hoped that he

might be able to slink away unquestioned, but Pugsy exclaimed:

"What de hell! The joint's closed!"

"Can you beat that? This is an all-night dump!"

"Somethin's happened! I've knowed Boozy Jake for ten years, and it's the first time I've seen his door locked."

Tattoo addressed Buck. "Hey, young fellow! What about it? Who closed up Jake's place?"

Buck mumbled something incoherent and tried to edge away, but Pugsy broke in. "Say, you're the guy that was rushin' the dishes to the kitchen. You can tell us what's happened."

"The place was raided," stammered Buck. "They closed it for selling liquor."

"The hell they did! Well, there's one of our customers that won't buy no more from us. So they took poor old Jake away, did they?"

"Yes, the officers took him and locked up the place."

"What about May? What about the cashier girl?" cried Pugsy in great excitement. "Did they take her along, too?"

"No— Yes, of course they arrested her." Buck felt that he was not a very fluent liar. "She fought like a wild cat, but it was no use. She and Jake were both pinched."

"Come along, Tattoo." Pugsy was already dragging his companion away. "Let's beat it over to headquarters and see what we can do about May."

"Wait a minute," said Tattoo. "There's just a chance—one chance in a million—that she slipped it to this guy when she seen the dicks coming. It will take just a minute to frisk him."

In less time than he could describe it, Buck felt himself seized, his elbows pinned behind him and swift hands searching every pocket. No violence was used, only skill, but when the strong-arm men left him gasping at the end of those three seconds he had been thoroughly searched even to his ox-fords and hat band.

With mixed feelings, but mainly with a hymn of thanksgiving in his heart, Buck sat down on the curbstone and pulled on his low shoes. To his astonishment, the

slight scuffle had brought no interference from the few skulking figures that had observed it. Either they had not understood what was happening or had understood too well to take chances.

Buck decided that there was nothing to keep him in that neighborhood any longer. His first move must be to warn May that Pugsy and Tattoo were released. Evidently they had put up a good alibi and now they were on her trail.

A minute later and the young man had jumped into a cruising taxi and was racing madly across town to Charles Street.

But May's address was not the one he had given the driver. He had said St. Vincent's hospital, for at the moment he set foot on the running board he remembered with sickening horror that he had not a cent in his pocket.

Also, it was just as well not to mention May's address to a taxidriver. Buck felt he had reason to be suspicious of that tribe.

As the cab rattled over the cobbles, he wondered whether he might not go to St. Vincent's hospital after all, not as a fare but as a case for the emergency ward. He realized that the day had not been entirely unsuccessful for a young man who was looking for trouble.

Near the Jefferson Market Police Court the taxi slowed down in a knot of traffic and Buck took advantage of the opportunity he had been waiting for. He had released the door catch and kept his hand on it so that he could swing it open without a click, but as he stepped out and darted through the traffic under the Elevated, the chauffeur caught a glimpse of him and slammed on the brakes with a curse.

By the time the driver had scrambled out of his car, Buck had slipped between the motors and street cars to Christopher Street, and by the simple device of taking every corner that he came to, he succeeded in losing not only his pursuer but himself in that maze of winding streets.

There was one moment when he thought he was a goner. A hulking fellow stepped from a doorway right in his path and reached out to seize him.

"What yuh been stealing?" he demanded.

It was a moment of suspense. Buck fancied he could hear the heavy gallop of the chauffeur just around the corner. He pointed straight ahead.

"Help me get that pickpocket," he gasped. "He took that turn to the left."

As the stranger joined in the pursuit, Buck took the next turn to the right, flying like the wind.

Finally, he had to ask a policeman which way was Charles Street, discovered that it was only half a block distant, and a minute later he was ringing the doorbell of May's shabby old-fashioned house.

The girl had been waiting for him and it was she who let him in.

As the door was closing behind him, a taxi went tearing past up the street and Buck had a hunch from the weird curses that the driver left in his wake that it might be the car that had brought him from the Bowery.

May seized his hand in her cool slim fingers and led him up the obscure staircase. Her room was on the top floor, front, and to reach it one had to pass through several strata of odors, the fried onion smell of the first floor, the garlic of the second and the incense which proclaimed that one of the upper rooms was a villager's studio.

"Ssh!" cautioned May as they began the ascent, but the young man was too breathless from his flight to say much, and not until she had locked her door behind him did he explain what had happened.

"Well, I'll tell the world, that's the limit!" exclaimed May. "Jake's pinched. His place is locked, and Pugsy and Tattoo are hot on our trail."

"Do they know where you live?" asked Buck anxiously. "It won't take them long to find out that you were not arrested."

"If you mean to ask if they were steady callers at my house—not on your life. Still, they could find out easy. Jake would give them my number. He's their sort. Jake would just as soon hand me over to his pals if he saw anything in it for himself."

"Then I don't think we'd better waste any time here," whispered Buck. "Every-thing packed?"

The girl glanced at the small suit case by the door. "All set," she replied crisply.

She turned out the gas and groped toward the door where Buck was waiting for her.

But suddenly he felt himself in the clasp of her slender young arms. May was clinging to him trembling. He could feel her warm breath on his cheek and the fragrance of her hair in his nostrils.

But she was clinging to him in terror, not in passion. Her voice vibrated as she breathed in his ear: "Don't move! Don't make a noise!"

The doorbell of that sinister old house had jangled to the impatient jerk of some brusque hand.

Whoever stood at the door was demanding admission with a fury that expressed itself in that alarming clamor of the gong.

## CHAPTER X.

### A TEMPORARY HAVEN.

**B**REATHLESSLY the girl and the boy stood listening at the head of the stairs.

"The landlady's awful deaf," commented May. "She may not answer that bell for a long time."

"Have you any weapon in your room? A revolver? We could lock the door and stand off those roughnecks if they try to force their way in."

"No chance," whispered May. "I wish I had a gat, but there is not so much as a hatpin in my room."

"What shall we do, lock ourselves in and pretend there is nobody home?"

"Too risky! I tell you those fellows are bad! They would just as soon smash in the door."

The clamor at the street door echoed through the house and this time it was followed by the creaking voice of an old woman.

Her words came quivering up the stairs. "I don't know if Miss May is home or not. I'll go up and see."

"Don't bother, I'll go!" It was the gruff bass of Pugsy that rumbled in reply.

"I'm her brudder, see? She's expectin' me! If she ain't there I'll wait."

Buck had retreated into the darkness of the hall facing the top of the stairs. He

was wondering whether a determined rush in the dark, a smashing blow to the jaw, might take the intruder by surprise and send him headlong downstairs.

He was willing to chance it, although Pugsy was apt to have a gun in his hand.

But at that instant Buck felt himself gently pulled by a slender hand to a recess under the dim skylight.

Below it stood two trunks one piled on top of the other.

"Quick! Go up through the trap door and give me a hand," whispered May.

Like a cat he climbed the trunks, raised the skylight and reached down to give the girl a lift. She was so light that he almost swung her bodily through the opening and they gently lowered the trap door into place as the heavy footsteps of Pugsy reached the top of the stairs.

Tattoo was close on his heels. The two ruffians did not hesitate, but strode into May's room without knocking.

The pair on the roof could hear their expressions of anger as they found the place deserted. A glimmer of light through the dirty glass told them that the men had put on the gas in her room.

"Don't move!" whispered May as the thugs came out into the hall. "Those fellows are apt to think of the roof as a sure way out."

But their pursuers were in doubt. "I don't think she's back yet," said Pugsy.

"Maybe she's come in and gone again," suggested Tattoo.

"Hard to say! But I'll camp right here and you go down on the street and keep a lookout. Keep moving. You may pick her up most anywhere. Just cruise around in the car and be ready to nab her."

One pair of heavy feet descended the stairs. Pugsy could be heard striding back into May's room and the couple on the roof even fancied that they could hear the couch creak as he flung himself upon it to wait.

There was nothing for it. They must make their get-away over the roofs!

Their first precaution was to slip off their shoes, for the slightest sound might be overheard by Pugsy, who was apt to be a good hand at roof climbing.

Then very painfully they made their way an inch at a time to the coping and climbed to the adjoining roof. Once there they breathed easier, but still they had need of caution for any householder who heard them might turn them over to the police as suspected burglars.

And they had no desire to encounter the police any more than the gangsters.

Climbing one wall after another they presently came to a large roof with clothes lines and other signs of apartment house life.

They dodged behind a wide protecting chimney just as a blurry shadow entered from below and stood wheezing and puffing.

It was a huge woman weighing upward of two hundred pounds and shaped like a sack of flour with a string tied around the middle. She waddled deliberately toward their shelter and began to upbraid them before they could escape.

"What you think this is, hey? Such canoodlings! Such goings on, I do not allow on my roof."

She rumbled and wheezed in indignation, trying to make out which of her tenants was carrying on a clandestine flirtation among the chimney pots.

"Take shame to you! Kissing and hugging on a respectable roof like this! Once I tell the landlord about you and out you go, lease or no lease!"

But as the cumbersome guardian of apartment house morals edged around one side of the chimney, Buck and May slipped lightly around the other side and before the caretaker's indignant eyes they gained the door from the roof, raced down the flights of stairs and came out on the street, giggling like a pair of children.

At the first dark doorway they paused long enough to slip into their shoes and then strolled arm in arm to the nearest Elevated station, under the medieval towers of the Jefferson Market police court.

At the turnstile Buck was forced to call for help. "Have you got carfare, May," he said. "I'm cleaned out."

"Sure!" She slipped some small change into his fingers and added: "I've got plenty of expense money in my 'safety deposit vault'—the left one," she added slyly.



At Thirty-Eighth Street they left the Elevated, walked a few blocks to Buck's discreet lodgings and the young man thanked his stars that the pickpockets had not carried away his latch key.

He admitted May to his snug little apartment, switched on the light and extended the hospitality of his diggings with a lordly gesture.

May gasped. Apparently she had never before seen an interior that contained so much luxury and comfort.

To Buck's mind it was just a tastefully furnished bachelor's home, a cozy living room, bedroom and kitchenette. But when May contrasted it with her own shabby bedroom on Charles Street, with its cracked walls and skirts hung on the back of the door, it seemed palatial.

"My God, boy, ain't we Ritzzy!"

"You like it?" smiled Buck.

"Like it! I love it! Say, ain't you afraid the boss will show up?"

"I'm the boss. Who did you think I was?"

"I don't know! One of the help, I reckon! Do you mean to say that this swell dump is yours?"

"Of course it is—and yours as long as you need it."

He opened the connecting door and showed May the cheerful little bedroom, rattling the key to let her know that it was on her side of the door.

"I'm going to camp in the living room," he said. "I've slept on the couch before."

From a linen closet he pulled out some extra bedding, and with a careless gesture tossed a suit of pyjamas in May's direction.

"Too bad we had to leave your bag at Charles Street. These are not a fit, but they will do."

May fingered the silken pyjamas with their delicate lavender stripes and the monogram embroidered in silk.

As Buck left her to herself she glanced up to where he stood in the doorway and remarked humbly:

"Gee, I hope you'll forgive me!"

"What for?"

"For being such a fool. To think of my giving the job of bus boy to the Prince of Wales!"

With a smile Buck closed the door. Presently he heard her key turn in the lock and a moment later he was putting away the sleep that he had so thoroughly earned.

The sun was shining in his eyes when he was awakened by an imperative peal at his door bell.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LAURENCINE AND HER MESSAGE.

**B**LINKING and rubbing his eyes, the startled sleeper jumped off the couch, slipped a dressing gown over his pyjamas and cautiously peered through a crack in the door.

It was unceremoniously thrust open. The next instant Laurencine Palmer was inside the room and had closed the door behind her.

If Buck was annoyed at her cool way of taking possession, he was not astonished at it. Disregard of conventions was a fad of Laurencine. She prided herself on being excessively modern.

"Well, sleepy head," she remarked coolly as she dropped into the easiest armchair and lighted a cigarette. "Do you know it is after ten o'clock?"

"Yes, no; that is, I hadn't thought of looking at the time. I was out late last night."

"Obviously!"

Laurencine leaned back, crossed her silken ankles and wafted a smoke ring into the air.

Buck reddened and stammered as he gathered the bedding from the davenport, rolled it into a ball and tossed it into a closet.

"Oh, I say, Laurie," he began. "Can't I see you a little later in the day? Let me take you to lunch somewhere!"

Laurencine eyed him quizzically. "I'd rather talk to you now," she remarked. "It's something important."

"But, I say, this is rather—ah—I'm not used to talking to girls in my pyjamas, you know."

"No? Well, I'm sure that's very Victorian of you! How do you stand it, living with your own virtue?"

This sounded insulting and was meant to be. Laurencine smiled a tantalizing smile, then straightened her face to an air of gravity.

"Percy, dear, something important has happened and I need your help for a friend of mine."

"I don't want you to call me Percy. My name's Buck now. I don't want any one to call me Percy any more."

"Well, that's nice. Buck sounds rather dashing; I think I like it."

She tilted her head sidewise, glanced at him with languid, appraising eyes and remarked:

"You know you are a perfect dear with your hair rumpled. You may kiss me if you like."

For the first time since he had known her, Buck ignored the invitation. He was irritated. He wished this girl would go away and discuss her silly project with him at lunch. He didn't know what it was, but he was sure that it was something utterly futile.

Laurencine was more amused than insulted at his pointed ignoring of her proffered lips. She drew another puff on her cigarette.

"All right, *don't* kiss me! I was only trying to be kind to you. But, anyway, you've got to listen to me."

"Oh, well, go ahead! Spill the bad news."

"It's not exactly bad news, Buck. Mrs. Banning is dead. Mrs. Gerhardt Banning, of Park Avenue."

"Dead! *That* Mrs. Banning? Why, I didn't know you knew her, Laurie."

"I didn't very well. I knew her husband better. He's an elderly philanderer with more money than brains. But at that he has enough brains to make a pretty good play fellow."

"Huh! I get you! You called me your little playmate the other day. So that's what it means? Not much on brains!"

"Don't be silly and don't talk personalities. What I came to tell you was this: Mr. Banning is in awful trouble. Something is preying on his mind and he wants a young, good looking man just like you, Bucky dear, to help him out of this scrape."

"He does? Is it something about the stolen bracelet?"

"Why, yes—how did you guess—but, of course, you must have seen the paper. Here's a late edition." The girl tossed him a copy.

Without difficulty Buck found the headlines:

**DEATH FOLLOWS MYSTERIOUS JEWEL ROBBERY. MILLIONAIRE'S WIFE SUCCUMBS FROM SHOCK.**

He looked at the photograph that adorned this narrative. It represented a decidedly pretty woman, plump, blond, smiling and bedecked with jewels. Although it might have been taken some time before, and one had to allow for a change in the standards of beauty, it was evident that Gerhardt Banning had a good eye for feminine charm. He had married a very attractive wife.

And now she was dead. The news story went on that after the theft of her gems the millionaire's wife had been prostrated by the shock. She had seen the burglar who had forced his way into her bedroom and had screamed and become hysterical.

Frightened by her outcries, the burglar had not waited to lay hands on any further loot, of which there was much in the apartment, but had escaped through a window.

The victim had not been able to describe the bandit. She had passed from her hysteria into a stupor that ended with her death.

The husband, who was prominent in social and financial circles, had offered a reward of ten thousand dollars for the capture of the bandits. A separate reward of five thousand dollars was offered for the return of the bracelet.

Buck's eyes took in all these facts while Laurencine was still drawlingly presenting her plans.

"Gerhardt—Mr. Banning was terribly upset over this. He was really fond of his wife. You know—I'm not saying that he was passionately in love with her; but he did care for her. Why, it was only the day of the robbery that he gave her that diamond bracelet for her birthday present."

"He told you all this? He lies to you with his troubles?"

"Oh, don't be a silly, jealous boy! Gerhardt's an old friend of mine. It's just by chance that you've never heard of him before or met him at my place. He's called heaps of times."

The boy frowned. "Well, what does he want me to do about this? What does he know about me?"

It was a feeling of resentment and half-suppressed jealousy that caused the young man to conceal what he knew of the whereabouts of the gems.

"Well, here's where the delicate part of the business comes in," said Laurencine, drawing her chair a little closer to his. "As I mentioned, Gerhardt is fond of the ladies. He's old enough to know better, but he still flutters about boudoirs, and among his other flames there was a certain—to put it mildly—a person, who called herself an actress. As a matter of fact, she was nothing more than a show girl. A sensual, henna-haired vixen—you know what I mean—Spanish, with undulating hips and big, seductive eyes—"

"Well, go on!"

"She went by the name of Señorita Luz Mendoza. I don't know whether she was really Spanish or not. South American, most likely, with a touch of Indian."

"Something seems to tell me that you don't approve of your playfellow's playmate," ventured Buck.

"She's a detestable creature," snapped Laurencine. "I don't see what Gerhardt found in her."

"You don't like the *señorita*?"

"Decidedly not, and I think that Gerhardt is sick of her by this time. In fact, that's what I came to tell you."

"Does he want *me* to take her off his hands?"

"Don't be flippant! Mr. Banning suspects that this South American wild cat may have had a hand in the theft of that bracelet. She admired it immensely, and if she made up her mind to get it she would be quite capable of hiring a thief to steal it."

"You think so?"

"If I'm any judge of character that crime would not be beyond her. She has no morals—that's why I suggested having you meet her."

"What! What!"

"Certainly! A nice-looking boy who knows how to dance and make pretty speeches could get into the *señorita*'s good graces in no time. It would be an adventure for you! A lark! I'd like to do it myself."

"Do what?"

"Meet the lady; make love to her; gain her confidence, and find out whether she has the bracelet."

"You want me to play detective?"

"Why not? You'll get the five thousand dollars if you succeed, and you'll be well paid for your time in any case—no limit to expense money. Why, I should think you would jump at the chance!"

Buck felt his face grow red with indignation.

"Now, look here, Laurie," he blurted, "I'm not a prig or a Puritan—"

"Aren't you?"

"You know I'm not. I'm as liberal as anybody in my opinions, but there are some things a gentleman can't do."

"As for example?"

"Acting as a sort of paid stool-pigeon; helping some detestable old roué out of one of his entanglements."

"Don't be too rough on him, Buck. You may need help yourself some day."

"Never! There is one thing I pride myself on—keeping clear of entanglements with skirts."

Laurencine gave a gasping little chuckle. It almost choked her.

It startled Buck, who did not think that he had said anything so very funny.

"No entanglements with skirts! Oh, most virtuous young man! What about pyjamas?"

Buck followed her laughing eyes. Behind him in the bedroom doorway stood May, rosy from sleep. She was clad in his lavender-striped pyjamas.

Buck heard a little shriek before the door slammed.

"Hell's bells!" exclaimed May as she disappeared.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



# Milord's Servant

By **DON CAMERON SHAFER**

*Author of "A Month to Live," etc.*

**A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE**

"**A** RACK of veal."  
M'lord of the Manor tossed a dog-eared cook book on the littered kitchen table—not without a hard word or two under his breath—rubbing his arched nose thoughtfully the while with a floury forefinger, and called loudly into the next room:

"Collie, G'bless me, what's a rack o' veal?"

It was a large kitchen, but primitive, for the great manor farm itself lay at the very edge of the Colonial wilderness. Naked, rough-hewn beams o'erhead, plain, hand-made furniture, white plastered walls, wide stone fireplace. A bit to one side of this stone hearth sat a stolid Mohawk woman, head bowed, brooding in sullen anger, thinking bitter words in her own barbaric tongue.

For now Milord had taken upon himself to prepare the food, thereby deeply wound-

ing her sensitive and loyal soul, swearing by his strange gods that he was sick unto death of Indian cookery, of meat—meat—meat, of venison roast and broiled, of spit-ted wild fowl, and even of the good sweet maize which had nourished her people for ages untold.

M'lord, famishing in a land of plenty, had sworn by the nine gods he would have a veal pie!

A sorry business he was making of it, too. Doublet tossed upon a rude bench, his sword hanging by its baldrick to a chair back, his leather hunting shirt off and his under sleeves rolled up.

All the kitchenwares and stores were on the table before him. The veal pie was in the making! For days and days he had yearned and craved for white man's victuals, for such a veal pastry as one might buy for a shilling in any coffee house from

Charing Cross to Whitechapel in far-away London Towne, or one nearly as good at the Golden Hind, or the Red Wolf, in New York.

But pastry of any kind was not easily accomplished on the far frontiers of the Royal Province of New York in the year of our Lord 1704. Plenty to eat, in truth, but few good cooks to prepare this abundance in an appetizing manner for the table. And here in the pleasant valley of the Schoharie Mohawks, twenty leagues from the fortified Dutch village of Schenectady and thirty from the busy trading post at Albany, a veal pie was all but out of the question with no one but an Indian woman to do the cooking.

But Dow Van Gurler, on the flats above Schenectady, had killed a bull calf and sent a quarter of it to his good friend, Glenn Sanders, by a Schoharie Indian returning from the council fires at Onondaga. Flour was to be had from the stone mill of Jan Pieterseon toward Albany and there was in the manor house a cook book of sorts from one of the book stalls in Fleet Street.

"Well, egad, a rack, as I remember it," drawled a pleasant male voice from the adjoining room, "is an efficient instrument of torture designed purposely to punish presumptuous amateur cooks."

"You're a deceit and a hissing, Collie! Amateur cookery is its own punishment and the eating of it torment enough. No joking now, th' cursed book doth read to use a rack of veal—"

"'Lack-a-day, Glenn, probably means th' skeleton."

"Well, well, skeleton, indeed, sir! But there's got to be a little meat in a veal pie!"

"I've seen them mostly bones, s'help me! Curses on this wilderness with so much to eat and no one to cook it—put in a little calf meat, Glenn, old boy."

"'A rack of veal,' read the amateur cook again, "'cut into small pieces,' sure got to be meat. 'Parboil in water'—it shall be done. 'Dredge in a little flour.' Gad's my life! Dredge—dredge—Collie, how does one go about to dredge in a little flour?"

"Well, I've seen 'em dredge for oysters."

"Wrong guess, Collie, try again."

"Oh, 'o rat me, Glenn! Ne'er mind th'

cursed book, go ahead and make your veal pie if you must have it."

"But I've got t' follow directions, haven't I?"

"Then follow 'em and quit pestering me with your nonsense."

"But th' fool who wrote this book, some stupid female most like, did use such meaningless words and so jumble up the sentences—"

"I'd, I say, Glenn, hast no imagination? If an ignorant Barbadoes black can fashion a meat pastry and never read a word—"

"All had to learn somehow."

"Experience, Glenn, best of teachers."

"Well, all right, here goes, the rack shall be meat and dredge shall be interpreted to stir in a little flour. If you eat it and die remember that I gave you fair warning."

"I'll take a chance on anything that slightly resembles white man's food, G', yes! I'm that sick o' wild game broiled and fried I shall die of a cholera. Shade of Epicurus, but I'd give a handful o' gold pieces just to stretch a leg under the old oak at the Rainbow right now."

"London is three thousand miles away!"

"And a man can get fair bread and a pastry of sorts in the Dutch shops above the Battery in New York."

"Three days to New York, Collie, by horse and sloop."

The thing of calf meat and sticky dough was slapped into the iron Dutch oven and covered with live coals for the baking. As soon as the amateur cook had cleaned his floury hands and face he joined his cousin, Sir William Collinan, in the large living room.

A vivid contrast between these two men—Collie, in his expensive and well fitting London clothes, a silk turban on his close-cropped head in place of wig, the soft leather tops of his riding boots folded down below the knee; not the gay, wigged and beribboned young fop he was in London here in the wilderness of the New World, but still a tall, handsome young gentleman dressed with care and elegance. Glenn Sanders, a year or two younger, a bit heavier if not quite so tall, in his own curly brown hair worn well down over his leather covered shoulders. An embroidered doeskin hunt-



ing shirt of India make fell almost to his knees; breeches of serviceable nankeen cloth and half legging moccasins.

"Best chuck th' whole demmed business, Glenn," advised his cousin in pacing the floor with his pipe. "Give th' cursed land back to th' red Indians with your blessing and come along to Merrie England with me."

"No, Collie, you know I can't—"

"Pish-tish and fiddlededee, Glenn. All that's forgotten. Jamie's dead, three years ago, his breath rattlin' out o' his throat in the royal palace of St. Germain with Louis XIV holding his limp hand and promising the very war that now sweeps land and sea. And William has followed him on to hell, so, you see, th' whole episode is quite wiped out. And th' times be such that a hatful of gold would buy a man immunity for selling out th' fleet. L' say, my handsome cavalier, and you were but stripped of this wilderness leather and garbed once again in the French fashion, and even Queen Anne herself would forgive you for pinking one of her relatives."

"Kings may come and they may go, but I stay," answered Glenn. "Jamie always secretly hated me because of my undisguised love for Charles. And William's mind was poisoned by those seeking favors at any price—'twas they set upon me that French killer paid to let my blood."

"An' you spitted him proper for his conceit!"

"Aye," with a grin, "and I paid dear for the thrust, though as pretty a one as ever was driven home. Oh, I'll ne'er forget th' sickly grin on William's chinless face when he rolled the rich jest of my exile on his thick tongue. Damn him, say I, and all like him—royal fools filling this new land with their enemies, and some day they will pay those old scores to the full!"

"G' love 'm, Glenn, but you peer into the future darkly. Th' joke was on you, coz, it was, indeed, but the queen will forget and forgive—"

"I shall not," truthfully, "and, Collie, you may deem me mad, but I like it here. This is the greatest country in the world, no man can even guess its size and richness, and some day—"

"Then stay here with the demmed redskins and enjoy it," interrupted Collie, who had stopped his pacing to gaze at the west wall of the room, where every knot, every dark stain, was surrounded by innumerable tiny punctures. "Stay here alone, fencing with knot holes, forgetting the taste of good wine, of good food, forgetting your relatives and friends, without good company or good women—"

"There are no good women, Collie."

"Well, well S' blood! Once you weren't so demmed particular!"

"I've left that all behind me."

"You have—you have, indeed, and about all else worth having in life."

The peace of Ryswick had lasted but five years and now war raged anew between France and England. For a time all was quiet in America and the shock of battle was three thousand miles away. But the fighting ships of both countries carried the conflict far out on the seven seas—France and Spain against England—carried it into the New World. The winter before the French had loosened the blood mad Canadian barbarians upon the peaceful New England colonies—bloody Deerfield, blood all the way from Piscataqua to Casco!

There was talk in New York of an expedition in reprisal to invade Arcadia. So far the great Confederacy of the Iroquois remained neutral, thus protecting New York, but how long this might last depended upon the diplomacy of the English, for the French were working hard to secure the assistance of so powerful an ally.

Glenn's cousin, on business connected with his extensive land holdings in West Jersey, had come to America with a squadron to convoy back the trade ships loaded with food and stores and, while these vessels were loading at the piers in New York, he had run up river to visit his exiled relative.

The veal pie was a sticky failure. Whether it was the rack or the dredge that failed Glenn did not know. It boiled over, it charred a bit, the meat didn't get done. Oh, it just wasn't edible, that's all! And Cousin Collie roared and laughed over that meal until his laced handkerchief was wet and Glenn's temper badly ruffled.

"Oh, G'suffer me, Glenn! Ha-hahahaha --you ought to do well in the queen's kitchen!"

"For th' diel's sake, Collie, hold thy tongue," exploded Glenn. "If you only know how sick I am of Indian food. By the Eternal, if there's a cook to be had in the entire province I shall have her!"

"Rabbit me proper if I wouldn't!"

"Oh, I've tried and tried—Schenectady and Albany—and not a black to be had that can make even good corn bread."

"Bless m' soul, coz—desperate ills require desperate remedies. Go ye down to Dorp and marry one of those stout Dutch wenches—they know how to cook."

"Though the very thought of matrimony sickens, still it may come to that yet."

"A hungry man will venture 'most anything, mayhap even the noose or matrimony. But, hark t' me, Glenn, if you've no stomach for th' same face every day and th' same snore every night, why not a female slave or two, after the Roman fashion? There's many a shipload of likely Scotch lassies and Irish colleens coming into New York every summer, doubtless a cook or two among them, sold for their passage money."

"Collie," exclaimed young Sanders seriously, "though I have entertained serious doubts at times, there may be something in your old knowledge box after all! I'll get me one of those redemptioners, if she can cook, the next time I'm in New York."

"You'll die long before that of a misery in your stomach. I'm going back there next week and maybe I can find one for you if you'd trust me with the mission."

"Spoken like a true friend and loving relative, Collie. I have a sum of money in the hands of Peter Vantuyle on Broadway and I'll give you an order on him for the price of a cook and you can arrange the indenture papers and send her up to Albany."

"I'll get you a cook, damme if I won't, Glenn—a spanking, broad-beamed Irish wench, skilled with th' skillet, a veal pie specialist, a white bread artist, a—"

## II.

LORD CORNBURY, Governor of the Royal Province of New York, first representative

of the English government and highest authority in the colony, responsible only to the queen and the lords of trade—for he ignored the assembly at Albany—sits in his snug brick house on Maiden Lane, lower Manhattan, well content with all and sundry.

He lolls back in his stuffed chair, puffing at a long pipe, and takes his ease, for affairs are going well in the province. Queen Anne's war was a lusty infant, but luckily for him—and no thanks to him!—the ravages of strife had not harmed New York as it had lain waste to northern New England, for the Colonial assembly at Albany had made a truce with the venerable Sachems of the Long House. These "New England farmers and leather shirts," as the governor liked to call them, had prevailed upon the Iroquois to keep the red hatchet of war buried beneath the tree of brotherly love. And, so long as the great confederacy extended around the English, from the St. Lawrence westward to the Ohio and south to Georgia, the province was secure.

So wars and rumors of wars did not disturb milord the governor. He puffed contentedly at his pipe, filled with Virginia's best, and sipped languidly at a tall glass of Castilian wine which had been taken off a Spanish ship by one of his own privateers. It was whispered along the water front that this Spaniard had been a specially rich one. The governor's fat jowls sagged down to his thick neck in its starched Venetian lace; his yellow waistcoat, stiff with braid, wrinkled comfortably over his rounding middle, and his short, fat legs quite filled the shiny silk of maroon breeches.

Life was sweet as he stretched at ease there and thought of these pleasant things. Another venture, in which milord was a silent partner, had turned out quite as handsomely. This very day a large ship had come in with the tide, clearing from Southampton, heavy with Indian goods. And this same ship brought a valuable addition to the colony, a load of human freight so badly needed, consisting of more than a hundred serving women.

Serving maids—little more than slaves! For each and every one of them would be sold at auction, or otherwise, for their pas-

sage money. They would be indentured, bound out, for a long term of years, until they had paid in sweat and muscle for their passage. Many of them, uneducated, less knowing, would never be free again.

Now servants of all kinds were pitifully scarce in the colony. The proud Iroquois, slave holders themselves, preferred death to such ignominy and dishonor. As well try to enslave a panther. Neither would they work for hire at any price. A few Western Indians, Penneys and Tulus, were brought in by raiding warriors of the Long House and sold to the whites.

Negroes from the West Indies brought a ready price of one hundred dollars each. Natives and half castes from Brazil were to be had, but they were worth nothing. A hundred cooks, seamstresses, spinners, milliners, weavers, housekeepers—worth their weight in gold!

So now Lord Cornbury, well pleased with himself, with his queen and his colony, pulled toward him a sheet of white parchment and, with a newly sharpened quill, wrote this notice for a printer's broadside to be posted on the morrow:

#### NOTICE

Arrived this day the goode ship Alice Pendell with a cargo of shrouds, worsted shags, men's hose, twist cloth, assorted hatts, english wire, callico, buttons, and a quantity of trinkets for ye indian trade.

Also:

A fine list of female redemption servants—cooks, weavers, housekeepers, *et cetera*, to be sold at public auction for their passage money and bonded in indenture for terms of service.

(Signed) JETHRO WARREN.

Capt. Alice Pendell.

Ah, surely a good war made prosperous business, mused the governor as he pushed back in his chair and straightened his wig. (Another sip and the candle flame to his pipe.) That accursed assembly of farmers and backwoodsmen in Albany—he'd have it out with them yet. He wondered how the journeymen were getting along with their work on his new mansion up the river. Milord had never been so comfortable and content in all his life. The book was closed on those dark pages of English history and his own life.

It was true that he had been the first to desert King James, but a man were a fool to back a lame horse, and had not William of Orange given him a commission in gratitude? Those cursed creditors in old Jewry who had hounded him out of London—oh, he had money enough to go back now! Fifteen hundred pounds to fortify New York, all in his own pocket. A thousand more to guard the frontier—all in his lordship's chest and the assembly at Albany could sit and snuff and smoke and whistle.

Only one little cloud—no bigger than a woman's hand—darkened the serene glory of the governor's prosperous existence. Not a serious situation; entirely domestic and under his own lead roof, but one that gave him no little concern for all of that. But, surely he was master of his own house. His word was law. And, by the Eternal, if he had any authority left, his ward and niece, Penelope Lingsay, should marry his friend and business associate, Sir Richard Bellemont, lieutenant governor of the Jerseys, and mighty soon to be governor of that rich province if milord had any friends left near the throne.

A great many reasons were in the governor's mind why this union was specially desirable. Sir Richard was of a family far superior to his own, with extensive landed estates in England, and the two of them, working together, could control every worthwhile venture in the provinces.

The fact that the lieutenant governor was fifty something, and looked it; that his past was not all it should have been, accounted in a great measure for the dissension and domestic difficulties in the house of the governor. Miss Penelope declared emphatically, a dozen times a day, that she would have none of him. And just as emphatically, and certainly more profanely, her guardian said she would—or, or—well, he promised her faithfully that she would never leave the mansion again except as Sir Richard's bride! This after she had run away twice and once nearly got a sea to England.

"I'll never marry the old spider!" declared she.

"So-ho!" gasped her guardian. "You defy me, eh?"

"I do—I do! I defy you, and thunder and lightning, and even God to make me—"

"Cease—cease such wicked blasphemy!" roared her guardian. "You'll bring bad luck upon this house."

"I'll burn the house down around your ears before I'll—"

"You'll marry the man I select for you, and when I tell you to, and don't you forget it! What an age when young girls presume to question the wisdom and authority of their elders!"

"Wisdom—authority—you flatter yourself. I'll run away to the woods before I'd marry that old man."

"Oh, you will, eh? Well, my little wild cat, let me tell you that the doors are locked. You've run away for the last time. There's a guard front and rear, besides a constable or two patrolling the streets, and if they let you slip away again I'll have their warm heart's blood!"

"You shan't imprison me here."

"You'll stay right here, miss, until you're safely wed."

"No—no—no—no! I'm damned if I will!"

A costly vase was hurled to the floor in her fury—a candlestick took wings toward the governor's head.

"Hold!" shouted he, ducking. "What have we here in mine own house—tomboy—hoyden! Fine words you learned in your convent school. Another oath from you, miss, and I'll drag you to Jersey this very day, and well off my hands, before you disgrace me in public as well as private."

"You shall not sell me like a colt!"

She snatched at a lace cloth covering a side table and sent its costly ornaments crashing to the floor.

"You'll be wed—"

"If that evil day ever comes I'll make that old spider think he's wed a hornet's nest!"

"Oh, he'll soon tame you," choking and gasping. "Not a step out of this house until you go on his arm, his ring on your finger!"

With that the governor stamped out to send a hurried message to Sir Richard to hasten the wedding day. For all her threats

the girl knew that it would be mighty hard to get out of that house and harder still to escape this forced marriage with the Jersey spider.

"I won't have this daily row ringing in my ears," he roared from the safety of the hall. "You'll be wed within th' fortnight, within th' fortnight—you hear!"

"I'm here now," defiantly, "but I may not be here then!"

### III.

IN the late afternoon there was apt to be more than one table of young bloods, and some not so young, in the popular coffee house of Hans Hotten, on Broadway. It is not to be inferred that because of its nomenclature no stronger beverages than coffee were consumed therein! A half dozen young men were there now, in their long, fine silk and satin coats, gold lace and silver buttons, powder and wigs and plumed hats, busy with tongues, pipes and glasses, discussing the gossip of the colonies, the Indian raids, the last ship in, the tidings from London.

Enter the Hon. John Robertson, long of face and sad of mien, no man on Manhattan needing cheer more than he.

"Greetings, Long-face," called Collie cheerfully. "Come in and let mine host prescribe for thy gloom."

"The times be th' very devil," sighed the Hon. John, dropping to an oak bench.

"And apt to get worse," answered one.

"I take it the course of true love runs not smoothly," laughed a dark youth.

"The old devil," groaned John, "has locked her in the house."

"Love laughs at locksmiths."

"This is no laughing matter."

"Well, drown your sorrows, men."

John Robertson was but one of many ardent youths on Manhattan, and, yes, on the great Long Island itself—and even over in New England—who were languishing for a sight of the imprisoned Penelope Lindsay and sorely grieving because Lord Cornbury had announced her wedding to a spider from Jersey.

Even while they were teasing John the town crier entered with his noisy bell and hung up on the wall a newly stricken broad-

side, fresh from the press, which they all jumped up to read.

### NOTICE

**Arrived this day the good new ship**

**Alice Pendall—**

"Well, rack me," drawled Collie. "One would think the Red Indians would be surfeited with gaudy blankets and cheap jewelry by this time!"

"A hundred females," read another. "Ye gods, but this good land will be ruined yet!"

"Stout Cornish wenches, Welsh matrons and widows—"

"No, no. Irish and Scotch girls on this one."

"Eh—eh—what th' d'il," cried Collie. "Well, if this isn't rare luck."

"Luck—for whom?"

"For Glenn Sanders; he needs a woman."

"He needs a surgeon!"

"No, no, a cook."

"Oh, ho, the barbarian wants a cook."

"Aye," laughed Collie. "Specially commissioned me to send him a pastry cook. Left him last week cursing the red meat, swearing he'd make a pastry—"

Then he told them about the veal pie—they roared for half an hour over it.

"I'll just slip over to the auction and get one—"

"You'll be too late," warned Jerry Taylor. "By that time every decent cook will be privately sold—only the riffraff are ever left for the block."

"A word with the governor will suffice."

"True enough," said Collie. "He has a finger in this pie or I'm a duck. I'll go see him."

Lord Cornbury had both hands in this pie—and he was not in the shipping business for his health. A customer was a customer. He had not seen this latest shipment of servants, so he was only too glad to go with Collie to the warehouse where the women were kept. No need for a guard—no place for these women to run away to even had such a thought entered their heads. They expected to serve their time and dark though the future might be, certainly it was no worse than what they left behind.

The governor called lustily for Captain Jethro Warren, bringing the old seaman hastily from his tiny office.

"Ah, captain," smiled the governor. "We've come down here to pay our respects to the ladies—be good enough to show us your sirens."

"As humbly a lot o' wimmin as ever I see, sir, dash my eye!"

"We're not bringing them in for their looks and there's a heavy duty on all objects of luxury and art. Gone the day when good English bottoms brought rosy-cheeked wives for heart suffering male colonists. We want cooks, weavers, milliners, housekeepers—"

"Unless our agents lie I've a deckload, sir."

"Then let them fill the eye, captain."

At the far end of the warehouse, behind piles of boxes and bales and barrels was a cleared space where English women were making themselves comfortable after their tedious voyage of more than four weeks.

"Gad's life, captain," said Collie under his breath. "You speak truth—they be plain as plain!"

"But young and healthy, sir, every wench o' 'em."

"I dare say, the plain ones seem ever to live the longest, but how many cooks among the lot?"

"Sixteen, as I live."

"Ranging from a fair skillet operator downward, eh?"

"There's one I know is good—she worked in the galley all the way over. Such bread, such biscuit, such pudding, such pastry—"

"Pastry's th' word, captain!" cried Collie. "That's the wench I want to buy."

"Martha Ball!" called the captain. "Martha Ball!"

She that was Martha Ball stepped out from behind the others, a young woman of about twenty, healthy, clean and well spoken.

"Well, sirs," a curtsy, "and here be Martha Ball."

"Can you make a veal pie?" asked Collie with a laugh.

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"That she can, damme yes," echoed the



captain. "It's many o' 'em I've et on th' way over, sir."

"She'll do," answered Collie. "How much and how long?"

"Ah," sighed the avaricious governor, rubbing his smooth chin and wondering how much the traffic would stand. "It's quite irregular, you know; ought to go on the block, sir, auction as the broadside says—"

"Hang the auction!" broke in Collie impatiently. "Think I'm going to stick round on th' curb all day waiting for some swivel tongue to cry 'Going—going—gone'?"

"Oh, doubtless it can be arranged."

"Doubtless it can, milord, or I'm wasting my time here. So let's get to th' office and do it."

"The passage will be full thirty pound—" began the governor.

"Thirty it is," said Collie.

"But at auction she would bring full ten pound more."

"Forty, it is going, going—"

"And say another fiver for all my trouble—"

"Going up! Fiver is added—but don't bear down too hard upon my slender purse, milord."

"Glenn Sanders has the money."

"And a devilish stubborn temper, sir!"

"Well, well," laughed the governor, "let him remember that the more he pays for her the longer she will be indentured to work it out. Fifty pounds will bond her for twenty years."

"Ye gods!" cried Collie. "Why not a shipload of blacks from darkest Africa and be done with it?"

Bond and covenant, Martha Ball, late of England, was soon the indentured servant of one Glenn Sanders at Schoharie. For fifty English pounds to hand was she enslaved for twenty years to come.

"There," said Captain Jethro when the papers were all regular. "Take her away."

"S' death no!" cried Collie. "I'll send for her."

"You can't leave her here," warned the captain. "I've got to get 'er offen my hands."

"She'll bide right here until Glenn Sanders can send for her. I will not be responsible."

"Tut, tut," interrupted the governor, being in excellent humor. "Take her up to my servant quarters and the wench can help in the kitchen until Master Sanders sends for her."

#### IV.

KING WILLIAM liked every bit of a jest. He, too, had his block, and his rope and his dungeon keeps but he preferred—sometimes—to forgive his enemies and heap glowing coals of fire upon their wigged heads by way of gracious gifts. It was hinted at the capital that Glenn's loss of kingly favor started when a beautiful young woman of the court smiled upon him. Immediately thereafter began the attempts to connect Glenn with certain intrigues and to identify him with the troubles between king and church. These failing, Glenn's enemies contrived a bit of sword play with a young French expert visiting the court which resulted disastrously for the visitor.

Now one does not disturb the vitals of a king's relative, however distant, without payment. For, as Glenn knew, one is in and one is out of a king's favor like the turn of a hand—to-day honeyed words, rich rewards, special privileges; to-morrow the block. The rambling old wooden bridge over the Thames held many a gruesome object nailed to its posts and arches which once had known a king's friendship!

But the Sanders' luck had not run out. Instead of the block, William gave him a bit of wild land in the province of New York and told him to go there and make himself comfortable. It is recorded that the sniggering king stuck his jeweled dagger at random in the great map of New York. "Ten good square English miles there," giggled he; "that's a farm for ye. Squire Sanders."

"Squire—" William's favorites roared with laughter. "Squire!"

"Thanks, sire," bowed Glenn, making a leg. "I trust that the soil will be rich that I may grow cabbage heads for thy court."

"Gad, thy wit will ever save thy head," chuckled William amid the dark looks of his fawning satellites.

"Wit saveth the head of a king's fool,"

retorted Glenn, "but every royal head is fastened on with justice."

It so happened that Glenn's hundred square English miles included much of the pleasant valley of Schoharie, not so very far from the frontier settlement of Schenectady, the gateway of the Indian country to the west, and the busy trading post of Albany on the North River at the end of tide. Here in a long valley, nearly two miles wide, the corn waved and rippled in the sun behind the long communal houses by the great sweet springs.

Glenn Sanders received from the Mohawk sachems a deed for his land, to supplement the English grant, paying for it with guns and trade stuffs. From the first he lived on the most friendly and intimate terms with the Schoharie Mohawks. They sold him venison and corn, beans and squashes. They tolerated the Dutch craftsmen from Schenectady who came over the hills to erect the great log manor house.

A handful of negroes in the fields, a Mohawk woman in his kitchen, a young articled clerk in the trade room, a friend or two for an occasional visit or a hunt, but otherwise alone. Glenn worked hard. Hunting a bit when necessary, fishing occasionally for pleasure. And he visited Schenectady and Albany when the desire for men of his kind became overwhelming.

And now, with Collie gone back to New York, he was lonesome enough. But things were going well with this venture in the new world. He enjoyed a sizable trade with the Indians. His crops were good. He prospered a bit. The only fault he found was with the food! Sick he was unto death of venison, nauseated with river fish, surfeited with turkey and wildfowl. Yearning, dreaming, thinking of sweet cakes and crisp white pastry, of berried tarts and hot breads—

And so, in this dark hour, what could be more welcome than a letter from Collie in New York saying that a cook was awaiting his pleasure. The letter came by way of Schenectady, with a party of Indians returning from the council fires at Onondaga, and it was five days old. A friendly, joking letter, but freighted with good news

and, had he but known it, charged with destiny itself.

"A strapping wench," wrote Collie, "skilled in pastries and breads—"

Stating the price paid and that Lord Cornbury, the governor, had been good enough to house this kitchen paragon until such time as Glenn could send for her.

"Good old Collie!" exclaimed Glenn. "I'll send for her quick enough."

He could not get away himself, but there was Seth Jestarara, one of the sachems of the Schoharie council, who would be glad to go. A Mohawk, but a man in every way was Seth. Educated in New England schools, speaking good English, wearing, for the most part, white men's clothing. Seth to the English, Jestarara to the Mohawks. With plenty of silver in his weasel-skin pouch, Seth rode away at daylight, leading a gentle mare. At Albany he would take passage on a sloop for New York.

In a few days he would be back with a cook—and trouble!

## V.

Of all the Red Indians of the Colonies, from French Canada on the north to Spanish Mexico on the south, none so far advanced, so progressed in their primitive way, as the Five Nations of the Long House. And of the Five Nations the powerful Mohawks were supreme.

Seth Jestarara was a man, a red man it is true, but a man for all of that. He was of medium height, broad and powerful, a fine featured, intelligent looking man, proud as Lucifer and as brave as the bravest. It would give him great pleasure to journey down to the big city again. He always found it interesting, although the white man's food ever sickened him. He wanted real food when he ate, strength giving corn and venison. He would bring back the white-cook-squaw as directed, but what under the shadow of the Thunder Bird's wing was the matter with Grandma Matana, one of the best venison roasters in the whole Mohawk country?

At the busy trading post of Albany, filled with stout Dutch shopkeepers, with Scotch traders and Irish settlers, overrun with Indians and their families, Seth laid over

for the night, his horses carefully stabled, until the wind gods consented to blow from another corner of their mouths and thus waft the broad sailed schooners of the white men down the stream.

An uneventful trip. Wonderful, thought Seth, lolling on the deck, how fast the white men were building their great mansions up the river. Little settlements were growing at the forest edge where the trees were falling to make grain fields.

"The white men come like rabbits in the season of plenty," thought Seth. "Some day there may not be room enough for us both."

Wonderful, too, how fast the island city was growing—bustle and tumult at the wharves crowded with shipping. Other ships anchored in the wide harbor—men o' war from England, armed privateers, shot battered prizes from the Sugar Islands and the Spanish Main.

Early the next morning Seth presented himself, with Glenn's order, at the governor's door. He was received with the greatest formality for it must be remembered that while the Long House remained neutral in this war, every English official must be careful not to hurt a sachem's feelings! Seth remained at the governor's house all the afternoon, waiting to deliver his charge aboard a north bound sloop where he had engaged passage and which would up-anchor with the tide late that evening. It was near eleven when he made ready to go.

"You'll find this servant in the back kitchen," said the governor. "I ordered her to be ready and waiting. Deliver her to Sanders with my compliments and tell him I hope she proves an excellent cook."

In this kitchen, but dimly lighted by a single candle, Seth came upon a cloaked and bundled figure. In those days when females journeyed they protected themselves from the dust, from the night air, from the weather, from sun and mosquitoes, and it was only natural that Seth should see nothing more of this woman than her bright eyes beneath a mass of traveling gear. Anyway, he didn't care how she looked, nor what she thought or did, so long as she came along peacefully and did not ask more than a thousand questions per

mile. And, peacefully or not, she was going anyway. His instructions were to bring her, and he never spoke twice to any squaw! Fully prepared, he was, to drag her up the river by her hair if she refused to go any other way.

But he had no trouble with his charge. She went with him quietly and peacefully enough, even in a bit of a hurry. He beckoned to her, the door opened, the guard saluted and they were in the street. A short walk to the wharf and the waiting sloop. And, in half an hour, with a stiff southerly breeze behind them, they were speeding up the broad river toward Albany.

There were no cabin accommodations. Seth and his charge remained on deck watching the inky sky line of wooded hills floating past between them and the stars. A bit of moon came out to look at itself in the water. They both dozed and wakened and fell asleep again.

"Oh, dearie me!" sighed the new cook after a long time.

"What say?" asked Seth sleepily, for this was the first word out of her.

"How far are we from Albany?" she asked.

"A long way yet."

"When will we arrive there?"

"To-morrow afternoon, if the wind holds."

For a time she was silent again. When she spoke it was to question about their destination.

"Where does this Glenn Sanders live?"

"At Schoharie."

"And where in Heaven's name is Schoharie?"

"A pretty little valley, encircled by low wooded mountains, about thirty leagues from Albany."

"Alas, I know naught about it—but I suppose there are people at Schoharie."

"Yes," said he, "my people."

"Oh," in surprise, "and no white folks at all?"

"Glen Sanders," for, with Seth, clerks did not count.

After another long silence—just as Seth feared—came more interrogations.

"And this man Sanders—who might he be?"

"A Scot."

"Oh," she sighed, "and to be sure, but is he an honorable man?"

"In all things I have found him so."

"And fair to those—to those, who are weak and, and in trouble?"

"Yes."

"Willing to aid one in sore distress?"

"I think so."

Though she asked no other question, Seth volunteered some additional information.

"You will find him a good master, though a bit exacting and quick spoken. But, be not alarmed, madam, a good cook knows the shortest way to the master's favor."

"Alas," she sighed, "then I am foredoomed!"

## VI.

GLENN SANDERS was supervising the packing of dried skins into canvas bales for transportation to Albany and thence to London. There were five bales of Indian dressed deerskins; ten bales of deer skins in the hair; four of bear; and several miscellaneous, including musquash, mink and martin. In the midst of this task, Seth Jestarara rode up to the manor house, as a man should, the woman following.

"Greetings," in the Indian tongue. "I bring your woman."

"My cook," corrected Glenn. "Glad you made it so well."

"It wasn't all so well."

"No?"

"It's none of my affair," continued Seth in Mohawk, "now that this she-cat is delivered safely to thy hands—"

"But—but—" exclaimed Glenn, "you've got the poor woman tied on her horse!"

"Yes, indeed I have! And until we were safely in the great forest I had her hands tied also."

"Trussed up like a calf to market!"

"Aye, and let me warn you. This kitchen slave is as full of trouble as an evil spirit. Three times in Albany she tried to get away."

"She did, eh!"

"And if she were my wife—"

"Cook!"

"I'd beat her every day until the devils left her!"

"If she doesn't behave herself here there will be remedies."

"And you best watch her day and night."

"I'll take care of her, no fear. She'll soon learn who's master here."

Glenn Sanders strode forward to assist the bundle of wretchedness to alight.

"Welcome," said he, cutting the ropes, "to our wilderness."

She did not answer, merely tumbling from the horse into his arms.

"Matan," called Glenn. "Help this new servant to her quarters."

The aged Mohawk came out of the kitchen and assisted the new cook into the house while Glenn Sanders turned again to his task in the yard.

"She tried first to bribe me with a gold bracelet," continued Seth, "saying she had friends in Albany."

"Sick of her bargain already," answered Glenn, "wishing she was back in one of those filthy hovels near the bridge."

"Then she began to threaten."

"A woman's weapon."

"After that she ran away. I was hard put to find her the last time."

In this manner Seth related all the essentials of his journey, while the skins were being aired and brushed before packing. Glenn was all the afternoon at the task and the bales were no more than roped and lettered when Matana summoned him to the evening meal.

Dinner and a new cook, forsooth!

White man's food, assuredly this would be a meal and his appetite ready for it, too! Perhaps even a cake—hot bread and pastry anyway. He washed with haste by the spring and hurried indoors.

Disappointment crushed him at first sight of the table. It stood there as ever with the old familiar load of roast venison, corn johnnycakes, spitted wildfowl. And beside the table was the old Mohawk woman alone to wait upon him as usual.

"Where," he asked in Mohawk, "is the new cook?"

"Your wife is—"

"Wife!" followed by a harsh Mohawk expletive. "That bundle of feminine wretchedness is no wife of mine."

"No?"

"Nor ever will be," firmly. "My slave—for the next twenty years."

"Wives are often slaves," she answered softly.

"I know naught about it, never having had any nor hope to have. But why isn't this servant at her tasks?"

"She preferred to keep her room."

"Oh, G' my life!" his voice began to raise in mixed English and Mohawk, requiring extra strength for expression. "Prefers to keep her room—her room, indeed! A lady o' th' blood; gentry come visiting. Oh, blister me proper if that isn't rich for a slave girl!" louder and louder as his anger grew. "Go you this instant, and drag that scullion, that *jille de chambre* from her hiding place and bid her dance attendance at my table!"

An angry gesture was sufficient to interpret these words to the aged Mohawk woman. She was gone a long time, while the venison cooled in its rich gravy, and the yellow corn pone dried on its wooden platter. It was evident that Matana was not dragging any one out, no sound of a struggle, while Glenn Sanders, glowering darkly across the table, drummed loudly with his knife, hot words boiling within.

He'd put this intolerable kitchen wench in her place. He'd tell her mighty quick what was expected of her in this house. Her room when she pleased, eh—b' th' Lord Harry.

He was lashing himself into a fine frenzy as the door of the hallway opened slowly and a woman entered. Her velvet slippers made no sound on the hardwood floor. She visualized before his startled eyes like an apparition out of the dark. And so she stood, framed in the doorway, the soft candlelight falling like a golden radiance upon her.

Glenn Sanders was stricken dumb and motionless, if not blind. Then, as the young woman before him made no move, he rose slowly to his booted feet, as one does not rise to greet a servant; his staring eyes fixed upon her white face.

"Who—who are you?" he demanded.

"Thy servant, milord," with a deep curtsy.

The tone of her voice, rich and full, fell

upon his ears with a touch of banter, a note of sarcasm.

"What play-acting is this?" as he noted her cheap linsey-woolen gown, wherein a jewel sparkled, her silken hose and velvet shoes.

"The rôle, I believe, is that of slave girl."

Before him a tall, well-built young woman, though in the coarse dress of a domestic, white chin up-tilted bravely, looked him over with ill-concealed curiosity and contempt. Not at all the kind of woman servants are made of. There was about her, standing there, a natural wistfulness, a bit of bravo and courage, very strange among women of that day and age.

"My servant?" still puzzled.

"Thy humble and, I trust, obedient servant, milord."

Not at all the kind of a girl that would ship herself out of England to be sold for her passage money. He was fumbling with the indenture papers in his pocket.

"So you're this Martha Ball Collie bought for me in New York?"

"It reads that way in the bond, I believe."

A bit impertinent—he'd know more about this—if Collie was up to another of his jokes.

"What part of England are you from and who are your people?"

"If I told, you'd know as much as I."

"I mean to know!"

"Thy thirst for knowledge does thee credit, sir."

"I'll find out more about you and what you've been up to."

"You have, I believe, according to the indenture papers, purchased the next twenty years of my life—"

"To do with as I please," he interrupted.

"But you have not, nor can you buy, my past."

"'Tis true," he admitted grudgingly; "unfortunately a man cannot buy the past of any woman. But I mean to know something of thy history."

"Oh, you will, sir, I promise!"

"And I like not the tone of thy voice, miss."

"Nor do I particularly care for the shape of your nose, milord."

"Ho!" he snorted. "Ha!"

"Hum!" she mimicked.

"A bit impertinent and insolent for a bonded servant."

"Does it read in the document that I must stand here answering thy fool questions?"

"You're to do whatever I tell you to do," sternly, "and answer civilly when spoken to—an indentured servant is no more than a slave."

"Every slave can escape from a cruel master," smiled she.

"Seth tells me you have already tried that—try it again and I'll clap an iron collar on thy neck and have thee flogged."

"Death frees them all," said she.

"And death it will be, I warn ye, and you try the wilderness route alone."

"Best that you watch me," she warned.

"I shall, have no fear o' that."

"And now, milord, that the profound mysteries of my past, present, and future have been revealed and made clear by my intelligent answers to your questions, what would you with me?"

He stood there, bested, staring at her, seeing that she was very tired.

"Nothing," dismissing her with a gesture. "Tell Matana to give you food."

## VII.

THE mental picture of this strange woman in his house did not leave Glenn Sanders when the door closed behind her. Long, long after she had gone her enigmatic face and figure lived and moved in his thoughts, her words rang in his ears. Linsey-woolen gown and silken hose! A cheap ribbon at her throat and velvet shoes! A bit of gold on a finger never coarsened by kitchen work. What manner of servant was this he had bought for fifty pounds?

Impossible—incredible—and yet the crackling documents in his pocket attested that she belonged to him. For twenty years this Martha Ball would have to serve him for nothing to gain her freedom. Dark eyes seemingly too large for her white oval face, beauty there if ever fear and anxiety would leave—his, for twenty years!

For a long time Glenn was busy with

these cross-current and enigmatic thoughts, over his pipe before the evening fire. He who had lived apart from all women for so long now had this young maid thrust upon him by the fates.

A hundred things he imagined, this and that about her, but no nearer a solution than before. And when the image of her began to fade from memory, like some powerful stimulant wearing away and leaving behind an insatiable thirst for more, he wandered kitchenward, but she was not there. He made petty excuses to visit other rooms. Through the upper halls he paced, halting a brief instant before a door, beneath which a bar of light gleamed, but went on again.

After a little he went outdoors and watched for a long time until the slender moon dropped out of sight behind the western hills, taking with it all the pale light from the sky, so that no one could hope to find his way out of the valley unless perfectly familiar with the country and its maze of trails.

"She'd go if she could," he told himself. "I could see it in her eyes."

All the remainder of that night he tossed restlessly on his blankets and was plagued with dreams, so that once he thought he heard a woman sobbing outside in the darkness. So realistic this dream that he got up and called from the open window. But there was naught but the deep silence of the night, augmented, and not relieved, by the melancholy murmur of a tiny owl, by the distant baying of wolves at their nocturnal hunt and the clamor of wild fowl in the near-by river.

And so Glenn Sanders came down to breakfast the next morning with his eyes a bit red and his temper far from the best. He was cheered and comforted, however, by the thought that now he would see this new servant by the broad light of day and judge whether or not the candlelight had been playing him tricks. He expected, of course, a fine English breakfast on the table and the girl there to serve him.

His tired eyes swept table and room with disappointment. Instantly his tongue began to shape harsh words—venison steak, rye coffee, cold goose, corn pone! And the new servant nowhere in sight or sound. He



was about to summon Matana when the curtain to the right moved and the maid entered.

"Oh, hello," said he.

"G'morn', milord," with a deep curtsy.

Glenn Sanders noted, or imagined he did, a bit of lightness in her words, the faint shadow of a smile upon her red lips.

"Good morning," said he with an effort.

Looking into her face and not at her coarse outer garments he forgot, for an instant, that she was a servant and was at the point of bowing her to a seat before he caught himself.

"If—if there is aught that you require in the kitchen," he began lamely, "to prepare a little real food for a white man you shall have it."

"Oh," said she, "I doubt me not there is all I can manage."

The morn confirmed what the night had merely hinted—there was history, as well as mystery, back of all this. A servant, a household drudge, a pot scourer, with the air of the court. Of a surety his servant and yet, and yet— Glenn Sanders had seen plenty of these indentured females before and they all looked their part, each and every one. Big, broad-beamed, coarse country girls, ignorant and unlettered, inured to hard work in house and fields and barns, heavy handed and thick of wrist. Or else city drudges, starved and overworked, hard drinking and hard living, induced by drunken sailors to try a new life in a new world.

None of these, and yet—Collie was the very devil with his jokes! It would be quite like him, if he could, to pick up some clever courtesan, a street hussy, and ship her up to him labeled cook. He'd laugh over it in every coffee house on two continents. Still and all, this maid lacked the bold look, the brazen and foul tongue, of such a Jezebel.

A fine mystery, an enigma, a riddle, but he'd read it soon. Women had never puzzled him long. Any of them, if given a bit of time, would tell all they knew in short order. This secret would out, else he knew not the sex, for the gateway of a woman's tongue, as Seth said, is never closed or guarded.

"I do hope your breakfast suits you, sir," she smiled as though teasing him.

"Oh, perfectly. One grows rather used to it after a few years."

"A lump o' tree sugar for thy coffee, sir?"

"Two lumps," studying her.

"And shall I get some cream?"

"Nay," he grinned, "that would be asking too much of any servant—the nearest cow being in Schenectady."

She laughed, but hastily smothered it, biting her nether lip, before Glenn's dark look. He felt that she was making fun of him and his wilderness life.

"You'll learn, miss, ere your bond is worked out in this wild country, to do without many of the luxuries you no doubt helped yourself freely to from other masters."

"Oh, la—"

"And for the cream of thy poor jest I'll get me a cow," he promised, "if only for the amusement afforded by watching you milk her."

"That will be funny!"

Came a noisy thumping in the hallway as Master Samuel Sawyer, Glenn's article clerk, came down to breakfast. A little lame fellow, with a twisted leg, using a heavy stick.

"Martha," began Glenn, "this is Sammy, who looks after the store and the books."

They each smiled a sympathetic greeting.

"And by to-night, Sammy," more than a hint in the master's voice, "when Martha has become better acquainted with the kitchen, doubtless we shall enjoy a special dinner with a bit of pastry."

"Devoutly to be hoped so," agreed Sammy.

"I'm afraid not," sighed the girl.

"And why not?" asked Glenn.

"Well," she confessed reluctantly, "because I have yet to learn how to make one."

"Then a bit of cake—"

"Nor cake either."

"Some berry tarts, perhaps—"

"'Twould be no more than an experiment, sir."

"Well, 's death, girl," a bit angry, "what in Heaven's name can you cook?"

"Nothing," frankly.

"Nothing!"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Body o' me!" In a loud voice. "What kind o' a cook be ye?"

"Alas, I am no cook."

"No cook," astounded. "Well, well—rich, if it isn't! A fine joke that Collie has put upon me."

"It's no joke at all," said she shyly. "I do hope you won't be angry at your friend, milord, because 'twas I that fooled him."

"Women are always fooling him!" emphatically. "You did me proper, too, let me say. Fifty pounds out o' hand for a cook and look ye what I get!"

"Oh," she exclaimed. "I never thought about that!"

"Dwell upon it and welcome."

"You have been badly imposed upon, sir," staring hard at him. "Fifty pounds—you paid for Martha Ball."

"No less!"

Even while she was talking she was twisting a large jeweled ring from her finger and now she sent it rolling its sparkling way across the table toward him.

"I believe, milord, that you will find that bauble sufficient to reimburse you for any pecuniary loss I may have caused your slender purse."

"Aye, but my purse will stand it," sullenly, "if my stomach may not."

"And if you love your stomach so well," she retorted, "best buy another cook at once."

Head high she walked out of the room.

"Blister me!" ejaculated Glenn Sanders, staring after her. "If this isn't most too much!"

### VIII.

GLENN SANDERS scalded his tongue with hot coffee. His appetite dropped away as his temper mounted. He jumped up with an oath, kicking his chair aside, and hurried outdoors. Out there he dashed from one thing to another, accomplishing nothing, in a fine fit of temper.

Finally he stalked indoors again and began to quill an ink-spattered letter of indignation to Collie. A French phrase—best

not translated—bothered him in the spelling—he chewed the feathered end of the pen; he thrust his left fist into his breeches pocket, and drew out the ring! It was of fine gold, chased and filigreed in the best Italian craftsmanship and set with three fine, well-cut stones.

"Off the finger of a serving wench!" he exclaimed in derision. "Selling herself for her passage; into slavery for twenty years, and a ring on her finger worth the price of a sloop!"

Thief—the finger this ring has slipped from, as he had noted, was not that of a servant. *Fille de joie!* But the wilderness is no place to sell love! A thousand thoughts, and none of them pleasant, raced through his troubled mind, to be interrupted presently by joyous laughter and cheerful voices issuing from the dining hall beyond. Sammy and this new servant were getting along famously! Glenn tried to stifle a hot wave of resentment, perhaps even of jealousy, as he overheard:

"Oh, I have heard of Schoharie," laughed the girl, "though I was never able to spell it, and I supposed it really was a village."

"It is little more than scenery," answered Sammy.

"I thought surely there were white people here, women and children, stores and churches."

"Red women and their children."

"It is all so unexpected and strange, so very amusing, though a mad adventure. And my master, oh, ha, ha, ha, ha—"

"Allowances must be made," for Sammy was loyal; "he isn't quite himself to-day."

"Trying to frighten me with black looks and roaring voice—"

"It is not his natural manner—"

"He doth so amuse me—ha, ha, ha!"

"If I did not know that it was quite impossible," said Sammy, "I would say that he acts very like a man in love—"

This last raised Glenn bodily from his chair, dashing his quill to the floor as he strode across the hallway and into the dining room.

"Back to your tasks and your books!" leveling a threatening forefinger at poor Sammy, as though to run him through. "You've work to do there—go and do it."

Sammy muttered something apologetical as he grabbed his cane and went limping away as fast as he could go.

"And you, you—"

"What, milord?"

"You laughing fool!"

"Aye, milord," she smiled. "I have played the fool."

"Back to your pots and pans."

"Is it a crime, then, to laugh in this house?"

"You'll find it a bit unhealthy to laugh at me."

"But rather difficult not to," with a smile, "especially when you begin to puff up with conceit, to blow and bluster—"

"Woman!"

"I make no secret that your high-handed and overbearing manner pleases me no better than my cookery pleases you."

"Indeed!"

"I toss the fact in your face, sir. And now that I have paid you in full for all that you have lost on account of me, I demand that you send me out of this wilderness back to Albany and civilization."

"And do you imagine that I will do that?"

"I do indeed, and if you do not you will soon be sorry."

"You forget the trifling matter of your name on certain papers of indenture."

"My name, sir?"

"Aye, and an indentured slave cannot even purchase freedom without the consent of the master. And I refuse to accept the jewelry which you probably stole."

"Stole, milord?"

"How else would a servant come by such a valuable bauble?"

"Oh," biting her lips, "I didn't think you would be so unfair as to construe it that way."

"How else would I think?"

"But thinking until your head aches will not prove I stole it!"

"Enough! Back to the kitchen where you belong. See if you can learn to do something worth while, even if for the first time in your life."

"Are you ordering me to do this?"

"Nothing else!"

"And if I refuse—"

"Then I shall flog you with my riding whip!"

So angry by this time, he really meant it as he snatched a rawhide from a near-by chair.

She stood before him, wide of eye and quite as angry as he, a challenge in every line of her splendid figure.

"I dare you to!" firmly and bravely.

"Flog me with your riding whip, indeed! You king's pawn exiled into this wilderness and reverting back to savagery. Had I known the fate that waited me here I would have jumped into the river on the way up."

The fact that she knew his history and dared to cast it into his face astounded and unnerved him.

"I wish t' God you had!" hoarsely.

He cast the whip upon the floor and stamped angrily toward the door, only to turn and throw the ring upon the littered breakfast table.

"Keep that until the rightful owner demands it."

"The rightful owner demands it now," picking it up and slipping it back upon her finger.

"You were in the governor's mansion, and if you have taken other things I shall hear of it."

"Oh, you'll hear soon enough!"

"And have you no fear of the jail?"

"What else is this house in the wilderness but a prison to me?"

Though he knew it not, at the time Glenn's wrath was born of the very fear that through some trick or other, something he did not comprehend or understand, she would soon be lost to him in spite of the bond. He knew that she would run away if she could, he feared that any hour an officer might ride up and demand her body for theft.

"There is freedom in this country," said he slowly—"such freedom as was never known in England or in all Europe. I have no mind to hold you to the strict letter of your bond, so long as you treat me fairly. You will not find me a hard master if you prove to be a faithful servant."

She stood there looking at him, watching the anger fade slowly out of his eyes.

"But if you want trouble, miss, you shall have it, and I will find a way to curb your daring insolence and to quiet your slashing tongue."

For a little space her fair head was bowed before his searching glance.

"You have bought more trouble than you think with your ill invested money, milord," looking up at him sadly. "Let's not add to your general distress with silly quarrels and useless quibbles. Leave be, and while I am here I shall try to earn my keep and be of some small service in thy house."

Saying which she turned and ran kitchenward, leaving him standing there more puzzled than ever.

### IX.

EVEN the best told and best acted falsehoods require an excellent memory and a very clever tongue to live. Nothing is so easily betrayed as a lie and nothing slips off the lip so easily as the truth. So, thinking himself very subtle and clever, Glenn tried to get this girl to betray her past by adroit questionings and complicated mental tests. He endeavored to read this riddle through subtle interrogation and by encouraging her to talk about herself.

Here was a woman, a young and beautiful woman (linsey-woolen, silk, and velvet!) a redemptioner, a slave girl (manners worthy of the court!) softly and gently spoken in words well chosen (certainly learned in no kitchen!) and free from the all but unintelligible dialect of rural England or the horrid colloquialisms of the tenantry near the Tower. So at every meal, as she stood by to serve him, he tried his verbal tricks and fired his broadsides of questions against the armor of her silence.

"Where did you say your home was in England?"

"Why, did I say?"

"Perhaps not, but I was a bit curious."

"Most men are, sir, and better natured if one keeps them that way."

"You have a great deal of wisdom or experience with men."

"Perhaps both, sir."

"Should you care to send some word to your family or friends, I have letters going

out to-morrow and will write a word or two for you."

"Thanks, but I can write myself when necessary."

"Oh," said he, having trapped her into this, "serving girls seem to be better educated than when I knew England."

"Were you so well acquainted with them then, sir?"

"Egad now!" He darkened at this thrust. "What mean you by that taunt?"

But she only laughed.

"Ah, that London," watching her closely. "more than half a million people in a single city—the jostling, noisy streets, gay with life and noisy with busy folk—"

"Streets that are much too narrow, sir."

Evidently she knew the town!

"Aye, to be sure, especially down by the bridge. But they were laid out before coaches were invented."

"Alas, and the shops," sighed she, "with all their finery and things to tempt the purse. I wonder shall we ever see their like in this far country?"

"I make no doubt," said he.

And then, forgetting the object of his reminiscing, he rambled on and on, talking about London and the England he had known, about himself and his past, and getting no nearer a solution of the mystery than ever before.

"Does not such memory make thee homesick?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "but occasionally I do sigh for my old haunts and my old friends."

He looked up and saw the dancing lights in her dark eyes, the shadow of a smile on her full red lips, and knew that she was laughing at him, reading his ill concealed purpose, conscious that he had been disclosing his past, and not she!

"A plague on it!" he exclaimed, jumping up. "What care I who ye be or whence you come?"

"Why should you care?"

"I don't. You are a woman, young, well favored, spirited, and that in itself is sufficient."

Now was he standing before her, a man starving for love and affection, for the soft touch of a woman's hands, looking down

into the deep, hypnotic depths of her anxious eyes. Words flooded to his tongue, but the voice that sounded them was not his voice.

"Thou art my servant, but first of all thou art a woman!"

"That has ever been my misfortune, sir."

"But my good fortune!"

"I have often wished I were a man—but never more so than at this very moment. Then would I answer you as you deserve for such forwardness."

"You are a woman—my woman," laughed he nervously. "Mine—all mine!"

"Not all, milord. You have not bought my heart nor my soul, nor that within which is really me."

"I have bought enough!"

He came slowly toward her, more tenderly than bold, more the cavalier than the master.

"Have care," she warned. "Though but a woman, you will find me a dangerous one."

"They all are," he smiled, "one way or another."

Her groping right hand behind her had found a sharp steel knife on the table. With this in her tiny fist she faced him bravely.

"I shall not hesitate to use it," she warned.

"Body o' me, I believe you'd stick me!"

Another step, and she lunged at him savagely, but his right hand darted out and seized her slender wrist. A brief struggle, in which he found her far stronger than he imagined, writhing and twisting in his arms. She struck him in the face with her clenched fist, a swinging blow that left its stinging mark; fighting with all the indomitable courage of a wolverine, regardless of the odds against her. She kicked and struck out and actually bit his hand until the blood streamed.

"You little devil, you!"

But this display of temper and courage, fully matching his own, won his admiration and respect.

"Cease," pushing her from him. "Quiet now, lest I be forced to strike thee."

"Don't you dare touch me!" she panted.

"Aroused sufficiently, I shall not hesitate to plunge a knife in your back or to put poison in your food at the first opportunity."

For a time he stood there watching her admiringly.

"I believe you quite capable of it," said he. "I am ashamed, if not frightened."

His head bowed, he turned and left her.

## X.

SAMMY reported that the girl was ill of a humor, the megrims, or some such strange malady peculiar to females, nor would she leave her chamber for any command or threat of Glenn's. For two days he did not see her and missed her more than he cared to own.

So Matana cooked his wild meat and made succotash and spawn in the Indian fashion, and Glenn ate and glowered, and promised himself to do this and do that—

He did nothing!

The third day Martha was about the house again, a little more white and wan of face, but still herself once more. By now, it must be confessed, Glenn was quite as much interested in her future as her past. The fact that for fifty pounds he had bought a servant who had never served, a cook who knew nothing about cookery, did not worry him at all. The certainty that she had run away from somewhere, from somebody, because of something, was all a great mystery which began to sink slowly into insignificance before the more important question of how soon he might lose her.

Therefore he was not at all surprised when the stout high sheriff of Albany, mounting a sorry white nag, with four armed deputies to heel, rode up to the manor house just before noon. Glenn knew, without being told, that red-sealed documents of seizure were hidden in the inner pocket of the sheriff's old blue riding coat.

"Ah-hah, Mr. Sanders," greeted the moon-faced official as he rode into the yard. "A good day t' ye, an' health, sir."

"Same to you, old law-and-order," a sinking within his breast. This young woman a thief! To be taken away from

him, out of his house! "Dismount and come in." He could do no less. And yet, and yet, guilty though she might be, he was of no mind to see her go without protest. "Bivouac your infantry in the kitchen."

A wide chair and a tall glass for the sheriff in the office. It would not do for Glenn to appear too anxious about this official call. He needed time to think!

"A pleasant place you have here, friend Sanders," boomed the sheriff, "though a bit in back an' lonesome at times."

"Pleasant enough," admitted Glenn, "and I am not lonesome."

"No?" over the emptied glass. "Comfortable here at least."

"After a fashion."

Let whatever had gone into his ears, thought Glenn, come out of his mouth when ready. The rotund sheriff set down the empty glass and nodded his heavy head kitchenward.

"I see you've been gettin' a new servant," said he.

Ah, now it was out, and, as Glenn suspected, did have to do with this Martha Ball.

"A redemptioner," he explained. "One purchased in New York for me by a friend."

"Quite so," mysteriously. "Quite so."

"I needed a cook."

"Oh, ha-hah-ahaahaha!"

"One tires of wild game and maize after a bit."

"True enough," chuckled the sheriff, much to Glenn's bewilderment. "I'll warrant you've been livin' high th' last few days!"

"No one lives very high in this wilderness."

"It would be a rare treat t' stay t' dinner," garulfed the sheriff. "A new cook—cakes and pastries—and me famishing after jolting over that hard trail since daylight."

The frontier code demanded that he invite the sheriff to dinner, though he hated to do it.

"Of course you'll stay, but I can't promise you much."

"No matter," chuckled the other. "I

await th' meal with pleasure, and will soon take its measure."

The sheriff emptied another glass while they discussed affairs of the colony, the news at Albany, everything but the business that brought that official to Schoharie. Glenn knew that this was the very first day that Martha Ball had ever attempted to cook anything, and he hated to see her shamed before company, but there seemed to be no help for it.

The table was nicely laid with a cloth, with china and silver, and looked quite the proper thing. The roasts, a wild turkey and a haunch of venison, were as usual, but the rest of the dinner was—well, it was just what one could expect of a beginner.

"These biscuits, now," began Glenn, passing them—"they seem nice and brown—"

Truth was, they were hard and tough. Something evidently of vital importance had been neglected in their origin.

"Ho!" exclaimed the sheriff, trying to break one. "If this thing should happen to fall on the plate—"

"Sh-h!" warned Glenn as Martha entered.

"Ah-h!" ejaculated the sheriff under his breath. "A comely lass, as I live!"

"Not bad to the eye."

"Though a demmed rotten cook," added the sheriff; "if I must say it in thy presence."

"You mustn't," warned Glenn.

"Take these biscuits now—"

"Take two," said Glenn, his anger mounting. "They're the finest in all Schoharie!"

"Aye, yes, but—"

"Note well the rich brown color of them and the appetizing fragrance—"

"And the heft—"

"Sirrah!" cried Glenn, leaning angrily across the board. "You do insult me and at mine own table!"

"Now, Glenn, now—"

"Men ha' died for less!"

"You know yourself, Glenn—"

But Glenn was now in a fine temper.

"Help yourself liberally to those biscuits," hoarsely, as he whipped out a short-barreled pistol and presented it to the sher-

iff's bulbous nose. "Eat hearty—a liberal helping to that delicious bread."

"What—what's this, man—"

"A pistol."

"But, but—"

"A little appetizer."

"You dare to threaten me?"

"Worse—I dare to shoot you!"

Glenn's reputation along this line had followed him across the wide ocean. The sheriff ate. He helped himself to the biscuit—to the soggy bread. With the pistol back in his pocket, but ready to hand, Glenn plied his unwelcome guest with food. He forced upon him, and down him, a round half dozen of the amateur biscuits. He fairly wadded him with the dough bread and a flint-hard tart or two.

"Enough," gasped the officer, "though I die for it!"

"I do hope you have enjoyed this meal, sir," dropping his hand back into his pocket as Martha entered.

"It—it's one of the largest meals I ever ate!"

"You do so honor us, sir."

Then, as the girl went out again, the sheriff mopped his damp face with a blue hanker, jolting a shower of crumbs from his wrinkled front, and exclaimed:

"I didn't come up here to poison myself."

"No?"

"So put up that pistolet, Glenn, an' let's get down to business."

## XI.

"You've been rigged proper, Glenn."

"Most like."

"And by a woman."

"Nothing so very strange about that—it has happened before."

"You've been imposed upon."

"Oh, often!"

The high sheriff was pacing the floor, his thick hands under his coat-tails, a heavy dinner under his bulging waistcoat, conscious that he had a difficult task before him with a man in no mood to be trifled with. Right now his legal business needed more diplomacy than dragoons, more caution than any show of authority.

"You know yourself, Glenn, that wench's no cook."

"Oh, she'll learn in time."

"Not in a hundred years!" rubbing his middle. "Some women have a perfect genius for spoiling good foodstuffs an' she's one of 'em."

"There's plenty of other work around here."

"You've been cheated in this, Glenn, and I'm here to take her off'n your hands."

"Thanks for your interest," smiled Glenn, "but you've had a long ride for your pains."

"Don't be a fool, Glenn."

"No help for it when the mood is on me."

"I'll pay every cent you've got invested in her and a bit more."

"There is not money enough in the province to buy her!"

What he really meant was that he wouldn't be intimidated for any sum, but the sheriff read a different meaning in his words.

"So-ho," he leered, "so that's th' way th' wind blows, eh?"

"If you, or any one else, thinks that just because this lass is comely you can come here and bargain for her like a filly—"

"Well, if money won't do the trick how about the law?" His voice rising. "Cast your eye on that!" tossing a warrant before Glenn. "There's th' necessary documents to take her with me whether you like it or not!"

Glenn's voice, too, began to lift at this threat.

"And let me acquaint you with the fact, Mr. Sheriff, that I have the legal papers in my pocket that say she is mine, my servant, my slave, duly bought and paid for, until she has worked out her redemption to the last farthing."

The sheriff's warrant crackled loudly in Glenn's shaking fingers as he opened it. Here, he thought, was the answer to all this puzzling circumstance. He read, but, instead of a solution, mystery was piled on mystery. Authority for the high sheriff of Albany to recover from one Glenn Sanders a maid servant answering to the name of Martha Ball. No hint of any crime, no



reason why—and down at the bottom the scrawling signature of the governor himself!

"Why should Lord Cornbury be interested in so small a matter as my servant?"

"I'm sure I don't know and, furthermore, I don't care. That's authority t' come here an' get her an' now I'll be starting back with her."

"I take it, from your presumptuous speech, that so far in your official life there have been no disappointments and no failures."

"I always get what I goes after," boastfully, "an' no one dares defy th' law."

"Be prepared for thy first disillusionment," said Glenn. "And if I mistake not this signature it will be a bitter one."

"Ho—you dare stand ag'in' th' law!"

"This redemptioner is my property and this house is my castle, and I shall guard both with all my strength and with my very life."

"You're inviting trouble, sir."

"An old friend," with a smile, "and often with me. I stand upon my rights."

"There ain't no rights," grunted the sheriff, "when th' governor wills!"

## XII.

To go back without the maid, as the sheriff well knew, was to have his official ears filled with strong language and, mayhap, be snatched out of his soft berth besides.

"Ha-a-a-ar!" angrily. "You'll get yourself into a fine mess o' trouble."

"Most like," grimly, "I often do."

"Some one mighty high up wants that lass."

"I suspect as much."

"An' they'll stop at nothin' to get her, too."

"I will go as far, or further, to keep her!"

"Stickin' your head into a noose—"

"Let be," warned Glenn. "I'll select mine own neckwear, though it be of hemp."

"You're a demmed obstinate devil, Glenn—"

"Other folk have said as much whose opinions I valued higher."

"There's th' warrant," slapping it on the table before him, "and I've men here to enforce it."

He stamped to the kitchen door and called loudly to the officer in charge. They came crowding in, the four of them.

"Ready with your pieces, boys," ordered the sheriff.

Helmed and corseted in English steel the four men eased their heavy musketoon to the ready.

"Blow up your matches!"

The lighted matches were hurriedly puffed into glowing coals.

"Guard your priming pans!"

He had no doubt but this show of force would be sufficient for the occasion.

"Now Mr. Sanders," bellowed the sheriff, with his men back of him, "will ye listen to reason?"

"St. Gris!" exclaimed Glenn with a laugh. "I am flattered by the armed force you deem necessary to properly awe me into submission."

"An' now, my fine fellow, you can have all the trouble you want."

"I want so little 'twould hardly pay to cut the piece!"

The sheriff turned to his men:

"Search this house—"

But Glenn Sanders stepped between them and the curtained kitchen doorway.

"Not so fast—" he began.

Came a low voice behind the curtain:

"Don't--don't let them take me back."

Pleading instead of the old defiance.

"The man who takes this woman from me," warned Glenn, as his blade whistled free from its protective scabbard, "must reach beyond my sword point and any law that would seek her out must be prepared to follow me into the lawless wilderness."

Glenn was by now sufficiently aroused for any madness, yet he was but biding for time, because even in his anger he knew that a man armed with sword and pistol has no chance against four muskets at close range loaded with swan shot and slugs.

"Stand aside, Glenn," ordered the sheriff. "I'd hate t' see you shot down for a stubborn fool."

For a few minutes Glenn stood there, weighing in his mind every chance of a

swift attack. But even as the soldiers raised their pieces the curtain behind him moved and into the room came the girl.

"What do you want with me?" she demanded.

"Why, miss," stammered the sheriff, "I've my orders, I have, to come an' get you."

"I refuse to go!"

"I wasn't of a mind to ask your consent, miss."

"Nor shall you take me."

She lifted the curtain and into the room filed ten young Schoharie warriors fully armed with rifles, tomahawks and scalping knives.

"What's this—" began Glenn in surprise.

"If there is to be any fighting, my brother," answered Seth Henry in his mellow tongue, "we desire above all things to share it with you."

Before these armed and terror-inspiring savages the four soldiers lowered their pieces hurriedly and fell back in alarm. Even the pompous sheriff began to sweat and to stammer. He knew that he was out-manuevered, puffing out his fat cheeks and blowing noisily through his nose.

"You'll hear from me again," he promised.

"I am afraid so."

"This here's rebellion, rank treason, defiance o' th' law, an' th' governor shall hear o' it."

"It shall be your sole pleasure to tell him."

With Glenn's words the officer stamped out of the house and to horse. From a safe distance he turned and bellowed back over his shoulder:

"I'll be back with th' law and armed men t' enforce it, you damned backwoods savage, you!"

But Glenn Sanders did not even hear this threat, remembering with joy that this warrant did not accuse Martha Ball of theft—it merely authorized the sheriff to seize her and bring her back to New York. A mystery, a puzzling confusion about this, growing ever more intricate and confounding. Some one wanted her, he could only guess why, perhaps even the gross governor himself. She had, somehow, slipped through

their lustful fingers, and Glenn well knew the fate of such female redemptionists. Martha Ball might not be any cook at all, the poorest of servants, but still she deserved a better fate than that. Glenn Sanders had given his word and his bond to provide for her, to protect her and care for her, and he meant to do it. The idea of any one, even the governor, forcing his hand was repugnant, stirring up hidden Scotch animosity and stubbornness.

"Let no man think he can scare me out of what is legally mine," he declared.

In this dark mood he passed out into the yard where the young warriors were laughing and talking.

"How did you happen here in the nick of time?" he asked.

"Matana came, your woman sent her," explained Henry.

Back to the living room where he found the girl watching from a window.

"So you do not want to get away so badly after all?" said he.

"Not that way!"

"And yet you do not want to stay here?"

"Why, milord, I am content."

"Serving maid!" in derision. "You are a better play-actor."

"And a terrible cook, sir."

"A very good dinner," he outraged truth; "the sheriff did eat o'er much of it."

"He did, 'tis true," she sighed, "preferring to die of a cramp rather than a slug in his vitals!"

Glenn flushed, but he could not answer.

"And, milord, may I ask why thy doublet pockets do so bulge?"

"It's—it's nothing," scowled he. "I have things in my pockets."

"Biscuits!" tearfully.

His face grew even redder.

"And I saw thee feeding my tarts to the dogs!"

No answer.

"But I'll do better with a little practice, sir, if you can manage to survive that long." Glenn sought refuge from his confusion in teasing her.

"Perhaps," frowning darkly, "I'd ha' done better to let the sheriff take thee."

"Please—"

"It would be a relief from your impertinence."

"But you do exasperate me so!"

"And your chronic willfulness."

"Please—don't send me back. I'll work, I'll slave, I'll do better with this damned cookery—"

"Oh-o, a swear word!"

"If that word offends it is good you were not present when I was struggling with those sticky messes."

"I know," said he, "I tried it!"

For a time he stood there looking at her, studying her face, unable to understand.

"I demand to know," he began, "just what you did down there in the governor's house to warrant this invasion of my home by the law."

"Oh," said she, "I did enough."

"Out with it!" he cried. "This thing has puzzled me long enough."

"Well, for one thing"—he failed to note the hidden laughter bubbling in her voice—"I threw a book at his head!"

"A book—"

"'Twas the second volume of Higgensworth's 'Last Moments With the Martyrs.'"

"You might ha' killed th' man with such a heavy book."

"It did fair take the breath out of him, sounding his middle."

"But why—"

"Because he threw 'he History of Greece' at me first."

"But what was this leather bound duel all about?"

"All about a black spider!" she laughed and ran out of the room.

### XIII.

MYSTERY fattens on silence, develops best in the dark and thrives mightily on unanswerable questions. It is very like something growing slowly in the brain, gradually crowding out all other thoughts, filling the mind entirely with solutions, with theories and explanations.

A comely, well-bred woman who chooses to be a slave; rare and expensive jewelry on a serving girl's finger; a red sealed warrant signed by the governor! Who could

explain this? And every day additional incidents helped to make the mysterious all the more inexplicable.

Collie had sailed for England with a convoyed fleet. Other letters that Glenn dispatched to New York never reached their destination and, inasmuch as there was no postal service, and these billets had to be intrusted to the hats and pockets of sloop captains, this was not so strange.

The high sheriff would be back, no doubt of it, but not until word could pass from Albany to New York. Glenn reasoned that he was within the law and even the governor would not dare go too far in this effort to seize a serving girl. Bribery, trickery, chicanery, anything he might attempt except to carry the matter into the open courts and the white light of publicity. And there was also the chance that the strong arm of the English law was reaching across the wide ocean for this girl!

What the sheriff would do next, Glenn could only guess. Certainly when he came again it would be with a force deemed sufficient to overawe and intimidate him. Glenn would hardly dare involve his Indian allies in this fight. But something of what threatened he imparted to his friend Jestarara. The sachem agreed to instruct his young men to keep their eyes and ears open, both on the trail and in the white man's villages, so that Glenn might be warned in time of any new developments.

"A man who journeys far for a strange woman," smiled Seth, "always brings trouble back to his house."

"But there is another proverb of thy people," laughed Glenn: "A woman stolen from the enemy is twice as dear."

There was some little recompense for all his worry and trouble, for now Glenn began to eat of white man's bread. Cakes and cookies after the fashion of the Dutch, pastries and sweets familiar to all English, as well as other dainties appeared miraculously on his table. For this Martha Ball, however inexperienced she might have been, was quick enough to learn. Quite as able to read as Glenn himself, which was unusual in any serving woman, and making no difficulty whatsoever over such words as "rack" and "dredge." The secrets of the

cook book were revealed to her as by magic and even her second pastry, a pigeon pie, was quite as good as any ever ovened in the White Horse!

She had a pleasing way with her, too. Sammy was her worshiping slave and old Matana followed her around like a dog. All day they laughed and chattered in the kitchen and about the house, although neither understood a dozen words of the other's tongue. And as for milord, the sweet music of her laughter, her voice raised in song, all contrived, by the same magic, to make him more content and happier.

His house was livelier, more attractive, and one day he noted with pleasant surprise that it was clean and orderly as never before. Surely this big place needed a woman! With her there the day seemed brighter and the work lighter.

Glenn came into his office one morning, shod in noiseless moccasins, to stand unsuspected behind his clerk who was inscribing, with many flourishes of his pen, sundry lines on a clean white sheet.

"Well-a-day!" laughed Glenn as he reached out and seized upon the paper. "If I haven't been housing an unsuspected bard in my home!"

Sammy uttered a cry of surprise and snatched at his verses. In a sudden fury he flew into Glenn like a mother wildcat over one of her kittens.

"Gimme that! Gimme that!" he screamed.

Glenn held him off, kicking and struggling, while he read:

#### "WHITE ROSE

"My little white rose is a maiden rare,  
Gentle her eyes and brown her hair—

"Not so rotten, Sammy.

"And a rose, dew laden,  
Is the soul of the maiden.

"You do well, Sammy.

"Lovely and calm and pure and serene,  
Never a lovelier flower was seen.

"Remarkably well put, Sammy.

"And better than any flower that grows  
I know I love my little white rose."

"Hold hard!" as Sammy seized upon his cane.

"Gimme that!"

"I'll give thee a cuff on thy ear in a minute."

"You've no rights to it—no call to make fun o' me."

"I would I had thy gift," Glenn sighed, releasing him and his verses and turning away. "But if women must be won with quills and verses, flutes and whispered nothings, then am I foredoomed a bachelor all the days of my life."

Saying which he went outdoors trying vainly to think up something pretty and pleasant to say to Martha Ball! While poor lame Sammy, his verses desecrated, dreamed his dream of rescuing a damsel in distress, of ringing steel and hard ridden horses, of mad adventure and daring do.

#### XIV.

A LETTER, duly stamped and sealed, was often a full week going from Albany to New York. Frequently enough it did not get there at all. Often times sloop captains forgot these scripts and took off their hats in a breeze and the letters, carried therein, blew overboard! But this one went straight to its destination.

The high sheriff wrote a miserable scrawl, with many new and novel ideas about spelling, but withal he made it plain enough that Glenn Sanders refused to give up this Martha Ball. Why, the insolent fellow had even defied the law with an armed force of Mohawks! The sheriff awaited further orders and a military force, adding:

"I hav' spok to ye offiseres hear and onliest Thing we can do is let me hav a Companie. Plis forward me ye ordairs and—"

The governor broke the seals to this, and all but a blood vessel at the same time.

"By th' holy living!" when he could get voice at all. "That backwoods lout, that renegade savage—defying me, defying the royal governor, outraging the law. Oh, by the Eternal, I'll have his life—I'll call out every constable in the colony—I'll go up there myself—"

If he did but half of what he threatened in that apoplectic hour, Glenn was as good as drawn and quartered. For a full half day he stamped up and down, cursing and

raving. Now his anger was directed to the inefficient high sheriff, now toward his missing ward, and then Glenn got the full of it once more.

Lord Cornbury never dreamed of any serious opposition to his will nor imagined any difficulty in rescuing the girl. She'd tricked him, run away, it was all a mistake, and surely this man Sanders would be the first to acknowledge it. An official call of the sheriff, an officer to pay all damages, was all he thought would be necessary to get her back again. He even imagined that the girl herself would be sick enough of her bargain, once she was well into the backwoods. But now, G'blood! here was this stubborn young Scot refusing to release her!

But any official action on his part was handicapped by the secrecy required to carry it out. It would never do to let the whole town know that his ward had run away on the eve of her marriage. Nor did he dare take a chance on the prospective bridegroom's finding out what had happened.

This madcap girl must be brought back at once, at once—but secretly! The whole affair required great diplomacy as well as prompt action. It could hardly be trusted to others. He'd go himself to Albany, on some pretext or other of official business to disguise his real purpose, and he'd bring her back. He could even make it appear as though she had gone up there with him.

For once the governor was stirred to prompt action. However dilatory he might be in affairs of state, when his own private interests were threatened he made things fly. And he did much as he said he would do too, though this was contrary to his reputation at the time. He commanded that a fast sloop be made ready at once—ordered out his personal guard, his secretaries, his whole retinue, and the very next day but one came he stamping into the high sheriff's office, much to that officer's surprise and consternation.

"Imbecile—ass—marmot!" greeted the governor. "Here in the security of your dotage you have failed me!"

"But, but, your excellency—" hastening down with his feet from the table.

"You had your orders, thick-skull," getting purple in the face with the very thought of it. "You worm, you insect, you sleeping sloth—"

The sheriff never had a chance to explain. In his raging frenzy the angry governor so far forgot dignity as to dash his plumed beaver into the sheriff's white face.

"Get out!" roared the governor. "Go and work for thy living!"

The sheriff's own deputies, hastily trimming sail to this new wind, were the first to grab him by the collar to throw him bodily into the street. In less than five minutes, by special proclamation, a new sheriff was sitting in the official chair.

"Now," said the governor, "we will teach that Schoharie upstart a few things!"

He began secretly to organize an armed force against Glenn Sanders of Schoharie. This was not at all difficult. His officers spread the rumor that a scouting party of French and Indians from Canada had been reported in the vicinity. To protect the frontier a scouting force would be sent out. And there would be no failure this time, no coming back without the girl. The governor himself would see to that! He would not be intimidated by a handful of barbarians.

Probably the governor would not have gone along at all but he thought surely he could convince the girl that she must come back with him and thus avoid any trouble which would be sure to be gossiped about in every coffee house in the province.

The expedition was ready to start at dawn of a Thursday, but all through that night the Talking Fires winked. Against the black curtain of night these signals blazed and flared and died down again. From the sand hills above the post, from high points on the near-by Helderbergs to the mountain tops above Schoharie fires were kindled. Three of Jestarara's young men happened to be in Albany, accompanying a shipment of Glenn's furs, and they saw something of the governor's preparations and heard about this imaginary invasion of enemies from the north. Knowing the other side of the story, it was easy enough for them to divine the truth. A day's time could be saved by the fire

signals, so long before daylight Glenn Sanders knew that an armed force was marching against him.

"This fox will lead that pack a long chase," he promised his friend Seth when the Mohawk came to warn him.

# XV.

THE governor's punitive expedition into the Schoharie wilderness had everything but a train of artillery. Half a hundred men in all, most of them mounted; swords and pistols and muskatoons. A uniformed officer at their head and even a kettledrum or two. The governor meant to make a show of strength against the Schoharie Indians and settle with this Glenn Sanders into the bargain. Also, he was determined to bring this girl back with him and conduct her safely, forthwith, to the Jersey spider before she had a chance to think up, or execute, any further mischief.

The first laws of the colony were made by the landed patroons, in the assembly at Albany, by the Lords of Trade in London and by various officials, more or less competent, sent out from England from time to time to rule and to govern. And no laws were more plainly written, or more strictly observed, than those governing the indenture of servants and the owning of slaves.

But might has ever interpreted the law to suit itself. Lord Cornbury, as governor of the colony, had frequently proven that he was above the law. Had he not openly pocketed the money raised to protect the northern frontier? Backed by every appointive officer under the crown, by the red coated troops if necessary, he was beyond the law. If, for any purpose whatsoever, the governor desired this Martha Ball, her indenture papers in Glenn Sanders's pocket would not protect him.

Well said that Glenn was ever a stubborn Scot. Let the officers come, it would be necessary to find this Martha Ball before they could take her. The governor and his men had not passed the great beaver dam, which is half way between Albany and Schoharie, before Glenn Sanders was well on his way to the great Indian country, westward!

Ordinarily even this would not mean escape, if it did now. At any other time a single runner with belts would be sufficient to bring Glenn Sanders and his party back to Albany within a fortnight. The red men might go a long way to protect one of their own people from the white man's law but they depended upon the generosity of the colonial government for arms and ammunition, for implements, trade goods, even food. So they dared not disregard any reasonable request of their white brothers at Albany.

But now, with France and England at war, and the great confederacy of the Iroquois standing neutral between the two belligerents, they might do much as they pleased and not even the governor dared to threaten. He could not order the sachems to do this and that, nor dared he venture westward with a show of force, which would bring down about his ears both the Iroquois and the French.

So Glenn Sanders, taking advantage of this unusual situation, went into the Indian country. He embarked at daylight in a thirty-foot birchbark canoe, well loaded with trade goods, Martha Ball forward and two stout young Indians at the paddles. Behind him came a smaller canoe with the camping things and supplies for their journey, bearing old Matana and another Indian youth paddling.

"Is not this Schoharie country wild enough to suit your fancy, milord," began Martha Ball when told that she must accompany the expedition, "that you needs must go traipsing off to the westward?"

"There is another and more important reason," he smiled.

"What?" a bit alarmed.

"I fear to lose thee."

"Oh," thoughtfully. "The sheriff again?"

"An armed force is well on its way here to take you from me."

"You do but imagine this."

"'Tis true enough, even as I say."

Glenn saw the look of alarm registered on her countenance.

"Then let us go at once!"

"Scarce a minute ago you did not want to leave."

"I fear this lonely wilderness, indeed I

do, beautiful though it be and so rich in many things. I fear the savage sleeping beneath the gaudy coats you deck these barbarians in. I fear the hidden lights in their dark eyes. But more than aught else I fear to be dragged back there to—to—"

"Get in," bade Glenn; "no one will drag you away."

The canoes put forth upon the narrow stream, clear and swiftly flowing, and the high dirt bank shut out the valley from their sight.

"Why should you go to so much trouble for my sake?" she asked after a while of thought. "'Twere easier and better to get rid of me at once."

"Well," laughed Glenn, busy with his paddle, "first I am a stubborn man and well set in my way. Second, I have an inherent reluctance to having anything taken away from me by force, however valueless it might be, and, then again, I like to have you here."

"I have brought you nothing but trouble."

"I am not so sure but there is more!"

Times when the little river wound smoothly between high wooded banks. Other distances where the water roared and tumbled into white foam over submerged rocks as it dropped to lower levels, whisking away into swift channels and dangerous whirlpools through which the canoes rocked and tossed.

Between thrusts with his paddle Glenn watched the young woman crouched forward. He saw her face go white when the foaming waters reached high on either side, saw her slender fingers gripping at the gunwales, but she did not close her eyes nor cry out.

"A runaway thoroughbred!" thought he. "No wonder some one is so anxious to have her back."

## XVI.

It was a long and tedious march, across the deep sands of the Albany plains, over the wooded Helderbergs and thence down the old Indian trail, but recently widened for pack horses, which follow the Creek of the Foxes and its narrow valley to the broad river flats of the Schoharie.

Ages and ages before all this a generous old Mohawk chieftain had given his favorite son, Karagondontie, and his bride this beautiful Schoharie country, teeming with game, rich for their crops, and safe from distant enemies. A new colony of the Mohawks grew up there. A proud race these Mohawks, resenting any infringement on their rights, any encroachment of the always-hungry whites.

And now Lord Cornbury, who knew little enough about Indians and nothing whatever about handling them, was riding into their country with an armed force without taking the trouble to send a belt in advance to explain his purpose.

"Ho!" said he, when this was suggested as the proper thing. "Send 'em word, indeed! And have those redskins tip that renegade Sanders to our coming so he can run away to the woods. A fine business—no siree! We'll ride up there and catch this weasel napping."

Nor could he be argued out of it—action first and explanations afterward—only a few of those Schoharie Indians anyway—a few beads and blankets, a keg of rum, and all would be made right with them.

But it is mighty hard to catch a weasel napping!

At the edge of the open fields where the dark forest reaches out to meet the corn ground and the grassy plains about the Schoharie villages the officer in charge of the posse, knowing much about train-band tactics but little enough about Indians, halted to organize in the shadow of the wood. They had met no one on the trails, they had seen or heard no hunters. All was peaceful before them, every evidence of a well executed surprise.

Indian women could be seen working in the fields; but a more careful observer would have noted that there were none on the side toward the invading host. Indian children played about the log houses, but there were no small children in sight.

The governor and his officer rode forward to the edge of the wood to reconnoiter before the advance. Suddenly, there before them in an open glade, raised a fearsome apparition. It seemed to materialize out



of nothing before their popping eyes, but in reality this terrifying hobgoblin had stepped out from behind a dense cedar bush.

"Th' devil!" gasped the governor reining back. "As God's my life!"

"O-o-oh!" cried the officer behind him, hastily covering his eyes.

Before them stood Jestarara, but certainly no white man would have recognized him. Stripped to the clout he was, and his huge torso painted a glossy black from the belt upward to his bristling scalplock with its single eagle feather marking his rank. And about his blazing eyes were painted two large white disks while his cheeks were slashed with bright streaks of vermilion. In his right hand a cocked rifle and at his belt, scalping knife and tomahawk.

With a savage gesture he threw up his left arm to halt the men.

"Stop!" he commanded in English. "No farther until you explain why you bring an armed force into my country."

"O-oooh-a a-ah!" stuttered the badly frightened governor. "You tell him, major."

"Peace," answered the major with difficulty. "Our mission is not with you or yours."

"Then why are you here?"

"We have come to arrest this Sanders."

"He is our blood brother."

"But a white man and subject to the white man's laws."

"The laws of the white man do not operate in our country without our consent."

He signaled with his hand again and out of the earth raised a fearsome host. Nearly a hundred warriors in their war gear and paint, seemingly an Indian behind every tree and bush. A frightened soldier loosened his matchlock; a frightened officer spurred among them to quiet the fools.

"Close up—close up! Form squares and stand at attention!"

The major and Jestarara argued the point, but the chief would not let the armed force into the valley. The governor and the major might ride out to the Sanders mansion alone, but the entire force must be on its way back to Albany within an hour.

All the bluster and fight had oozed out of the governor's system long before this.

"My poor little girl," he began to whimper to himself. "Here in such a wilderness with these savages!"

He hadn't the slightest doubt in the world that he could ride up before the door and she would throw herself into his arms, sobbing for forgiveness.

Sammy came out to answer their loud summons.

"Where is thy master?" demanded the officer, riding into the yard.

"Glenn Sanders is not here."

"Then where is he?"

"He has gone westward," a bit vague, "on a trading expedition."

"Damnation!" exclaimed the major.

"What's the trouble now?" demanded the governor.

"Sanders has gone."

"Well, let him be gone," shouted the governor from the roadway. "The fellow's in rare luck. Bring me the maid and haste."

"Tell Martha Ball we want to see her."

"Sorry," smiled Sammy, "but Mr. Sanders took her with him."

"With him?"

"Aye."

"Horns of the devil—hark t' that now!"

"Hark t' what?" demanded the governor.

"He's gone and taken the maid with him into the Indian country."

"By t' holy—"

The thwarted governor raised both fists to the sky and let loose verbally until he fairly strangled for breath.

"Which trail did he take?" asked the major.

"He left word that in case any one should inquire," grinned Sammy, "that he had taken the other one!"

The governor, having come to the end of his vocabulary, choked out a final word.

"We aren't done with that knave yet!"

## XVII.

Down the pellucid Schoharie to where its clear waters join the Mohawk but a few leagues west of Schenectady, at the Indian castle called Te-on-do-ro-ga, then westward by this great water route to the country of

the Long House. There was no need of haste. It would be several days before the officials at Albany found out from the rivermen which way Glenn Sanders was going to his fate. Long before that they would be far into the Indian country.

They met considerable traffic on the Mohawk, though it was the season of low water; heavy batteaus, long strings of them, laden with grain and produce from the cultivated flats along the river where the Dutch farmers were already housed. Canoes, barges, rowboats, pushing up against the current, heavy with trade goods, arms and ammunition, rum and supplies.

Now and then they passed an honored sachem of the Long House, in all his dignity and stately finery, being paddled by his warriors to or from the council fires. A high-peaked Dutch farmhouse, a log cabin or two on the higher banks, a summer camp of Indian fisher folk, and no other sign of habitation.

For the most part this water highway westward to the Great Lakes was easy enough. Miles and miles of steady paddling on a reasonably calm stream; short riffles that could be negotiated with poles or a line. And only now and then a rapid, or a fall, so steep and swift that a short carry was necessary and these were made easy by wide trails; there were even wooden rollers for the heavy boats that could not be carried on the shoulders of the men.

Water fowl raised in whistling flocks from the weed grown setbacks along the shore. Grouse drummed noisily from the wooded banks. Black and gray squirrels raced through the treetops. All day the water curled and whispered at the prow and the busy paddles thump-thumped against the gunwales. When night had come, and tall blue herons croaked their flapping way to the tall trees for the night then the canoes put into shore and the tent was set up about a large camp fire.

Often Glenn left this work to his men and went forth with his gun to hunt for the pot. Wherever they stopped game was plentiful, and most of it moving at dusk, so he seldom came back without a haunch of venison, a brace of ducks or a fat turkey. His Mohawks, even old Matana, made

a great holiday of the trip. To them it was a delightful outing, appealing to the nomad in them, and a pleasant visit to their people, with friends and relatives in almost every village. After the first day or two Martha caught something of this and forgot her fears of the wilderness road, making a great picnic of the occasion.

This evening meal about the camp fire was the only substantial one of the day. In the morning they were too anxious to be away and at noon there was hardly time. So each night a big feast was prepared and after eating they sat for hours about the flaming fire, talking of this and that.

"Oh, this freedom," cried Martha, "this being outdoors, free from exacting conventions, from social restriction, even from fashionable clothing, it is worth being a savage to enjoy it."

"A serving girl in town," said Glenn, "has few liberties and much work."

"Aye," said she, "and a young lady of the gentry has even less!"

"For all I know," said he, "God knows there was freedom enough among the ladies of the court!"

"Ten thousand don't and can't, sir," she laughed. "Fear of compromise and scandal rolling tongues. Silly fashions, rules for crooking the finger—bound here and restricted there. Everything forbidden that is either comfortable or natural."

"You women folk make your own hard world."

"To please you men."

"You please me better as you are," said he.

The orange-red fire flared up and lighted her face, throwing a sharply lighted profile into Glenn's watchful eyes. Then it came to him of a sudden that she was very beautiful in spite of the coarse gown she wore, short in the Indian mode, with leather moccasins on her feet and woolen stockings. And Glenn could read on her studious face that she was well content with this new liberty, this great adventure into the Iroquois country.

"Think you, milord," after a bit, "that they will follow us here?"

"It all depends on how badly they want you."

"Oh," with a laugh, "they want me badly enough."

"Then they will follow."

"We can go on and on and on."

"No," said he, "we can go no farther than the Iroquois. Beyond them the French control the Indians and they are at war with the English."

Firelight on her face, a face already browned by the sun; the night reflected in her dark eyes wherein tiny points of light were as the stars. And Matana had done her hair in the Indian fashion, in two heavy braids, one over each shoulder. The fine figure of her there, seated on a robe, her youthful body free from all the trammeling inventions of feminine fashions, freedom to act like a boy—small wonder that Glenn's busy mind left her past, for once, and concerned itself solely with the future!

This Martha Ball—his servant—he would never part with her—the light and the life of his house—God, how hungry he was for a woman's touch! And yet, and yet, this could not go on forever. If she stayed with him—some day. It was only fair to her, if she proved fair and honorable, that he should protect her. Theories, surmises, guesses, he really knew nothing about her—as likely good as bad. And his own past? Well, it had been none to sweet!

Marriage with a servant girl—why not? It had been done in the Colonies again and again. Why, the lady of Rynsler Manor, all silk and bejeweled and bowing courtesy when she served the spiced wine, had been sold once for twenty pounds! And people honored her for her courage as much as for her grace.

Already Glenn had noted that there was something about the conquest of this great American wilderness that leveled all people, both great and small, rich and poor. The heritage of name, social position, castes and customs, counted for little in a land where a man must rise or fall, sink or swim, upon his own initiative.

Here in this magic country the exiles of Monmouth's abortive revolution were already free men of position and the poor and ignorant Palatines were piling up their Spanish dollars. Why, he himself knew men who once had worn titles in England

now clothed in wild leather and living in log cabins. And an Irish tapster and a Scotch 'prentice were rated two of the richest men in Albany.

Brooding thusly, wrapped in his own busy thought, he was awakened by a shower of leaves which the girl threw upon his bowed head.

"Why so much heavy thought on a night like this?" she laughed.

"Because—because it seems to be a night to—to invite certain thoughts," rather ambiguously.

"Pleasant thoughts?" shyly.

"Why, yes—I was thinking about you."

"Cease at once, I bid you, and occupy your mind with more pleasant things. After all, it is not so serious as you imagine."

"They will follow."

"But to-night I am free—free—"

"Nay," smiled he, "you forget that you are enslaved to me for twenty years!"

"Well, even that could be worse," saucily; "it might be for life."

"Would that then be so much worse?"

But the double meaning escaped her and she began to tease him out of his dark mood. Of a surety Eros, with this woman's Silky hair, was weaving a strong net around him!

Their first stop was at the Oneida castle of Canoweroghera, one of the largest villages along the Mohawk route. All this was an old story to Glenn, but Martha Ball's first view of an Indian village was a revelation.

She had a very lowly opinion of all Indians because all she had seen near New York was the degenerate and low cast savages of Long Island, long since debased by unscrupulous white scoundrels. But, to her surprise, these proud Oneidas were a different race of people.

They did not live in rude huts nor were they garbed in the discarded finery of their white neighbors. Here was a large and substantially built village, located on the high and grassy northern bank of the stream, with many long communal houses built of logs and roofed with bark. Large and comfortable houses they were wherein two or three, or even more, families lived happily together.

Each family had an equal portion of the

interior and lived by itself, though on the most friendly and intimate relations with each other. There were also a large council house, meat drying racks, storehouses and, behind the village, the great communal gardens where corn stood higher than the tallest warrior's head; where the ground was yellow with ripening pumpkins and flecked with the dark green of squashes. On the higher slopes were thousands of wild apple trees and long rows of beans and ground roots.

And this village, when they came in sight of it around a bend in the stream, was busy with its daily affairs and pleasures. Old men sat in the sun fashioning toys for the children or chipping flint arrow points for the chase. Scores of happy youngsters were laughing and shouting at their play. Women at their tasks, sewing, tanning skins, pounding corn, laughing and visiting. And these people wore clothing—shirts with sleeves, coats, cloth leggings fancifully trimmed, embroidered moccasins.

An orderly village, strictly governed by its sachems, with laws for the hunt, for the fields, for the conduct of its people. Nearly a hundred years of close contact with the whites had brought few changes to these people. After the first defeat by Frontenac they had been quick to adopt the white man's thunder stick and now were well armed. Steel in place of flint, cloth to supplement their skins, the white man's tools, a few horses, cattle and pigs. But, in all other things, they adhered strictly to the ways of their fathers, ways that had made the Iroquois all-powerful over nearly one-third of the whole continent.

Glenn Sanders was well and favorably known in this country of the Oneidas. The young men greeted his arrival with a volley from the shore and he landed amid the cheers of the people and the resonate beat of drums. The sachems came to take his hand and bid him stay.

One of the long houses was immediately cleaned and placed at his disposal. This was a small guest house, divided, or rather curtained, into four compartments, with raised platforms and comfortable beds. The cooking fire burned in the center and gave both light and heat.

On the morrow, after holding a council with the chiefs and the giving of presents, the trading would begin.

### XVIII.

As was to be expected came a runner with belts.

Glenn Sanders knew that flight to the Indian country did not mean escape. The officials in Albany would do everything in their power to bring him back. First and foremost they would ask their red brothers to return this man and his servant to them.

And this important message to the Oneidas could not be ignored. A few hours after the runner was announced the sachems were called in council by the official crier who went through the village beating a small drum and shouting his orders.

The council was held in the shade of a great oak where the sachems were seated in a circle—the sacred pipe passed from hand to hand after the head chief had blown smoke to the four winds, to the sky above and the earth beneath. This ceremony completed Ganukhsade, the chief, received the messenger and spoke to him thusly:

"Brother:

"We of the Oneidas bid you welcome to our fires. May your lips open with truth and sweeten the words out of your mouth. We will listen to our white brother's messages and receive his belts."

To which the half-caste Adirondack youth replied through an interpreter.

"Brethren:

"The Master of Life has opened my brain and made my breath blow good words. I give thanks for your welcome. You chiefs whose hearts are open give heed to the words of my mouth. By this belt you will recognize the authority of the governor of your white brothers and know the truth of the message I bring." Presenting a three-hand belt.

"Brethren:

"These are the governor's words, heed them well:

"What I speak comes from the roots of your white brother's sentiment. It is written in the treaties that the men of the Long House may not fly to the whites to

escape your laws nor the whites to the red. Here is in your midst a white man from Schoharie; cast him out. Suffer not your eyes to be dimmed or your hearts bound up—cast him out. He comes as a trader, but it is a lie. He is trying to escape the vengeance of your white brother's law. And there is with him a white woman which he claims falsely to be his captive. A lie out of his mouth, for she belongs to her own people and you must deliver her at once under guard to Albany. May the Master of Life give you courage and strength for this."

A belt.

"Brethren:" he continued.

"When you have done this as the governor orders, the false trader cast from your village and the woman returned to her people, then there will be for you such reward in trade and silver as you sachems in council together shall agree upon.

"There is no sugar on my lips, no spear in my tongue. I have brought the great white chief's words to you."

Presenting a large belt of purple and white wampum.

Glenn Sanders, standing back among the warriors, heard all this and saw the belts received. The long ceremonial pipe passed again, the medicine men began to finger their drums to a low chant; by no facial sign did the sachems betray their thoughts. In time, a long time, and after due deliberation, Ganugsade spoke again:

"Brother:

"The roots of all English hearts are entwined with ours and may no wind ever separate them. But we fear that our interpreter is not skilled in your difficult tongue. Perhaps our ears are old and do not hear aright, for it seems to us that there is too much do-this and do-that in your message, a concealed threat like a knife hidden in the blanket. The governor speaks to us like disobedient children, or like surly husbands to lazy wives, and not like brothers. In this matter, as in all matters, the councils shall decide and let you know what comes out of our minds.

"This white man is our blood brother. He has always treated us fairly and we know of no reason why we should cast

him out like a wet dog from our beds. If this white woman be a captive, which seems likely, we shall arrange for her purchase and return according to our ancient laws. But if she be slave, or wife, we cannot take her from him.

"We have opened our ears to your words and weighed them well."

A small belt so the messenger could show that his message had been delivered.

Then Glenn was called before the council and the head sachem questioned him without the strict formality of the council routine.

"How about this woman, my brother?"

"She is here with me."

"Is she thy wife?"

"No."

"Thy slave?"

"Yes. I recently purchased her from a shipload of servitors from across the big water. I paid for her with my money and have here the writings according to the white man's law which say that she is mine."

The sachem took the papers.

"I note the black marks on the white skin, my son, and I recognize the red seals of the white man's law. What is yours is yours, and no man may take from you, for such is the law of the Long House."

At a sign from the chief the messenger's belts were all returned to him, signifying that the council was at an end and that his message had not been received.

The breed took them with an angry gesture and a dark look, the white blood in him resenting this as an insult to the Colonial government.

As Glenn suspected, those crafty officials at Albany had yet another card to play. They had anticipated that the Oneidas might return their belts, for they knew that Glenn was well liked, so this same messenger was intrusted with another word or two in case his appeal to the council failed. He did not make the haste homeward he had in coming. He lingered all night and most of the next morning in the village and several times Glenn saw him in earnest conversation with hot-headed Oneida youths.

Now the Oneidas, like all the Iroquois

people, have their castes and secret societies and some of these organizations are made up of adventure loving, reckless young warriors who thirst for excitement. They often drank too much of the "English milk," and they had learned the value of silver and gold pieces in the trading towns where pleasure may be bought.

The hardest to control of all these societies was that of the Tree-cats. They prowled a great deal o' nights and gave their elders much concern. These youths, among others, chafed at the prolonged neutrality of the confederacy while their neighbors were at war. Their feet were eager for the war trails and their fingers itched for the scalping knife. Many of the Tree-cats had disappeared earlier in the summer to join the French forces of the north against the New England border, lured there by secret agents from Canada, with promises of rich reward and plenty of fighting.

Glenn Sanders knew that any whisperings of a reward for Martha Ball delivered safely in Albany would bring about much mischief.

## XIX.

THAT night Glenn sat for a long time on the robe-covered platform of the guest house talking with Martha Ball.

"The messenger's belts were returned to him," he explained. "This means that he will go back without you."

"Somehow, I felt that it would be so," softly. "Even in this wild country, with all its savages, I feel safe."

"But you are not safe," warned Glenn. "I like not that sullen, evil-faced messenger from Albany. He has a crafty look and, if I mistake not, will make another and more subtle play. A handsome reward will provoke such fellows to mischief."

"Surely, he won't dare attempt anything here in this large village."

"Anywhere. So to-night I shall watch until midnight and after that my Schoharie lads will keep their eyes open. In the meantime I caution you, as you value your freedom, do not stir from this house, and call out at the first suspicion of anything wrong."

"You are but trying to frighten me."

The Tree-cats, like their namesakes, were more crafty than he knew. They made no foolish attempt to raid the guest house that night, well knowing that Glenn and his men would be watching and that any such foolishness meant facing his pistols and long knife as well as arousing the whole village. Sa-do-ga-rah, the Flat Mouthed, was a crafty youth. He argued that the time to strike was when the victim least expected it and that would be during the day and in the very heart of the village. He laid his plans carefully, providing a litter and hiding out a war canoe.

In the late afternoon, as was their custom, Martha and the old Indian woman went to the near-by communal garden to gather some roasting ears for the evening meal. To guard them went a Schoharie youth with a loaded musket. The village was busy with its afternoon affairs. Other Indian women were in the garden with a few well-grown children to assist.

The tall corn rustled about them as Martha and the Mohawk woman pulled down and broke off the green ears, tossing them into a splint basket. The armed youth stood close by the edge of the field, but after a bit his dark eyes shifted to a couple of Indian maidens picking beans a little way above him. It was then a dark arm flashed out of ambush and the broad of Flat Mouth's tomahawk thudded against his skull. As the fellow's knees sagged he was quickly dragged out of sight in the corn and dropped senseless to earth. At the same instant old Matana was overturned before she could cry out and her face thrust rudely down in the soft dirt so that she could not even breathe.

Martha Ball, a little way ahead, saw nothing of this because of the tall corn. Just as she turned to the thud of Matana's body to earth a hand was clapped over her mouth and just as quickly she was enveloped in smothering blankets and whisked away through the standing corn.

Matana was a stout old woman for all her age. She writhed and twisted so that the young brave, his knees in her back, scarce could hold her down at all and had no chance to draw a weapon to silence her.

In spite of him she thrashed about so with her legs that other women were attracted by the sound and he had to jump up quickly and leave her.

Matana rolled over with loud screams.

Shouts and shots in the air—the entire village instantly aroused. Chiefs came dashing out of their houses, weapons in their hands—the Oneida war cry rang in the air in swelling volume as the warriors leaped for the rifles. The alarm was so sudden, and the cause of it so vague, that every one thought the village was being raided by the northern Indians.

Glenn knew where Martha was, and, suspecting from the first what had happened, he came running up just as old Matana got to her feet and cleared her mouth for words.

"Enemies in the corn—the white girl—gone!"

This was sufficient to arouse Glenn Sanders to a fury of action. Out of this chaos, this tense excitement, this *mêlée* of frightened villagers and aroused warriors, he helped to bring order and to systematize the pursuit. The warriors were divided into small parties and sent out on every trail. A number of large canoes were hastily launched to patrol the river. The best hunters and trackers were put on the trail in the cornfield.

Glenn Sanders, for all his rage, had sense enough to know that whoever had taken Martha Ball had done so at the instigation of the Albany officials, and that she must be delivered there to secure payment for the mad venture. There were but two routes open to Albany, one by land and one by water, for it would be next to impossible for any one, red or white, to make that long journey overland through the trackless forest with so great a burden.

And it would be, as Glenn reasoned, a difficult task to carry a full grown woman over the land trail, certainly a difficult and back-breaking job no Indian would relish. Sooner or later they would take to the water route.

Covering their trail, the Tree-cats could hide in the river thickets until night and then steal out to the open water and paddle away in the darkness. Thus, traveling by

night and hiding by day, they had a good chance to get to Albany with their captive.

Reasoning in this manner, Glenn took his Schoharie boys in the smaller canoe and set out down the river at full speed. It was his plan to drive hard until he was certain to be below the raiding party in hiding. Several leagues downstream he sent two of the youths ashore to watch the trail while he and Seth's Henry guarded the river.

He selected for this purpose the narrowest part of the stream he could find, where the banks were low and there were no screening islands. Under the overhang of the western and darkest shore he waited, hour after hour. All night long canoes passed up and down and each time Glenn paddled out to intercept them. Mostly they were traders, or casual travelers, or members of their own searching party.

It was near dawn, the darkest hour of all, the hour when the gray river mists writhe upward above the black water, when the stars die down to pin points and the shadows are like ink, when Glenn thought he saw a gray shadow moving before his eyes. For a few seconds he thought he was imagining this, then a tiny wave or two slapped against the hard side of his canoe.

The slight rustle of the water as Glenn pushed out was sufficient to alarm the canoe ahead. He heard a whispered exclamation and then the swish of paddles as the big canoe leaped forward.

A stern chase is always a long one—even longer when the pursued has the advantage of darkness and knows all the crooks and turns of the stream. Only because of good eyesight and hearing was Glenn able to keep in the race at all. He could not see them at all and was able to follow only because of the oily waves that raced away from their keel as though some marine monster was swimming on before him.

Twice he routed them out of hiding places in this way. Once they sought refuge in a creek, and Glenn heard the scrape of their canoe on some overhanging willows and fired his musket, aiming high. The flash of the weapon lighted up the sur-



rounding space like heat lightning. Glenn saw, in the flash of that light, the Tree-cats bending to their paddles, racing downstream again.

Probably they would have abandoned the canoe and taken to the forest but for the fact that they knew there was a long and dangerous rapid ahead, with which their steersman was perfectly familiar, and they thought that Glenn would not dare this treacherous way and would be left hopelessly behind.

In the first graying light of dawn Glenn saw the large canoe pass swiftly out to the center of the stream, and to his ears came the angry rumble and roar of the rapid ahead. The big canoe raced forward and then bent sharply downward as it took the swift descending water to the rapid and vanished from his sight. With a shout to the Indian youth behind him to dive overboard and swim ashore if he was afraid, Glenn headed straight for the spot.

Seth's Henry was the son of a chief. He lacked not courage, and in the excitement of the chase he knew no fear. Instead of diving overboard, he raised the Mohawk call and bent to his paddle. The canoe tipped and plunged swiftly down and ahead into the boiling flood before them. Glenn could do nothing else but keep to the current, to the swift water columns racing between the hidden rocks. Once, twice the canoe touched, but a quarter of an inch of bark between them and death. Down they plunged, between black jagged rocks, between white waves of foam dashing high, shipping a bit of water, the flying spume dashing like rain in their faces.

How they managed to live through it Glenn never knew, except that they were not to die then. Riding out of the boiling flood at the foot of the rapid, they saw the big canoe gliding along leisurely ahead, confident that the pursuit was over.

Again Seth's Henry raised the Mohawk war cry. Loud and weird as the call of a loon, a note of terror in its rising cadence, the shrill and savage call echoed over the water. Paddles flashed ahead as the Oneida Tree-cats answered his challenge with their own war whoops.

Now it was no longer hide-and-seek on

the dark river. Dawn had come, and there was no hiding, but the race was all in favor of the big canoe ahead with its five strong paddlers.

The distance between the two canoes widened, but Glenn had no thought of giving up. He was now certain that Martha Ball was in the bottom of that canoe. Beyond a doubt they were far ahead of all other pursuers, and if they could out-distance him they could get to Albany without molestation. It was all but hopeless to try to catch them, to even get within gunshot of them.

A league, two leagues—the sweat rolling down Glenn's face, his garments wet, tiring a bit.

"Think you they be gaining now?" he asked.

"No—we are holding the distance."

Another league—

"They seem nearer," panted Glenn.

"They are nearer—we are gaining!"

Though Glenn and his companion were fast tiring, they were actually gaining, incredible as it seemed.

"They are tiring out. Stick to it, lad!"

"No," said Henry. "Their canoe is lower in the water."

Now one of the Oneida paddlers had lain down his paddle and began to splash water out of the canoe with his cupped hands.

"They've sprung a leak!" cried Glenn. "They were ripped in the rapid."

"Not that, my brother, else they would have been leaking a long way back."

Whatever the cause, it was apparent that the big canoe was leaking badly and that the Tree-cats lacked any proper utensil for bailing.

In a few minutes it was apparent that the canoe ahead had to make a fight of it or run ashore. To fight was to give Glenn all the advantage, for he could move about freely. Also he would soon be reinforced as the river traffic began. So, while still out of range, the big canoe, now low in the water, turned about and dragged its way heavily toward a near-by sandbar.

With a shout Glenn and Seth's Henry found new strength and were after them. Stripped light for a quick dash for Albany, the Tree-cats were not armed with rifle, and

they had with them but a single bow and arrows for hunting purposes. But when they attempted to string the bow the rawhide was wet, rendering it useless.

The big canoe grounded in the shallows, and the warriors jumped out and dragged it up the sand just as Glenn came dashing in. Three of the Tree-cats sprang back in the water to meet him, while the other two lifted a heavy bundle from the craft and hurried with it to the shelter of the willow.

The fight began there in the water as Glenn leaped out, sword in hand. A hatchet whizzed past his head—three to one—rapier against tomahawk and scalping knife. A thrown knife was turned aside with the blade—a lunge, and Flat Mouth was run through the left shoulder. As Glenn wrenched his steel free the other two Tree-cats were back and into the fight. Seth's Henry was knocked down—four to one now. But the Indians knew nothing of sword play. They should have kept their distance. A few thrown tomahawks would have ended it soon enough. But they were fight mad and chose to rush him. No doubt they would have killed Glenn soon enough, and he would be well within his rights to slay them all; but he valued the friendship of the Oneidas and knew some of the fathers of these braves.

Like a streak of light the bright blade leaped forth—a whirling circle of steel. A deep gash across the forehead of one, and he was blinded in his own blood; another received a punctured arm; a fourth got a thrust through the left thigh; and the other turned and dashed away to the shelter of the willows.

Glenn's first thought was of Seth's Henry, but the youth was already sitting up and rubbing his eyes. So he ran to the willows where the wet bundle had been dragged. This bundle was already writhing like a giant cocoon wrapping in which a new-born butterfly was struggling to get out.

Glenn cut the cords and unrolled the wet and bedraggled and all but unconscious form of his servant.

He carried her out into the rising sun to warm her, chafing her hands and drying her

face. It was a long time before she could talk.

"Thank God their canoe was injured in the rapids and sprung a leak," said Glenn, "else we never would have caught up with you."

"Thank me instead," with a wan little smile. "I disabled it."

She stood up, fast recovering.

"When I heard the pursuit, when I knew that you were close behind, I worked one hand free and tore a large steel buckle from my belt. With this I cut a large hole in the bottom of the canoe beneath me."

"You might easily have drowned yourself."

"Perhaps 'twere better so, milord."

## XX.

THE French were at Onondaga.

Their officers, their traders, and their spies were there, all busy with intrigue and bribery to influence the sachems of the Long House to take up the red hatchet against the English.

Onondaga, place of the never dying council fire, the center of the great Confederacy of the Iroquois, the very heart of the government of the Five Nations, for the Onondagas, wisest of all, were ever called the Fathers. So here, in this great neutral ground, at the fountain head, met both the English and the French; the one to keep the Iroquois neutral during Queen Anne's war—the other to win their allegiance or secretly to recruit as many adventurous young warriors as possible for the bloody war trails in northern New England.

This large village of the Keeper of the Fires consisted of many long communal houses scattered over a level bit of ground in the midst of extensive cultivated fields and orchards. Just now it was a thriving business center, the central point of trade, and filled with many white visitors. Missionaries were living there, trying to convert them to Christianity and to call the French king "father." But the older sachems could not forget that Champlain had fought them, had driven them from their rich country along the St. Lawrence, which the French had taken for themselves.

Gay French officers were in the village, resplendent in bright uniforms more fitting for the boulevards of Paris than an Indian village; French emissaries from the great fortress at Quebec; French traders and *cour-de-bois*, many of them but spies and secret agents. Foremost of all these was Count Andre Louis L'Or Jocanaire, who spoke many honeyed words and gave many valuable presents to win the friendship of the red people.

Glenn Sanders and party found the Onondaga village all excitement with so many distinguished visitors. He was welcomed by the head chief and assigned a compartment in a warrior's house. But there was no trade. Prices were too high for any profit. The French were bidding for allies and not for monetary gain. They paid anything for furs, for corn and dried meats. They wanted to show their red brothers how rich and generous they were, how handsomely it would profit them to join hands against the English.

Glenn made the customary presents to the head men, but he did not open his bales and boxes. After all, he wasn't so anxious about the trade, being quite content to stay there in peace and security with Martha Ball.

But he was not to be left in peace.

Jan Pietrus Vrooman was a Dutchman from the Mohawk Flats. Aside from tilling his own fat acres, he traveled the countryside speculating in skins and produce, now that the demands of war sent prices rocketing. He bought grain, charcoals, tar, potash, tan bark, anything he could exchange his bright silver for at a profit.

This enterprise brought him to the village of the Onondagas, where he learned that Glenn Sanders was stopping. He knew Glenn and hastened to seek him out.

"Ho, Glenn Sanders!" he called before the house.

Glib of tongue he was, fluent in several languages, including sufficient Mohawk to drive a hard bargain with any savage. A handsome youth in his big blond way, with a good blue eye for women. So when Martha Ball came to the doorway in answer to his summons he quickly doffed his hat and bowed in admiration.

"A good day to you, miss!"

Acknowledged with a nod.

"And where did you come from?"

"From the house," said she, "and by your leave, sir, I'll return there instantly."

Jan would have said more, but she vanished, and just then Glenn came out.

"Ha, Glenn, who's that little beauty in this Indian country?"

"My servant," gruffly.

"Ho!"

"A redemptioner."

"Heigho! I'll redeem her myself, forthwith. What's th' price of her bond?"

"Go else with your bargain hunting, Jan."

"I could deal there at a handsome profit and no little pleasure. A redemptioner! Well, well, I must say they be shipping out better stock from the Thames these days."

"'Twould seem so," a bit nettled.

"Must have been a rare shipload you picked this paragon from."

"I didn't pick her," explained Glenn, his anger mounting. "A friend bought her for me."

"I respect the man's eyesight, but he showed lack of judgment if he shipped her to you before—"

"Hold hard!" warned Glenn.

"Oh, what th' devil, Glenn—"

"Only a few years ago I killed a man for less!"

The Dutchman jumped back as though Glenn's steel had already pricked him.

"Thunder and damnation, Glenn, I meant no harm!"

"Probably not, but wagging tongues dig many graves."

And, leaving Jan there, sweating and apologizing, Glenn went back indoors.

The next incident in this chain of events was with a leering old Jew trader out of Schenectady—a crooked-bodied old knave with a keen ear for small talk and barroom gossip.

"Ho-ho," cackled he when Glenn would have passed him by. "Not so fast, Master Glenn, not so fast!"

He was clawing at Glenn's sleeve.

"Out of my way."

"Not so fast, Master Glenn, the officers from Albany are not at thy heels now."

"If they did half their duty you would have been whipped out of the Colony long before this."

"Maybe," with a sly wink, "but not for stealing a lass—oh, not for such as that!"

Glenn reached out and seized him by the collar.

"What d' you mean?" he demanded.

But he really gave the fellow no chance to answer.

"You keep your filthy tongue off me or I'll shake it down your throat."

"I only wanted to warn you—"

But Glenn shook him so hard words were impossible and cast him aside in the dirt, little dreaming that he could have had the answer to all his puzzling questions for a single piece of gold.

And his victim, scrambling up behind him, knew where he could sell this bit of information to the best advantage.

## XXI.

COUNT ANDRE LOUIS L'OR JOCANAIRE and two lesser lights, resplendent in gay French uniforms, polished boots and golden sword hilts, lace and jewels and plumed beavers, had a special mission here at Onondaga. And they were determined to make the best possible impression on their red brothers with their fine clothes, their French swagger, their generosity and prodigality.

For the most part the English and French held no intercourse with one another, keeping to opposite sides of the town. But now the count chanced to come swaggering down the village street, returning from council, two officers with him, and chanced upon Martha Ball. In an embroidered doeskin dress, her hair braided, most attractive in this barbaric costume, she did not fail to attract.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" exclaimed the count. "What manner of savage is this?"

He stepped quickly before her and spoke to her in French which she did not understand.

"Ah, *m'selle*, by all that is lovely, you are no barbarian!"

"I understand your insolence and offensive manner if not your words," said she.

"So-ho! T'at true, eh?" in his poor English. "Ees th' admiration of a pret' face so great affront?"

She tried to pass him but he stepped quickly before her.

"*Eh bein*. Not so fas'."

To be rudely pushed aside, all but unbalanced, as Glenn came hurrying up.

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed the count "What do you want, fellow?"

"I desire, M. Jocanaire," in just as good French as his own, "nothing more than to tweak your nose!"

So Glenn, suiting action to the words, tweaked it. He seized it between his knuckles and twisted it until the count cried out with pain. When he pulled free and danced out of reach a red trickle splashed down his snowy front.

"Name of a name!" he screamed. "No barbarian can pull my nose and live!"

As the words snapped out, his long rapier slithered from its scabbard.

"Whether I live or not," said Glenn, "first blood is mine!"

"I'll crown you in blood, you clown!"

So deeply hurt his pride, so hot the wrath within, he scarce could wait until Glenn's blade was clear before he was upon him.

"Now, you leather covered savage—" as he lunged.

The angry words and the ring of steel brought out a fine gallery of spectators to ring them round. The count never thought there would be much of any defense against his onslaught, never looked for a swordsman in this wilderness. And Glenn had no sooner felt his steel in the first parry than he knew that here was no mean opponent.

They engaged along the lines of tierce, the long, slender, razor sharp blades slithering one against the other. Glenn Sanders contented himself with a firm defense, letting the count open the attack, although he knew that in fencing, as in all else, the best defense is always a swift attack. But he had been in the backwoods a long time, practicing at knot holes, and probably there were new tricks he knew not about.

The circling blades whirled in flashing circles of light—Glenn felt the count's disengage, the darting point was under his guard, the count extended in the lunge to

drive home the point. Sensing the move with his steel, Glenn cleared the threatening blade with a flying point. The Frenchman's long arm, combined with great skill, made him a dangerous antagonist. But Glenn's wrist and arm were toughened by ax and paddle, his wind and strength multiplied by a life in the open. Stored up within his body was the strength to win, providing his defense held out until the other began to tire.

Feint and double feint—the count strove to disarm Glenn and failed. He simulated another brisk attack and lured Glenn into a riposte, but the sudden thrust, quick as an adder's tongue, was parried with but an inch to spare.

By now Glenn began to put forth his own attack. His blade flashed in and out, at throat, face, body. However while his strength held the count was even better in defense than attack. But when he countered in a triple feint Glenn knew that the fellow was tiring. So now he speeded up his steel until the slithering blades were too fast for the eye, guided entirely by the sense of touch.

Once the count thrust low and the parry was so quick that his throat was exposed for a fraction of a second and when Glenn's blade failed to leap in with a thrust he knew that his antagonist was but playing with him. He who had practiced accuracy at knot holes, timing his point to the merest fraction of an inch to kill a fly on the wall, now began deliberately to disgrace the count and not to kill him.

"Such gay foppery ill becomes thee in this wild country," said he.

His blade slit the count's fancy coat up and down.

"You sneer at my poor leather shirt, *m'sier*—"

The count's sleeves were slashed; the gold epaulets fell from his shoulders; his wig was tossed off.

"I'll undress thee here and now."

The fine clothing was being cut to rags, a bleeding scratch or two, not until he felt his breeches slipping, and the ring of warriors around him burst out in noisy laughter, did the count sense that he was being disgraced.

"*Ah-ca!*" he panted, throwing down his blade. "Thrust home, man, and have done!"

## XXII.

THE crooked bodied trader hastily packed his bales and hired extra paddlers to hurry him back to Albany. There was a reward posted that promised more than any profit he could make in a year of trading.

Count Jocanaire, defeated and disgraced, was literally laughed out of the Onondaga village, his influence with the sachems at an end. He went forthwith to Oswego, for the great lake which the French still called Frontenac, but he left behind a stinging snake to avenge his hurt.

A French trader, with more than a drop of Adirondack blood—and other things in his trade bundles besides Indian goods—was intrusted with a handful of gold and certain instructions how to use it. This trader knew of an outcast Stockbridge Indian, of that tribe which was harried from the Hudson to New England and back again to exist by the tolerance of the Iroquois, because of their perfidy and lack of all honor, who would venture anything for a couple of gold pieces. From that very day this evil countenanced and black hearted savage began to stalk Glenn Sanders.

Under his ragged blanket he carried a short but very powerful Seneca bow and two straight, goose feathered, flint tipped war arrows, supplied him by the trader. At close range this bow was just as deadly as a rifle. It had the advantage of being noiseless and, being of Seneca make, would cast suspicion on a false trail.

No Indian hunter ever followed game with greater skill and care. Two gold pieces were a fortune and the task itself much to his liking. At last, one day when the trader began to upbraid him for cowardice, his moment came.

One evening Glenn chanced to go out through the open forest, which had been stripped of every fagot by the old women, toward the river. In a thoughtful mood he strolled that way alone, never dreaming of danger to himself. Through his friend-

ship with the sachems he had learned much about the French that would be of value to the Colonial government. He owed it to his country to go back to Albany with this information and yet he would not dare leave Martha Ball behind. Still he could write it and send one of his boys—

All unbeknown to him this Stockbridge snake lay coiled behind a hemlock coppice ready to strike. And, like the snake he was, he waited until Glenn had passed, hands behind him, head low, deep in thought, to rise like a grim and threatening ghost behind him—death in his hands.

Not so much as a leaf stirred to warn Glenn as the naked red-brown torso of the murderer raised slowly up out of concealment and notched an arrow to the taut bow-string. A flint tipped war arrow, with the guiding feathers dyed red, grooved for the blood to flow, and so made that the war head would pull free from the shaft and could not be withdrawn from any wound.

With a swift and spreading motion of both arms the bow bent almost to its full capacity, drawing the arrow back to the very head, and with a quick glance to make sure of his aim it sped like a flash of light to its mark.

Glenn was scarce twenty feet away and there was no chance to miss. The speeding shaft struck him full and fair between the shoulders. The impact of the unsuspected arrow itself was sufficient to pitch him forward to his knees, knocking him all but breathless. But, to the utmost astonishment of his would-be assassin, Glenn did not fall. Instead he whirled instantly and pistoled the fellow standing there before he ever knew the reason for his failure.

A shot so near the village brought a number of inquisitive warriors running to the spot.

"Throw that carrion into the river," said Glenn. "He tried to murder me."

He explained quickly as he could.

"Except for a magic shirt beneath my doublet," said he to the head war chief, "I would have been shot down like a fat buck."

The subject of this great magic was the talk of the camp for days. The chiefs respectfully demanded to see the magic shirt, but Glenn thought best not to divulge its

secret, for it was no more than a sleeveless jacket of Spanish chain which he wore for safety's sake whenever venturing into the dangerous Indian country.

That night when he told the details to his party about their evening fire, Martha became instantly alarmed.

"I never thought that I might bring you death!"

"Nay, you bring me life—"

"I'll go back, I'll leave to-morrow."

"I demand the fulfillment of thy bond," laughed Glenn. "Many times has death threatened and I am not afraid."

"But I am."

"I thought thee of greater courage."

"For thy sake," softly.

### XXIII.

GO-TA-QUA, the white haired Onondaga medicine man, he with the cracked voice and wrinkled reptilian skin, in hawk bells and rattles, chanted the latest orders of the council through the village.

"Oh, my people, open your ears to the wisdom of the council.

"No warriors, old or young, shall go forth secretly to the war trails of the whites. So it is ordered and those who disobey shall forfeit their houses, their women and their shares of the stores.

"Oh, my people your ears again:

"No hand shall be raised against our white brothers either French or English. No words shall mock them, no sides be taken in their quarrel.

"And a word to all ye strangers:

"The white traders among us who attempt to recruit our young men shall be cast out. Spies will be whipped from the camp. And no one shall be allowed to traffic in goods without the permission of the elders.

"Hark to me:

"The council further orders that the white trader from Schoharie report to it at once.

"By this drum are your ears opened to their wisdom and their word must be obeyed."

Word was passed along to Glenn and on his way to the council fire it was whispered

to him by a friend that a Colonial officer, a lieutenant, and five men had just arrived from Albany. The crooked one had reached Albany and claimed his reward!

Glenn stood for some time at the far end of the council fire, as etiquette demanded, awaiting the signal to advance. The officer had already stated his business. When the pipe had passed the head chief raised his hand and Glenn came within the circle.

"Brother," began the sachem slowly, "five seasons have you come to us with your trade goods and in all things we have found you a man. Now this officer comes here bringing word that you have with you a white woman whom you have stolen from her people and they demand her back. Brother, how do you answer this?"

Glenn waited an impressive interval before replying. Then:

"Brethren:

"There are in this very castle many Paney boys and girls taken in fair conquest to the westward, who are now yours. Would you give them up to your white brothers because this officer came and demanded them?"

The sachem answered readily enough.

"Brother, if this woman is truly thy slave that is indeed, another matter."

Glenn brought forth his indenture papers to prove that the woman was his slave. The legal document was passed from hand to hand, there were whispered questions and opinions.

The lieutenant was allowed to answer thought an interpreter. He simply stated that the signature on the document was a forgery, that the girl was not Glenn's slave and never had been. She had run away from her people and now must be sent back in accordance with their treaty which provided for that very thing. After a long session the head chief gave his final verdict.

"Brother:

"We have heard the evidence and weighed it well. We believe this woman is not your slave. A mistake has been made, and she has evidently tricked you. She must be sent back and you shall be paid in full for your loss.

"Were she of our people, were she pur-

chased fairly or captured in fair fight, were she even thy wife, brother, we would sustain you in this claim. But we yield to the demands of the governor believing his claim to be just."

Knowing well the futility of any argument against the decision of the council Glenn hurried back to Martha Ball. Escape, except temporarily, was impossible, for there was no place to go. To the westward lay the village of the Senecas, the Cayugas and the Tuscararas, but they would be warned immediately not to receive him and to seize the white girl. To the north were the French and all their Canadian Indians on the warpath. Nor was there any town or settlement of the whites to the south which he could hope to reach.

But Glenn Sanders was a stubborn Scot and one not ready to accept defeat. The head sachem, whether intentionally or not, had sown the seeds of thought in his brain by suggesting a way out of the difficulty.

"Well, well," reflected Glenn as he strode away. "She shall not go back—though I have to take her to wife!"

The idea, it must be confessed, was far from being repellent. But he was so angry at the time that he would have married old Matana rather than confess himself beaten. And so came he back to Martha Ball.

"The council has decided that you must go back to Albany at once," he announced.

"No!" springing up in alarm.

"'Tis true," with a dark look. "An officer and five men are here to take you."

"You will not let them take me—you promised!"

"He has the consent of the sachems."

"But surely, milord, you know of some way of escape?"

"Aye!"

"Then let us go at once."

"There's nowhere to go."

"Into the wilderness, anywhere, so long as I am not to be dragged back."

"There is no wilderness haven for us."

"But you did say now that there was a way—"

"I am blood brother of the Mohawks. Upon my arm I bear the scars of brotherhood and the mark of the wolf. Even



those in that council who are secretly prejudiced against me dare not disobey the laws of the Great Confederacy. And it is the law that a man's wife may not be taken from him under any circumstance."

"His wife!"

"Purchased, or captured, from whatsoever tribe or people she shall not be taken from him."

"You—you mean that you'll pretend—"

"I mean only that by marrying you can I keep you."

She stared at him with wide eyes; understanding coming but slowly.

"Oh!" said she. "Oh!"

"So we'll be married at once."

"No."

"I say yes!"

"Marriage is a sacrament, a holy thing," in a low voice. "There can be no legal marriage without the church and state."

"We will be married, as were Boaz and Ruth, in the presence of the people."

"No, we are not barbarians."

"Very well, then, I know where there is a priest, be prepared for thy wedding in ten minutes, there is no time to lose."

#### XXIV.

IN the house of Go-ta-quá, the shaman, dwelt a Jesuit priest.

Glenn went to the house of the shaman and demanded to see the priest. After a muttered conversation within an old Indian woman came out to say that the friar was not there.

"Would that you had teeth to bite your crooked tongue!" exclaimed Glenn. "I heard him—tell him to come out at once or else I'll come in!"

So the friar came out, tall and gaunt, smoked over many camp fires.

"What would you with me?" in Mohawk.

"I need your services at once," in the same tongue, "to perform a marriage ceremony."

"Another pretense at an Indian marriage," sneered the friar. "I'll have none of it."

"No, I have not become a squaw-man yet. It is an English maid."

Glenn marched the man along so fast his black robe threatened to trip him. In the guest house he found Martha Ball, serious of mien and very thoughtful, much as he had left her.

"I've got a priest," said he. "We'll be wed at once."

"No. I'll not agree to that."

"There's but a few minutes."

"But all the years of our lives ahead," said she. "Have you considered that prospect?"

"May they be long and happy years," said he. "Quick with thy holy business, friar."

He seized her hand, finding it all a tremble, crushing it in his own. The shrewd friar, noticing the girl's hesitancy, thought he saw a way to escape this indignity.

"Do you desire to marry this man?" he asked.

"Saints above!" cried the girl, with a laugh. "He's never even asked me to."

"'Pon my soul!" exclaimed Glenn. "Can't you construe the act for the word? Would ye rather be servant than wife?"

"Wife!" a bit hysterical.

"Would ye rather go back there, wherever 'tis, to—to what fate awaits ye, than marry me?"

"Yes," slowly. "There are few fates worse than a loveless marriage."

"You mean that because you do not love me—"

"There is yet a more important reason, milord."

"Woman, this is no time to argue the point unless you want to be dragged back to Albany this very hour. Find some good reason why you cannot wed."

"You haven't asked me yet!"

"Oh—ah! 'Tis that again! Well, then, Martha Ball, will you be my wife and quick about it?"

"Not—not just because you hate to have your stubborn way questioned and fear to be bested in this matter."

"I don't understand you," said he.

"Nor I myself, quite, and yet I know that I shall not wed any man without love."

"You mean that you do not love me?"

But he was forced to tear her hands

down from her blushing face that he might read the truth written there for all to see.

"Why, Martha Ball," began he slowly, "I do not offer thee marriage without love, nor would I wed thee, though a stubborn man and much given to having mine own way, unless I was fair certain you loved me or was very near it."

He would have said more. He wanted to tell her that he had loved her ever since that night when she came to stand so bravely before him like a Roman virgin with a knife hidden in her girdle facing a victorious visigoth. But Matana had been watching outside and now ran in to tell them that the officer and his men were coming down the street.

"Proceed with the ceremony," commanded Glenn. "Go on—at once!"

"Do you, Martha Ball," began the friar, "take this man—"

"Oh, my goodness," she interrupted with a laugh. "I had most forgotten!"

"Forgotten what?" demanded Glenn.

"That Martha Ball is not here."

"G's love!" exclaimed Glenn in bewilderment. "Then where is she if not here?"

"In New York."

Explanation began to dawn in Glenn's puzzled mind—a substitute; a changeling, some sharp practice—

"If not Martha Ball," he cried, "then who are you?"

"I am—I am—oh, surely you must have guessed!"

"I have probably guessed everything but the truth."

"I am—oh, don't you know that I am Penelope Lindsay, the ward of Lord Cornbury?"

A sharp word came whistling through Glenn Sanders's teeth, a word more of surprise than profane.

"Well, what o' it?" still in a stubborn mood. "You are the same woman, whatever the name, and I could love thee no more whether serving maid or governor's ward, so on with the ceremony!"

When the lieutenant demanded the person of Martha Ball, Glenn came out to announce, smiling, that she was not there.

"There's no Martha Ball here, lieutenant," said he.

"Of course not," swore the officer, "and never was. Bring out Penelope Lindsay, if you must quibble over names."

"Nor is there any Penelope Lindsay here either," answered Glenn.

"What?" cried the officer. "That girl's here. Why, 's death, I'm no fool—I can see her myself, with these two eyes, standing by the doorway!"

"'Tis Mme. Sanders you see," answered Glenn. "Respects to our dear uncle, his excellency, and I wish you a very happy journey homeward!"

#### THE END



## CALENDAR

**M**AY, and a motor of silver and blue.

The cobalt sky aquiver  
With stars, half shawled by lilac mists;  
And the freshet winds from the river.

June. The headlights show daisy fields  
Like wraiths, running silently by.  
A sweet magnolia. A Rambler rose.  
And the moon in a green-gold sky.

What are eternal verities?  
Laughter? Vicissitudes? Tears?  
Or a handful of valiant memories matched  
Against the march of the years?

*Frances Taylor Patterson.*



# Loretta Brodell

By KIM NIGHT

## WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PARTS I and II

JAMES CHILTON, member of an exclusive New York club, poloist, veteran of the late great war, *et cetera*, is an admirer of six-gun literature. He detects a fellow member cheating at cards. Chilton knocks this Darril Morduant down, and the cheat resigns from the club. But Morduant is found murdered a few hours later, and Chilton had publicly threatened to kill him on sight. Chilton flees, mainly to deflect suspicion from a club friend, who likewise had quarreled with Morduant, and heads for the Arizona desert. On a Santa Fe train he knocks unconscious a New York detective who is trailing him, stops the train and escapes afoot in the sandy waste. The detective enlists the three belligerent Brodells—Skeeter, Jack, and Buckshot—to run down the fugitive for the ten thousand dollar reward. Their young and lovely sister, Loretta, feeds the weary Chilton and gives him their fastest horse. Her brothers do not blame her—the queen can do no wrong—but they set out to slay the New York “gunman.” Loretta, too, rides after Chilton with a telegram from New York saying that Morduant really committed suicide. She finds the fugitive just after he has killed a strange pursuer.

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### AGAINST THE WORLD.

A QUESTION existed now, the answer to which was to make an immeasurable difference in Jim Chilton's life.

Who was the man he had killed?

Unless that dead man happened by some hideous chance to be one of the Brodell's, Chilton felt no spark of regret for what he

had done— not even though he realized that he had made himself an outlaw. To outlaw himself from society seemed to be for some reason or other an inconsequential matter. But to break his promise to that girl—that was in his mind unforgivable—far more sinful than the killing of a man.

“They cornered me,” he said. “I had to fire. If I had not, I would be a dead man now.”

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for April 25*

He went again to the body and this time looked into the face. It was a haggard face with thin bluish lips drawn tightly across the stained teeth. The brown of the skin had turned to the color of soap.

Jim tried to recall the features of each one of those three portraits the girl had shown him. He looked back to her. "This man is not your brother," he said.

She shook her head.

"But you know him," Jim went on. "When you saw him something seemed to startle you, to horrify you. Or was it that you were thrilled with some other feeling—other than horror? Could it be that you were glad?"

"Yes," she admitted. "Although in the eyes of the law you are a murderer now, you aren't one in my eyes! If I had seen this man I myself would have wanted him killed. After many months I have wanted to see him again. Not that I could have killed him myself. No! But you have punished him—as he deserved."

Chilton was at a loss. "If he is a criminal—"

"He is a criminal. One night he came to our ranch. It was when my brothers were riding the range before the spring round-up. They were gone for several weeks. This man came with a bullet in the arm. I nursed him, fed him. He said he had been wounded in a feud and begged me to hide him. This I did. Then when he was strong enough—it was the night before my brothers came on the scene, he repaid me by—"

She was not able to finish immediately. Chilton saw the blood drain from her cheeks in the fury of that memory. He looked again into the soaplike face and the bared teeth of the dead man, and smiled in grim triumph at what he had done.

"I fought the man," the girl was at last able to go on: "He was desperate, almost insane. We fought—not like a man and a woman—but like two wild beasts. I could not, of course, hurt him—he was a huge man, as you see. I can remember how he almost broke my arm. If my screams had not brought one of the ranch hands, I really believed he would have killed me outright. The old stable mozo came. This man ran

away— Ever since I have been wondering just what I would do if we met again!"

"Your brothers—"

"They knew nothing of it. We kept it a secret, the old mozo and I. If my brothers had known what had happened they would have killed a score of men in their madness, shooting down any one who even faintly resembled the scoundrel."

It was thus that James Chilton assumed his new rôle of outlaw. His first revulsion at the realization that he was a murderer left him. He became in that hour a changed man.

"You find me an escaped murderer now," he said, "and one without a conscience, without regret. He went to her, took her hands, spoke in a changed voice. "You would better go back to your brothers, for I'm a different man than the one you knew before."

Her answer astonished him. He felt the grip of her hands. He felt them throb, he felt their heat, he felt as if she were imparting the intensity of her statement through those hands into his: "If you are found now, what hope can you expect? You are cornered, the whole range is trailing you. They will get you sooner or later, and condemn you. Can you ask me to leave you now—when I am convinced of your innocence?"

He stared into her face, knitting his heavy eyebrows together incredulously. "You don't mean to say you're casting your lot with me!"

"I do!"

He shook his head. "It's preposterous to think of, girl. The idea of your living with me in this desert while we're pursued on every hand! Don't you understand it's a life or death combat now. Any man I meet I must shoot to kill."

"Yes. Any man you meet you must fight. And I believe you can beat them all," she declared. Then as she drew her hands away, she added: "You can beat them all—except those three—my brothers. When *they* come—I want to be with you, I tell you!"

The cañon had turned dark. There was a thin line of red light along the course of the western wall. And against this Chilton

could see the silhouettes of a posse of riders.

He pointed upward. The girl looked.

"Do you see that?" he asked. "What am I to do now but fight them? Can you bear to be here and see me shoot down other men—as if I were fighting off a pack of wolves?"

"I can! Fight them! Don't let them take you! They will kill you on sight!" She was resolute in her answer: "Give way to no one. You can hold this valley. They say it's been done before. One man can fight off a posse. But when my brothers come—"

She did not finish. Chilton himself took her up at her word: "Yes, I must not forget what I promised you. When your brothers come—they are immune."

"Even then, I don't want you to give up!"

"We can't cross that bridge yet," Chilton said. "First you are going to be put through the grueling experience of seeing me shoot down any man that comes within my range."

"Count on me to stay here with you just the same!" she announced.

"You won't leave me—not even if I kill men before your very eyes?" Chilton asked.

"Not even then. You are at bay. Whatever you do now is in self-defense. I understand everything now. You came here sacrificing yourself for a friend. This telegram tells me that. You were hounded—an innocent man. They cornered you. You were compelled to fire. You are without blame in my eyes. If you kill others you'll still be without blame." She went to him again. "I want you to go on fighting!"

Chilton was watching that posse galloping along the rim of the cañon toward the opening at the end.

"Fight them all—until my brothers come!" the girl said. "When they come, let them be your judge. They are just men. If they condemn you—" She hesitated as if finding herself suddenly against an insurmountable wall.

"Yes, if they condemn me," Chilton said with a shrug of the shoulders, "I suppose then I'll lose even you!"

"No! no! I didn't say that!" She went into his arms. "You can count on me—even if I have to go against *them*!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### BESIEGED!

**S**MOO PASQUAL, the outlaw, rode his stocky pinto down the rocky defile which led to the mouth of the cañon. He was followed by three men. It was moonlight now, and little could be seen of his followers. Tom Tampico, who followed close behind him, was a big man and the only one who wore chaps. The straw sombrero of Garcia, the half-breed, was the highest point of light in the group. Straggling behind was the furtive and cautious little mozo whom they called Swink. Under the brim of his hat the lower part of his face was revealed haggard and yellow.

"Never seen a man more scairt in my life!" Pasqual was saying. He referred to the rider who had directed them to this cañon. It was the companion of the man whom Chilton had killed. "A fine coot to be trailin' a gunman! Ten thousand reward brings 'em all out'n their holes—these coyotes. Brave men, scairt men, daft men—it's all the same. All think they kin step up and plug this hellbender—until they meet him face to face—then all they dast do is to wheel their brons and trail off for another state!"

"Still and all the way he described that there murderer makes me think we'd orter go careful like, chief!" the man with the chaps cautioned.

"Look here, Tampico, are you-all goin' to turn yaller and run away—like you done up thar to the Santa Fe spur?" the chief asked pointedly.

"He said this hombre we're after stuck his head over the rock like he was a gila monster lickin' a heel-fly! It was horrible—that's what he said. One shot—bingo! And a long one at that! Dropped his man and ducked all in one flash. What good is ten thousand reward if that happens to *us*!"

"Tain't goin' to happen to nobody. Soon as the moon shifts over that mesa a bit, we

kin ride our brons in through this pass. It'll be pitch dark. Swink, where are you at? You climb up thar over that bowlder, and tell us what you see."

The foxlike man with the cartridge belt and alpaca coat dismounted and scrambled to the top of the bowlder.

"The cañon's all lit up, chief," he said.

"Do you see anything like a hoss or a man?"

"I see a man lyin' on the sand like he was asleep, chief. But it's a good long ways off."

"Most like he's the dead man," Garcia decided. "The hombre we're after ain't goin' to go stretchin' hisself out in the sand in full view of us—leastwise not until he gits some lead in him." The half-breed lit a rolled cigarette, the flame illuminating a twisted mouth and a cruel Mongolian cast of face.

"Fire at him and see if you kin wake him up," the chief ordered.

"Couldn't come within ten feet of him, chief—not in this light," Swink answered.

"Fire anyways. He'll hear it if he's alive. Likewise you may draw fire from somewheres else. Watch for a flash."

Swink obeyed. The man lying partly concealed in the weeds, did not move.

"He's daid all right," Swink reported. "Cain't see that he moved. But I see somethin' else. Some one movin' off thar beyond that mesquite patch. Damn me, chief, if I don't see two of 'em!"

"Two? You're locoed! The hell-bender's in there by hisself. They's only one hombre in thar—You're drunk!"

"One hombre—sure! The other's a woman!"

The heavy and cumbersome Pasqual scrambled up to the crest of the rock. Usually he preferred his henchmen to take the risks of spying, but on this occasion his curiosity got the better of him.

When he thrust his head over the ledge of the rock he could peer through the narrow dark walls of the cañon mouth to an open moonlit space beyond. There in the dim blue light, against the background of naked sandstone and quartz, he could see two figures.

"A woman, b'God!" Pasqual exclaimed.

"What's happened. We didn't hear nothin' about no woman! They's somethin' wrong here!"

"We got to work this game careful, chief!" Swink advised. "That hombre's watchin' the pass. We can't git into the cañon without we pass through them two bowlders, and he's bearin' on 'em."

From below came Garcia's voice. The only thing that could be seen of the half-breed now was the graceful sweep of his lighted cigarette. "How about sneakin' into the cañon from the other end, chief. They's a side draw there, which you can slide down it, over rocks and sand."

"But you cain't take your mounts," Tom Tampico objected strenuously.

"Don't need no mounts," the chief said. "Garcia's got the right savvy for this business. Sneak in—that's the Mexican way. We came horsin' into this pass with our mounts clatterin' somethin' awful. The hell-bender figures we're goin' to enter this-away: Well we'll leave him stick to that opinion."

"Tampico stays here with the nags, and makes a noise wunst in a while, takin' a shot into the cañon whenever he feels like it. Then Garcia, Swink and me slides down that thar dry waterfall. I know the place you mean. All as you have to do is to close your eyes and jump and you land at the bottom after slidin' a couple hundred yards. The moon's haulin' over the crest of the divide there and we'll be all set for makin' the dee-scent in the dark. Wunst we're in, then all as is necessary is for us to hide in the mesquite somewheres or behind a bowlder, and then start shootin'."

"Remember it's two instead of one, chief. There's the woman to think of."

"Don't think of her—just pot her," Pasqual ordered.

"What if we make a mistake and she turns out to be some one that hadn't ought to be potted?" Swink asked fearfully. "Remember this, chief, we ain't just raidin' a ranch now, and then trailin'. We got to git our man and then cinch our reward."

"A very good point, Swink," Pasqual answered. "We'll leave it this way: don't pot the woman. Plug the hombre soon as you git within range. We'll leave the

woman out of it." He added as an afterthought: "Anyways it won't do us no hurt to take her alive: she might be young."

"That thar last point is a good one, chief," Garcia commented.

Jim Chilton took the advent of those horsemen to the mouth of his cañon as a matter of course. He remarked to the girl that there was nothing to be alarmed about. He commanded the entrance. If any one tried to pass those two bowlders, he could easily pick them off. "The pass," he said, "could be held against a regiment."

He calmly continued eating the supper which the girl had supplied from her food pack. Chilton's own provisions were exhausted.

"What will the end of it all be?" she exclaimed. "What about our provisions? Our water? Ammunition?"

"I don't propose to stay here the rest of my life."

"You can never escape now," she warned him. "It is too late. You will have to give yourself up to my brothers when they come."

"There is, of course, the possibility of fighting one's way out. It would involve a large amount of gun fighting, which might be quite disagreeable to you." He added as if dismissing the whole subject: "Although I am now an outlaw I would rather avoid this business of wholesale murdering—until I am forced."

To Loretta Brodell this implacable calm in the face of certain defeat was incredible. The strength of the man seemed without measurement, like the great moonlit cliffs all about them. She pondered over this for but a moment. Something happened to shatter her thoughts. It was something that came in violent contrast to the serenity of those granite cliffs, to the serenity of that moonlit sky, to the serenity of that man.

Gunfire broke the tense silence. Bullets whizzed, spattered against the granite walls.

Chilton leaped to his feet. They were both in the open—clearly outlined figures in the moonlight, but out of range of any one down there by the mouth of the cañon. Flashes of light from three distinct spots on the opposite side of the cañon-bed revealed

the sobering truth. Chilton and the girl were no longer alone in the cañon.

Chilton checked his flush of anger. He must above all else remain unperturbed. Yet two things maddened him: First his ignorance of the cañon had permitted him to be trapped. Second he was confronted by enemies who were desperate and cowardly: they had fired upon him even though he was sitting up there on that rock ledge, clearly visible in the moonlight and in company with a woman.

These men were not the Brodell brothers, he was certain of that. The Brodell brothers were of a definite stamp. They were the kind of men who would not jeopardize the life of a woman—no matter what was at stake.

These adversaries, Jim Chilton was assured, were cowards and they must be killed.

"Fate seems to be insistent that I continue with my rôle," he said dryly.

He lifted the girl into that same granite bowl in which he had found such a complete refuge during the recent gun duel in which he was engaged.

"Stay here until I return," he said. "Fire your gun intermittently so that they will think that I am here. Meanwhile I will crawl through this brush, and get at them from another direction."

Any objection the girl might have had to this dangerous ruse was cut short by another fusillade of shots that came whizzing from the other side of the cañon. Chilton himself had disappeared in the brush.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SAGE-BRUSH TRICKS.

THE half-breed Garcia, firing indiscriminately at that moonlit patch of rock a hundred yards away, revealed himself a hulking form in the flash of his own gun. Against the white quartz of those cañon walls each shot was like a miniature flare of lightning.

Having emptied his revolver, he waited, his belly on the sand, his huge straw sombrero shoved far back on his head. Fifty yards away on his right hand and consider-

ably nearer to their target, was his chief, Smoo Pasqual. And beyond Pasqual was the diminutive and fox-eyed Swink.

Garcia always remained well in the rear in any such attack. His personal safety was a matter of immeasurable importance to him. When the tide of battle turned he was the first to anticipate it. If it turned against himself and his chief, he had an uncanny faculty—as Pasqual had found out—of vanishing from the scene. This had been the case quite recently when Pasqual and his band had attempted to derail the way train from Mesquite.

At the present moment, however, Garcia enjoyed a sense of complete security. The sand was warm, the mesquite brush enveloped him like a nest; his antagonist seemed strangely small and remote in that immensity of granite cliffs, of moonlit rock strata, of that distant strip of sky visible between the cañon walls.

Garcia's two companions, deployed off there in the black chaparral brush, ceased firing, the echo of their shot crashing back and forth, dwindling to silence. The air settled back from its violent vibration, to a nerve-racking stillness. Garcia felt deafened—as if the conflict were still going on, from wall to wall, in the air all about him, but as if through some physical incapacity he was unable to sense it.

One sound he did hear which startled him: the scurrying of a horned toad through crumpled mesquite leaves. He saw it darting across a patch of moonlight. Something had scared it out of the chaparral—perhaps the click of steel as Garcia was loading his six-gun.

Again the breed felt secure—because he was so insignificant. There was the flash of a shot on the other side of the cañon revealing only the curved edge of a rock slab. His enemy—so Garcia thought—was hiding there with that woman. What they were shooting at could not be guessed: certainly not at Garcia himself, for there was no indication of bullet anywhere in that vicinity.

Pasqual and Swink answered the fire. Again the cañon was riotous with echoes. It was a splendid, a terrifying sound, even to that hardened breed. Although it was

an aimless fusillade of shots, hitting nothing but that tremendous expanse of moonlit granite, Garcia felt a sudden qualm as if the marrow of his bones responded to the chill imminence of disaster.

The thought flashed through his mind: what if that killer had crawled from the protection of his bowlder and left the woman there to fire? What if he were now at large, creeping through the mesquite brush?

Garcia turned about, feeling a strange shudder go down his spine. It was not a coincidence that this fear had gripped him at that moment. Something had suggested it to him. Perhaps it was a sound in the chaparral; perhaps it was the shadow of a man cast by moonlight across the sand in front of him.

The air reverberated with Pasqual's fire—and with Swink's. The precipice behind Garcia seemed to rock in the reverberation. It seemed to fall forward; to crush Garcia back to the sand from which he had tried to lift himself. The moonlight shattered into many blinding rays. A deadening pain throbbed in the back of his skull. As if he were buoyed up by a long gentle flow of surf, Garcia rolled over, looked upward.

A man was bending over him, his sombrero blotting out the moonlight. Hot fingers were clutched at his throat. Garcia's hands were limp, paralyzed, empty of a gun.

Without any conception of what had happened to his henchman, the bandit leader, Pasqual, took advantage of the temporary lull in the firing to advance upon his target. Swink hung behind, preferring to await developments while secure in the protection of a big bowlder. The moon shone down glaringly upon that rock. All eyes were dilated and the moon rays reflected from glistening sand and the wide expanse of quartz and shale made the whole scene as light as day.

Jim Chilton released the clutch of his fingers from his prisoner's throat.

"Stand up," he ordered. "Don't make a sound or I'll kill you. Walk to that rock." He pointed to the bowlder where Swink was ensconced. "I'll tell you what to do



when we get there. Meanwhile, don't forget that I have my automatic pressing between your shoulder-blades."

Garcia did not forget. His head was throbbing murderously, his brain was reeling; the cañon before him was in a dim wavering mist as if he were under fathoms of water, which affected his vision, his breathing, his sense of balance, his sense of weight. He was like a diver lurching slowly along through green depths, who feels light and buoyant, but can make no progress; whose body feels as if floating and whose feet feel as if anchored to the ground.

"That was some smash you give me, pard," Garcia whimpered. "You got a fist which it's like a hoof. I'm doin' what you say. Don't worry about that. Anything you say goes, pard. No argument whatsoever."

"Call out to that man to come over here and help you," Chilton ordered when he came within a few yards of Swink's hiding place.

Garcia obeyed. "Come here, Swink," he called. "Give me a hand."

Swink's little head popped up over the bowlder. Chilton who was shielding himself directly behind his prisoner, caught sight of the long neck, the fragile skull, the narrow shoulders.

"What-all's happened, Garcia?" Swink cried in alarm. "You hit?"

"Tell him you're hit," Chilton ordered. "I'm hit."

Swink strained forward. His long neck gave him the impression of a scraggly hen eying the ground where it has scratched for a worm. Something was definitely wrong.

"Tell him to hurry up," Chilton ordered.

"Shag along here, Swink, give me a hand! I'm hit and I'm faintin'."

Swink was suspicious. Something was wrong. Garcia was not himself. Looming there in the partial obscurity of the shadow, the half-breed seemed strangely dilated. He was a big man, but he appeared much bigger than he ought to have been.

"If you're goin' to keel over, keel over," Swink called out. "I ain't comin' out into the moonlight. They'll pick me off. Call Pasqual back. He's snuck off into the

brush alone. If you're hit we shouldn't orter go on with this till we see where we're at. Go on, faint, and have done with it!"

Garcia's shoulders began to ripple in a low laugh. This was quite a good joke. His captor was not quite equal to the situation: at any rate he was not equal to judging the character of Swink.

"Go on closer," Chilton said.

"Just as you say, pard," Garcia replied almost with a tone of gayety. "But you cain't fool Swink. He's got eyes as sharp as a owl's."

The breed lurched forward again like a drunkard. Again Swink's little head popped up. It would have been a dead sure shot, Chilton reflected. But he still clung to his resolve, to fire only when his hand was forced.

"Call him again."

"Come on, Swink, I cain't drag an inch further. Got a bullet in my neck. Give me a swig. Help me." Garcia was actually laughing. He seemed to enjoy the whole business: it was a good joke on Swink, and it was an excellent joke on his captor, who had no conception of what sort of a man Swink was.

"Don't come any closer there, hombre!" the little fragile-skulled outlaw cried out suddenly.

"Why not?" Garcia chuckled. "Don't you know me. It's yore ole pard, Garcia. That's who it is!"

"It ain't! It's some one else. I know Garcia's voice."

"Convince him! Make him believe!" Chilton ordered. "Tell him you're wounded!"

"Don't you know your ole pard?"

"If it's you, why are you standin' there instead of comin' here to me? You're lo-coed. Come out farther in the light and let me see you."

"Go on out in the light," Chilton ordered. "Take one step."

Garcia obeyed.

Yes, Swink saw who it was. There could be no doubt about it. And there seemed to be little doubt about the fact that he was not in his right mind. He was either wounded, or drunk, or else—

Or else he was standing there shielding

another man! Swink had the answer. He raised his gun.

"Sagebrushin' me! Are you!" he screamed furiously. "Think you can sagebrush little Swink—do you, you sneaky breed! Standin' in front of that killer, and tryin' to git me out in the open! So that's it! Savin' yore own Mex hide and trickin' me! Oh, no! Swink knows a thing or two about double-crostin' his pard. There you go!"

The hysterical little bandit fired, squeezing his trigger in rapid succession as the gun belched out its flame. Garcia sagged at the knees, fell forward into the sand, lying face downward and clutching at the rattleweed in a grip that was never to relax.

Again Jim Chilton found himself face to face with a man who wanted his life. Again it was a matter of which man thought quickest, and fired first.

After Swink had killed his partner, it seemed as if his partner's ghost had arisen from his corpse and was standing behind him to avenge his death. There was the sharp leap of flame from that looming spirit. Swink's own six-gun barked out, shooting wild, kicking itself out of his puny arm.

With the smell of that powder still in Chilton's nostrils, and the sight of those two bandits lying at his feet, he wondered how much further he would have to go in this career of destruction before he could be free.

But there was no moment permitted him to hesitate. The action still demanded all that he had of skill and courage.

Pasqual, oblivious to the fact that those shots behind him had resulted in the death of his two henchmen, was crawling forward.

He had reached the granite bowl in which the girl was ensconced and Chilton could detect his hulking shoulders and his sombrero in a patch of moonlight.

brero, under which was the head of the outlaw Garcia. There had been no struggle. There had been virtually no sound. Garcia remained as he had been lying, belly on the sand. A moment later both men got up.

Then it was that Chilton forced his captive at the point of his gun to walk toward a near-by boulder. The girl had seen the two figures like one man appear in a band of moonlight, disappear, emerge again. A few moments later there was the rapid series of gunflashes, the reports. The man with the sombrero fell. At the same instant the little black figure crouching behind the boulder—the figure of Swink—fell.

All this had consumed a very short time, but it was a long enough space for the third outlaw, the leader Pasqual, to crawl through the chaparral and reach the boulder where the girl was hiding.

As her gaze was intent upon that drama on the other side of the cañon, she became aware suddenly of a form towering above her. It had leaped up as if from the desert sands scarcely an arm's length away.

She screamed, lifted her gun, felt a smart blow on her arm, a hand gripping her, wrenching the weapon away. The huge form blotting out the moonlight had leaped into the granite bowl, and now stood looking down at her.

She sank to her knees.

"It don't appear like you remember me, ma'am," the man said.

She looked up, exhaling her breath in quick gasps. The light fell upon the man's flat brutal face. His high soft voice belonged to the picture which had come up like a nightmare out of the darkness.

Yes, she remembered him. The same shudder went through her which she had experienced when she first saw him riding into her ranch announcing that he was going to shoot a certain man on sight—a certain fugitive. She remembered how he had horrified her because she feared he would kill the man he was after—a man whose life was for some reason or other of immeasurable worth to the girl!

And now here he was, the moonlight throwing his smile into a leer of hideous brutality.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A BANDIT BLUNDERS.

THERE was only one witness to the combat which had just taken place.

That was the Brodell girl. She had seen Chilton emerge from the crush and leap upon that huge mushroomlike som-

"Shoot me daid, but I wouldn't be more surprised!" Pasqual was saying. "The Brodell gal she goes trailin' with a two-gun man! Phoooy! The Brodell gal!"

As yet she was much too frightened to understand the meaning of the words. The advent of this man, leaping over the ledge of rock, and confronting her, had thrown her into a panic. She crawled back, keeping her eyes riveted upon him, as if she did not dare to look away. He followed her to the other rim of the granite bowl—a few yards' distance.

"Look here, maybe I've got this all wrong, miss!" he said in a musical voice. "You ain't trailin' with him! You are trailin' *after* him! Sure! I heard about it. They said you was ridin' like mad down into the desert, wantin' to git the reward yourself. And sure enough you git him first! That's the story! And he took you prisoner!"

"Yes, that's the story," she replied evenly.

"Good enough! Then it shore is lucky we got together! Ain't it now? I'm here to help you. I'll help you git him. We'll fight him off—you and me! And—listen to this: we'll split the reward. Them pards of mine—they won't git a smell of it! I kin give them the slip—the guzzlin' sheep-headed coots! It's you and me for the reward. We'll split it together. No, we'll *spend* it together—that's what!"

The girl had a conviction that she was facing a very desperate man. Perhaps she founded this conviction on the fact that while the cañon was still shaken with that gunshooting, and pungent with the smoke of powder, this man was thinking of love. It was the kind of love that came with drunkenness of combat; it was the kind of love that came after battle. It was not love; it was the frenzy of loot.

"Come here! Here's my hand! Don't be afraid. Take my hand, gal, and we'll shake on this! You and me gits this hell-bender and when we kill him, we celebrate! Don't be afraid of my hand! Come over here, damn you! Don't crawl off, snivelin'. You don't dast go agin me! You don't know who I am, or you wouldn't dast snivel and creep off thataway!"

She covered her face with her hands. No, she was not afraid of him. It was pitiful—that whole exhibition of a brute man with blood heated in lust and murder. She was afraid not of him, but of what was going to happen before her very eyes: he was going to be shot down, as he was standing there leering at her. She herself was kneeling in the granite bottom of the bowl, but he was standing upright, his lumbering body revealed full length in the moonlight.

He had taken her fragile arm in his fist and was pulling her up. She cried out, without trying now to level her frantic voice: "Perhaps you don't know, hombre, that your pards—the ones you want to double-cross—are both hit—"

"Both hit? What's that? Both hit? What the hell!"

"The man you're after shot them both down. I saw it all!"

Momentarily Pasqual was stunned. What was happening? Here he was flushed with the capture of this girl, exultant in what he thought a victory. Then she hurled this news at him, in a voice that was more exultant, more victorious.

"You saw it all, did you? And you're glad, are you? You little varmint! You little hell-cat! Glad I'm getting licked—ay? Well, you don't happen to know just who I am—you little she-devil. Not you! I'm Pasqual! Ever hear of Pasqual. Oh, yes, you've heard my name, but you don't have any savvy about Pasqual hisself! It's me! That's who it is! And I'll show you how I act when my pards is gettin' shot off! I take my loot when I gets it! To hell with a reward. Who wants a better reward—when it's a Brodell gal fallen a prisoner in my arms!"

She tried to beat him off, but she was as helpless as a bird in the coils of a snake.

"Brodells—wow!" he roared in his fury. "They'd give a lot to git somethin' on *me*—they would! Think they kin clean out the whole county of any man who goes agin 'em! Wall Smoo Pasqual is agin 'em! Smoo Pasqual hates 'em! And he's goin' to satisfy his grudge agin 'em by crushin' their little kid sister in his arms! That's who Smoo Pasqual is!"

Pasqual fell forward and the girl found

herself virtually supporting his weight. At some moment during that frenzied shouting of his, which had deafened the girl by the meaning of the words as well as by their loudness, a shot had barked out. She had not heard it. Her mind was a blank as far as any impressions other than that hideous snarling voice were concerned. High and soft as Pasqual's voice was when modulated, it turned into a screech, raucous, crowlike, when he was hysterical.

Pasqual made a convulsive effort to straighten his sagging knees. His sheer weight dragged him down from his clutch upon the girl's shoulder.

He rolled to the edge of the saucerlike slab of granite, dragged himself over it; fell down into the chaparral, and on hands and knees scrambled through the mesquite thorn to an open space beyond.

The girl's horse was there, standing dumbly, sleepily in the blue light. It reared, when this strange looking beast broke through the chaparral to reach for the hanging reins. For a moment it pawed the air, then wheeled about, kicking at the rocks and adobe, and dragging the big weight across a patch of sage.

Smoo Pasqual, clinging to the whirling, terror-stricken mount like a drowning man to a straw, shouted and swore. The horse was comforted. It was not a wild beast, not a bear nor a desert lobo leaping for its throat—but a man!

Pasqual pulled himself, with a last convulsive spurt of strength, to the horse's back, then low-crouched over its withers, rode off to the mouth of the cañon.

No shots followed.

The girl turned. A man had climbed to the rim and with one swing leaped up to the granite bowl.

She saw who it was: Jim Chilton, the man she had fought for, the man who had fought for her. The horror of the gunfight vanished. He was like a primitive man returning home to his cave after a night of fierce and bloody combat—returning home to his cave—and to his mate.

But this was only a taste of what ultimate victory would really mean to them.

The moon went down. There was a brief period of darkness softened by the morning

star. The sky flared. The sun came up. And then came the three Brodells.

## CHAPTER XX.

A CHIVALROUS CARD SHARPER.

JACK BRODELL was the first to arrive at the mouth of the cañon. He found a big man in chapareras occupied with the dual mission of guarding the exit and tending a wounded companion.

"Who are you, hombre, and what are you-all doin' here?" Jack demanded.

"Tampico—that's my name, pard," the last of Pasqual's henchmen answered. "I'm keepin' watch here so's no one can come out'n that gulch."

Jack looked down at the groaning Pasqual who was lying with head on a saddle, in a bed of sage.

"Plugged?" Jack asked.

Tampico nodded. "Durin' the night. They had a hell of a fight in thar."

"I reckon we're all after the same man," Jack said. "Here comes Skeeter and Buck. We heard the news when we was in a saloon up thar near the sierra. Skeeter was gamblin', Buck was guzzlin', I was givin' 'em a tune. We all three hotfooted here, fearin' we might be too late."

"You ain't too late," Tampico declared. "The hellbender is in thar. This man on the ground—he's my pard, Pasqual. They was four of us. Pasqual, he and two others went into the gulch, while I watched the nags and guarded this here openin'. All as I knew was there was a powerful lot of shootin'. The hellbender—he killed two of 'em—and this here pard of mine is dying."

As Jack examined the groaning Pasqual, two other horsemen came into the arroyo down from the desert floor above. They were Skeeter and Buck Brodell, the latter pounding along like a sack of bran without balance, without any conscious attempt to swing with the movement of his horse. That sierra bar on the corner of the desert had apparently served Buck too much tequila.

"What-all's happened?" Buck asked, as if awakening suddenly from a deep coma.

"This here's the cañon where our man

is hidin'." Jack explained. "Come to life, Buck, and git your bearings. Four horse-men got him cornered." Jack was explaining to Skeeter, who sat in his saddle and pulled thoughtfully at his thin mustaches. "This here man on the ground is wounded in the back. That's how the killer shoots. Gits 'em all in the back. I reckon this man—Pasqual they call him—ain't overly sot on tellin' us about it."

Buck lurched down from his horse, stumbled over to the prostrate Pasqual, and literally fell down beside him.

"Here, take a drink of this, hombre. If you're hit, it'll make you feel better." Buck put his arm around the wounded man, pillowed his head on his tremendous chest, and fed him from the bottle like a mother feeding a baby. When Pasqual was through Buck swigged off a good drink himself. "Now tell us all about it," he said affectionately.

While the liquor was taking effect on Pasqual, his henchman Tampico told the brothers what he knew of the situation.

"We wouldn't of cornered the hellbender here, 'cept that he had a woman with him—"

"A woman!" Jack Brodell exclaimed. "What and the hell are you handin' us?"

"That's the honest-to-God truth, gents. We seen her in thar when we first come. Where he found her, we don't know. But it's most like he abducted her. He's a desperate fiend, that's what he is, gents. Knows that he ain't got much longer to live. Knows that he's goin' to be potted by the first man as kin git him within range. So what does he do but rustle some gal from off'n one of these ranches or diggin's hereabouts, and drags her in there—like a coyote drags off a helpless hen from a coop! It's horrible, gents, that's all as I kin say!"

Buck Brodell, lying with his arm about the wounded man, raised his other arm, and waved a tremendous fist in the air!

"Good God!" he murmured solemnly. "A woman—rustled—in there like a hen in the jaws of a coyote! Good God!"

Jack Brodell went toward the two sentinel rocks of the cañon's mouth. Skeeter put both ends of his mustache in his mouth and chewed them.

"Go on, tell us the rest!" Jack cried in tremendous excitement.

"I'll tell you the rest." It was a soft, tremulous voice that made this announcement. The frightened Tampico and the three Brodell brothers all turned toward the wounded man. Pasqual had spoken:

"I'll tell you everything, I will. If I've got any breath left afore I kick off to say a word—I want to curse that thar hellbender which he shot me in the back. You don't know me, you Brodells. You don't care nothin' about me. I'm just a ole cowdog who goes from one ranch to another axin' for a little work punchin' stock. You won't mourn none when I die!"

He whimpered, almost laughed when he said this. His henchman, Tampico, meanwhile was trembling in his boots. Was this to be a dying confession? Was Pasqual actually going to confess himself a bandit leader—right there in the presence of the Brodells?

Tampico stepped back from the group, and picked up the reins of his horse. He stood there with one hand on the reins, another on his holster.

"I reckon that thar hombre is dyin', gents," Tampico said in very honest alarm. "And aside from that, he's had a snootful of likker which it's made his eyes bleery. Don't reckon he'll tell anything as kin be relied on!"

Pasqual lifted himself up from his bed of sage. Buck, in brotherly fashion, held up the outlaw with a tremendous arm. The tight, blood-drained lips of the wounded man grinned uncannily:

"No, gents, I don't reckon you'll believe what I say. I got somethin' that'll make your hair stand on end—you three Brodells. That thar killer in thar—not satisfied with shootin' down two of my pals in cold blood—like they were jack-rabbits; not satisfied with pluggin' me in the back, yaller coyote that he is—what more does he do? Kidnaps the sweetest gal in this here county, the sweetest and purtiest—a young child, that's what she is! Helpless in his hands, like a sage hen attacked by a rattler!"

"Who the hell is this gal!" cried the man most interested in that part of the subject—Jack Brodell.

Pasqual's gray lips tightened further. Through the grinning teeth he murmured exultantly, softly, slowly: "Your sister, gents, that's who she is!"

The irrefutable authority—always a part to the sayings of a dying man—was totally lacking in the case of Pasqual. His womanish voice was now wheedling, whimpering, broken. It could convince nobody.

Jack Brodell swore angrily. It was a very poor time to joke, and a forbidden subject to joke about. He returned from the two boulders of the cañon's mouth, and stood over the wounded man as if ready to pounce upon him. "If you wasn't already plugged!" he cried, "I'd shore finish you for sayin' that!"

"Sayin' what?" Buck Brodell asked thickly. "What'd he say? Some gal been rustled. What gal? What sister? What's all the trouble anyway?"

Buck's impression of the whole affair had become badly muddled since their meeting at the sierra drinking tavern. He knew he was gunning for an escaped murderer. He knew the murderer was cornered in that cañon. He knew by experience that no one could go into that cañon's mouth without being shot at very effectually by whoever was inside.

He knew that the hellbender he was after had imposed upon his sister's credulity and goodness of heart, and had been helped by her. He also knew that the sun had arisen, was flaming with extraordinary grandeur over those eastern mesas. He knew the air was thin and bracing. He knew that his head was whirling gloriously. "What-all are you fellows palaverin' about? Hidin' somethin' from me?" He began to swear, to lose himself completely in a storm of oaths.

Skeeter Brodell had been affected quite differently by the wounded man's announcement. He stopped chewing his mustache, as you will see a man who is surprised stop chewing his tobacco, and set his jaws. Skeeter's jaws were whitened. His eyes narrowed to points of pallid fire. That was his only outward change in aspect.

Without answering or denying Pasqual's astounding sentence, Skeeter calmly pressed

his horse toward the mouth of the cañon, preventing his younger brother Jack from bolting headlong inside to his death. That was Skeeter's first thought.

As for the little sister, helpless in there with a desperate killer—that was of course much more serious, but it would take judicious maneuvering—something which Jack knew nothing of. Having put himself between Jack and the cañon's mouth, Skeeter waited for the boy to absorb and believe the truth.

"Just what-all did I understand you to say, hombre?" Skeeter now asked Pasqual with inscrutable coolness.

Pasqual, confident of the fact that the Brodell brothers would not harm a man already dying from a wound, repeated with great unction, as if the taste of his words delighted his tongue:

"The hellbender we're all after has cornered your little sister in there, and he's shootin' down any man fool enough to git within his range!"

These were terrible words. Even Buck Brodell began to see the light. Slowly an impression gripped him—an impression that a great injustice was being done him—an injustice that could never be righted! A wrong that could not be avenged—not even if he killed every man in the world!

He scrambled to his feet, and stood reeling, dazed, as if some one had stunned him with a blow in the face. His red eyes bulged. His huge mouth gaped; he choked convulsively on an oath. His flushed beet-red face was drained, turning to a splotchy gray, blossoming with purple capillaries. In this fit of utter impotency, he turned to his elder brother:

Skeeter was the man to look to now.

"Git on your horse, Buck," Skeeter ordered calmly.

Jack was already in the saddle. He wheeled his horse—just as Skeeter had expected, and spurred it on a bolt for the mouth of the cañon.

"I knew you'd do that, you damned little blowfly!" Skeeter said, gripping the reins of Jack's horse. "That hellbender's shot down every man that's been in there, and so you think *you* kin hoss in! You want to git dropped in yore tracks?"

"Damn right, I do!" Jack screamed voicelessly. "Little maw is in there, ain't she?" He tried to yank the reins away. "You mean you're afraid to go in there and git plugged—when maw is in there waitin' for us to save her! If that's the truth, Skeeter, I should order shoot you down here and now for the yaller skunk you are!"

"If we all go in there and git plugged—like the way these here coots has just done," Skeeter said, pointing to the wounded Pasqual, "then who will save maw?"

Jack saw the point to this remark. What was the use of getting killed, unless it meant that their little sister was saved?

"What we got to do is to get into that cañon—without all three of us gettin' plugged," Skeeter said.

Tampico spoke up: "Pasqual and two of his pards got in all right. What they couldn't do was to git out."

"How'd they get in without they was all plugged, one by one?" Skeeter asked.

"They slid down a ravine in the pitch dark. That was in dead of night. If you tried it now—the hellbender would have time to practice on you for a while first, and then finish you when he felt like it."

Buckshot suggested his own characteristic method:

"The only way is to make a head-on dash—gallopin' our hosses in all at wunst. Some one's liable to git to cover afore gettin' plugged."

To the surprise of every one, including Buckshot himself, the cautious Skeeter seemed to agree with this opinion. It was no time to be over-cautious now—with their little sister in there, at the mercy of a desperado.

"Buckshot's right," Skeeter said. He pointed to a pillar of granite on the side of the cañon wall. If that pillar could be reached there was a cavelike hollow which would afford complete protection against gunfire. "If all three of us rides in—as far as that there hump of granite the first man I reckon will git plugged. The other two most like will git there safe. Then wunst we git in, it'll be easy."

"That suits me," Jack said. "I'll horse in first. You and Buck kin foller."

Still Skeeter did not let go the reins.

Buck Brodell meanwhile began to understand the seriousness of the whole situation. His elder brother had agreed to a desperate move. All three were to ride in, galloping their horses toward the nearest protection. It was a spurt of scarcely twenty yards. Unquestionably their enemy could pick one of them off—the first one, who would be acting as a shield to the other two.

In the vital drama of this crisis, Buck had become extraordinarily sober. The one outstanding fact of the whole situation was perfectly clear to him: one of the Brodell brothers must sacrifice his life.

"It'll be me!" Buck shouted. "Jack, he's the youngest. 'Tain't fair he should make a target out'n hisself. Maw she'd never forgive us. Skeeter's got to keep hisself safe, else who'd be our leader in these here fights? It's got to be me!"

He concluded with a dramatic swagger, a sorrowful expression. He patted himself on the chest and said in a heart-rending tone. "Buck Brodell—he goes!"

Skeeter made no such dramatic offer to sacrifice his life. Such a display—however noble—was distasteful to him. He resumed biting one end of his thin rusty mustache. Then:

"We'll draw cards for it," he commanded.

Buck agreed: "Ace high. High man will go."

"Jake," the younger brother consented.

Tom Tampico stared opened mouthed, his heavy chap-clothed legs astride, his hairy hand still hanging to the bridle of his horse. Pasqual sank back, his head resting again upon the hot saddle as he gazed through dim eyes at the three brothers.

In the intense excitement of this emotional climax the brothers had only one thought in their minds: Their little sister was held a prisoner by a murderous beast, and what was worse—a beast at bay. Both the nimble-witted Jack and the stolid Buckshot Brodell forgot the very well known fact that their elder brother Skeeter could deal any card he wanted from a pack no matter how much it was shuffled or cut.

Since it was agreed that the highest man

was to go in first, Skeeter of course dealt himself an ace. In order that there could be no argument whatsoever about his being the highest, he dealt Jack a deuce of spades, and Buckshot fared no better.

"Good God—a deuce of clubs!" Buck snorted disgustedly. "Luck shore's goin' agin me in this fight!"

"Bein' I got an ace, I go in first," Skeeter said quietly. "If the felon in thar takes a pot at me—which ain't unlikely—well and good. I'll stay in my saddle long enough so's you two kin shield yourself behind me, 'til you git to that thar hump of rock. Then it's up to you to blaze away at him as scientific-like as—well, as usual."

Jack reached for his brother's hand which was still gripping the reins of his horse. Skeeter drew it away—to avoid any display of untimely sentiment.

Buckshot's mind could not react to so many vital emotions in that swift moment of time. The dealing of cards, the probable death of Skeeter, the hideous danger of their little sister—the starting of their attack: out of this grab-bag of tragedy and combat, his mind lit upon one simple and insignificant truth:

"Deuce of clubs! Holy cripes! Deuce of—say, by hell!—I'll be damned if he didn't cold-deck us!"

"Go on, Skeeter," Jack said, "we're following."

Skeeter had already wheeled his horse, and spurred it to a gallop.

Jack followed, his own horse's head lapped on the quarters of Skeeter's mount.

Then came Buck, fuming and cursing.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE DEGREES OF LOVE.

**J**IM CHILTON had kept a long and leisurely vigil. The few yards of space between the cañon's mouth and the pillar of granite that afforded the first refuge, could be traversed in a few seconds. But in those few seconds there was time enough for the squeezing of a gun trigger, the killing of a man.

Chilton received that surprise attack with perfect equanimity. All he had to do was

to raise his gun and fire. But there were three riders in all. It would have been a simple enough matter to kill one of them, but the two others could be reasonably sure of reaching the refuge of that protruding cliff.

Even to kill one of those men required the quickest possible action. Chilton raised his gun without a flutter. He was deliberate even when pressed to act on the instant. The fact was, surprised as he was by this sudden onslaught of three riders, he had expected some sort of an attack at this very time—sunrise.

He had even foreseen the possibility of several riders galloping in at once. He reflected that this would be a sure way of forcing the entrance, provided they could find riders who were not afraid to die. It looked like certain death to the first man who entered. The Brodell brothers in fact had not doubted that point. One of them would drop.

But as Chilton peered through the intervening screen of mesquite, with his forehead just above the brim of his granite bowl, he held his raised gun without squeezing the trigger.

Something had given him a palpable shock. His whole frame seemed to react, to stiffen. He was aghast—not that the shock was unpleasant; it was actually a thrill. He had seen something very much like a miracle—overwhelming, astonishing.

Back in the recesses of his consciousness was an indelible picture of three strong faces: a man with bushy black hair, a man with a harsh poker face, a boy with gleaming black eyes and raw-tinted cheeks and a violin in the crook of his arm. The photographs he had seen of those men were lifeless, laughable, giving only the faint echo of latent strength and ferocity. They were the prim, stiff likenesses of old fashioned photography. And now Jim Chilton saw those same faces transfigured in that brief and glorious flash of time.

They were far off, but he recognized them beyond the shadow of a doubt: three faces resplendent in this moment of terrific danger, of combat, of almost certain sacrifice. The low sun slanted into their eyes, shining, radiant. Skeeter Brodell's was the only



head to be clearly seen, grim, gaunt, terrible in the expectancy of death. Jack was behind him, revealing only a second's glimpse. Buckshot was low-crouched, screened by Skeeter's mount.

All this happened in the space of time it would have taken Chilton to raise his gun, bring it down with a squeezing of the trigger, bearing upon the first rider.

The girl was by Chilton's side. She saw him hesitate. Her glance went to the three riders; she recognized them. At last this man she was in love with was face to face with her brothers!

Would he fire?

Would he remember his promises to her? Would he remember those pitifully inadequate pictures she had shown him? In that critical moment—where any move was fraught with life or death, would he pass the test?

Of course while these thoughts flashed through her mind, she herself was acting. She had thrown herself upon Chilton's arm to prevent his firing.

She realized then that she would have been too late—if Chilton himself had not hesitated. She clung to a limp arm, and looked up into his face which was smiling—and for some peculiar reason, actually triumphant.

She knew then what had happened: Jim Chilton could have killed one of her brothers. But he had remembered his promise to her.

As she looked up to him, her face was eloquent of incredulity, wonder, worship.

"Why didn't you fire?" she could not help asking. "You had just time enough. It was an easy shot. You stopped. You must have known that they're after you to kill you."

"I don't know what stopped me," he said. "Hang it all, a man can't remember his promises when three gunmen are after him to kill him! I think it was just the looks of those men that stopped me. They were all three riding in with the certainty that one of them would be dropped. It was the look on their faces. I understand what you mean when you say your brothers can't be beaten!"

"No, you haven't told me what is really

the truth: *you remembered your promise just in that one second!*" She still clung to his arm; she still looked up worshipfully into his face. "I am on your side now—no matter what happens. You've kept your word to me—at a time any man would have broken it. I'm going to give you my word now: From now on we're fighting together. Nothing will make me forsake you now."

They lay down behind the portecoon of the granite rim of the rock. To the girl a tremendous victory had come. As for Jim Chilton, he could not help realizing that by letting those three men into the cañon he had lost the first step in an unbeatable fight. Even that girl, Chilton thought, must have had some inkling of his desperate danger. But it did not matter to her. No defeat could matter when a woman had achieved her greatest victory—the victory of love.

Her words sang in his ears without dwindling away: "*Nothing will make me forsake you now.*" Her voice, still ringing in his ear, was fuller in meaning: she might have added, "*Until death do us part.*"

"I think it would be better for every one concerned if you rejoined your brothers," he suggested.

Her brow clouded. How could he think that of her now? How could he think any woman would be so cowardly as to desert her lover at a time like this? "If they are going to fire at this rock," she said, "I will be killed as well as you."

"You mean you'll stay, even though it might mean your death?"

"If I forsook you, you would most certainly be killed. I believe you wouldn't harm these brothers of mine."

"That's what makes my position very precarious to say the least. They are at liberty to fire at me, as soon as they take up their positions somewhere in that thick brush. I cannot fire back—because of our compact. I am virtually disarmed. If you don't want to see me shot down before your very eyes, I advise you to go out there and join your brothers' side."

"That I won't do. And they'll find it out quick enough."

"And when they find it out?"

"When they find it out they'll do what-

ever Skeeter says. He's the eldest. He's the law. I hate to think what he will do when he finds out I've forsaken him!"

"You don't mean that he'll harm you!"

"I don't know! Skeeter Brodell is a hard iron-fisted man! Every one who knows him fears him! He does what he thinks is right—not what he wants to do!"

"And still you're sticking with me?" Chilton asked in an incredulous voice.

"I am."

Jim Chilton answered with a tone of calm finality. "Very well then, the game is up. I withdraw." He flipped his automatic in his hand, turning it, and holding the butt toward her. "Take this. Since I can't kill these men, it is of no use to me. I can't fight. I am helpless. I can do nothing. All that is left for me to do is to hide here lying on this slab of granite, while your brothers crawl closer, get their positions, open fire. It is ridiculous, and to keep you here by my side is still more ridiculous. Go out there and tell your brothers that they have won. I am ready for them to take me."

"You are doing this because I am here?"

"I have not told you until this moment that you are the woman I love," Chilton said. "You can see why I am giving up."

A flush swept over her face, leaving it pale. She clutched the automatic, fondling it, holding it to her as if it were a vital and living thing—the effigy of this man himself. He could not use it. She could not let him use it to slay the brothers she idolized and loved—brothers that she had mothered!

And yet what was she doing now in keeping that gun to herself? She was permitting this man to give up his life! She was permitting him to die without honor, without a cause, like a dog shot down in his tracks!

In this consuming conflict, the girl sprang to her feet. She stood up in the clear morning light, her figure glorious in a long slanting sunbeam, her head and shoulders clearly revealed to the view of her brothers.

The three attackers had left their mounts. The girl caught sight of one of them—Skeeter—a hundred yards away from their refuge. A few more yards, a short climb

through the dense mesquite to a bowlder, and he would get Chilton within range.

He hallooed to the girl, calling across the cañon: "Git down out of thar, sis, so's we kin open fire!"

The other two brothers were likewise hidden somewhere in the chaparral, trying to get a range on Chilton's position. Buck's voice came out from somewhere on the cañon side. "Git down, sis. Why in hell don't you jump, sis? Has the gunman got a holt on you? Jump!"

Jack's voice came from another direction. "If you jump, sis, we'll take one pot and finish him! Make it snappy! Skeeter, he's mad enough to blaze away with you standin' there!"

But the girl did not jump. As far as the three brothers could make out she must have been held there by sheer force.

She turned around, looking down again at Jim Chilton.

"You heard what they all said? The game's gone too far now for you to give up. They'll kill you on sight." Her face was tortured. "I can't let them shoot you down that way! It's too horrible—too unjust! Take this—"

She did not hand him the gun. She could not complete the gesture—for its meaning was too terrible. Instead she let it drop from her hand.

He reached for it, looking up into her face with a mute question. Could it be possible that she was going to let him defend himself? Which was to win in that torturing conflict—her love for her brothers or her love for her mate?

She seemed to understand his question as clearly as if he had spoken it.

"No! No!" she cried hysterically. "Not that! Don't hurt them—those boys I love! There must be another way!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE EMISSARY.

THE Brodell brothers were not playing a waiting game. They had left their horses with reins hanging, all three mounts standing in the protection of a shallow draw just behind the abutment of

granite. Jack had climbed up, intent on getting a view of the top of that rock slab where he had caught a fleeting glimpse of his sister and also that of her supposed captor.

Buck had crawled through the mesquite thorn, keeping his belly on the sand. Above him was a thick interlacing of the little twigs and leaves, a complete protection from view. The brush extended part way up the base of the cañon wall. Buck crept until he came to the upper edge. From here he could look across at the slab of granite, where his sister was now standing in full sight of every one.

Skeeter was still farther off, having crept through the mesquite with the hope of getting a view of his enemy from another angle. He had likewise climbed up as far as he dared, with the hope that if he got high enough he could look down into that bowl-shaped slab.

All three brothers kept a constant vigil upon Chilton's refuge with the firm intention of firing the moment they caught sight of him.

One point puzzled all of them. Why hadn't their enemy fired when they were within his range—between the mouth of the cañon and their first refuge?

Skeeter had explained that the hellbender was crafty, and probably was playing a trick of his own.

"We got to go cautious like," he called to his brothers. "You cain't tell what this tenderfoot's up to. I banked on his pickin' one of us off and he didn't. From which I concludes definite: don't bank on his doin' anythin' like you'd think he'll do it. Just figure plain and simple that he's comin' Injun on us soon as ever he gits a good chanst."

Buckshot Brodell had a different view entirely: "The poor coot was so surprised he couldn't fire. Most like he was scairt stiff when he seen the three of us horsin' in. I generally always scare a man stiff all by myself gallopin' after him—let alone three of us."

Young Jack, because of his association with all types of women, good and bad, had an insight into life that was denied both of his brothers.

"I figure the hellbender could of plugged us but didn't," was his precocious and extraordinary guess.

"Jack he sure can spill the foolishhest remark at the best time, as any daft yearling I ever did see!" Buckshot cried in infinite disgust.

Jack was unperturbed. He called out through the sage-brush in a voice that almost any one in the cañon could hear: "Might be he's trickin' us, but I figure maw she's blockin' him in his own drift!"

"What the hell kin you mean by that, you little wart!" Buck cried contemptuously. Long after he had spoken Buck began to receive some vague impressions. Maybe Jack knew what he was talking about. Something to do with sis—who was a woman. If a woman complicated the situation then Buck automatically stopped trying to figure it all out. He grunted and swore, and let Jack go on with his raving.

"I tell you the gal's got him hog-tied or somethin' so's he *can't* fire."

"If you think that," Buckshot cried scornfully, "why don't you shag over thar and ask the gent to give hisself up without no more shootin' or hesitatin'?"

"Tain't a bad idea for a sew-bum!" Jack shouted back. "In fack it's the one and only good idea you ever g've' words to. I'm goin' to take a chanst."

"No, you ain't, young heifer!" It was Skeeter who spoke this time. He was playing his usual rôle of keeping his youngest brother from a suicidal move. "I got my own plans."

He raised his voice. "Hallo thar, sis!" he shouted through the mesquite. "Do you hear me? I'll give you ten minutes to climb down off'n that rock. If you ain't down then, we'll all three of us rush it, and there'll be some hot shootin'. And if you're sot on stayin' thar, you'll be in the thick of it!"

The girl heard this.

She did not reply. She returned instead to Chilton, who, having solved the whole problem and got the only possible logical result, had dismissed it all from his mind. He was now lying comfortably on his back, smoking idly, and watching a buzzard circling in the narrow strip of sky far above.

"That was Skeeter who called out to me," Loretta said. "Did you hear him? They'll take another chance on being shot down by you. They'll rush this bowlder--just as they rushed the mouth of the canon."

"The same thing will result," Chilton declared calmly.

"Yes, except that this time they will finish the fight."

"For that reason I advised you to go back to them. Take them my gun. Give me up."

The girl shook her head. "It won't do any good. Skeeter will kill you--no matter if you give yourself up. There must be another way. Skeeter is unforgiving; he will stick to what he thinks is right no matter how cruel it is! If I could only see one of my other brothers and tell everything! If I could make a truce with them for you and beg them to give you a fair trial--instead of shooting you down like a dog."

"Let's call one of them. Not Skeeter. From what you say, he would be hard to dicker with. But your second brother--the one with the big fists," Chilton had judged Buckshot Brodell by that one glimpse of him and by his picture, as all men judged him--a hail fellow well met. Buck would be a good emissary. He was not only the brother of the Brodells; he was the brother of any man in distress.

"Buck is the quickest to forgive, but he's the slowest to understand," the girl objected. "They can see the bodies of these men you have killed. It would take a long time to convince a man that you were in the right. I know you were in the right. But Buck will draw his own conclusions. It looks as if you're a wholesale killer."

"How about your youngest brother then?"

The girl knitted her brows. "He is only a boy. He thinks too quickly; if he had the idea that you were not playing fair--with me! Nothing in the world could stop his fury. He would be as bad as Skeeter. And yet--he might understand why it is I'm clinging to you in a time like this, when it might mean death. He is the only one of the three who could understand that!

And if I told him, he is the one who would believe. He believes everything I say."

Chilton laughed and watched the straight thread of smoke which he exhaled mounting upward. "Jack the violinist!" he mused. "Jack the specialist in love! This is a very delicate situation--petitioning three pillars of the law not to shoot me, even though the bodies of the men I have killed lie right out there in the sand before their very eyes! It would take a musician to blend these problems. It would take a boy like Jack to understand that this isn't entirely a conflict of murder and abduction, and hate and revenge--"

"But of love!" the girl herself supplemented. "Jack is the one to understand that!"

"Well and good. Let's ask for a truce--for an emissary. We will explain everything to Jack. We will explain that a murderer is desperately in love with his sister and she is so in love with him that she will stick by him in life or death. Is he too young to understand words like that?"

"Not Jack!" the girl cried assuredly.

"Give me your bandanna then," Chilton said. "I'll wave it at the end of this stick. If they consent to parley we'll call for Jack."

Skeeter Brodell called out to his brothers: "All right, men, the time's up. The gal won't give in. She's sage-brushin' us someway or other, and I ain't goin' to stand for it. This here cuddlin' up in the mesquite and waitin' for somethin' to happen is gettin' crazy. We take another chanst! The three of us. Do you hear? Crawl down agin as far as you kin to that rock, then we all make a jump for it."

"Wait till I finish this here flask," Buck called out. "If I ain't likkered up I'm liable to git narvous and shoot maw instead of the hellbender."

"Wait thar, Skeeter! Hold on! I see somethin'. They're holdin' up a bandanna! They've got it on the end of a stick. They're wavin' it. What-all kin that mean?"

"Just one thing," Skeeter announced: "surrender!"

Buckshot having taken his swig, looked

up and saw the bandanna waving from side to side. He lifted his six-gun and wagged it sideways bringing it to bear on the floating bandanna, as he tried to decipher just what it was he was going to shoot.

"Looks like a prairie cock dancin' in front of his hen!" Buck said in some surprise. "Here goes."

"Tain't a prairie cock. It's a bandanna!" Jack cried. "Don't plug it. It's a signal. You're drunk, Buck!"

"I just took a swig, but it ain't took effect yet. Soon as it takes effect I'll see what I'm shootin' at!"

"Don't fire, you lop-eared stew!" Jack cried. "Wait 'til we see what's happenin'."

Skeeter came out from the mesquite, and called: "Come on, gal, stand up, and tell us what your game is!"

Loretta Brodell again appeared over the rim of the boulder.

"I want to see Jack," she said.

"What for?" Skeeter cried suspiciously.

"For a palaver. I want to stop this fight before there's any more bloodshed."

Jack had already started out of the mesquite and was jumping over the thick brush.

Buckshot loomed up, waist deep, like a primal man appearing suddenly out of his lair. He brandished his fists—in one of which was a six-gun.

"Jack, you daft little yearling, you come back! If they's to be a parley leave me do it! They're sage-brushin' us, Skeeter!" he cried hoarsely. "They're goin' to kill the young shaver, I tell ye!"

Skeeter stood, his elongated torso revealed above the mesquite.

"Leave the young varmint go," he decreed definitely. "If the gal axed for him, she'll see he gits back safe."

Buck fumed and swore. The hellbender was "comin' Injun on 'em one by one - and Jack was the first to git trapped!" Something was obviously being slipped over on them. At least over on Buck. He had never seen such a procedure in all the time the three Brodells had been thinning out the bad men from the Cobb's Coulee ranges. The situation was getting more tangled every moment. "Damned if I kin make head or tail on it—without I have another drink!" Buck cried in despair.

Meanwhile Jack had reached the other side of the cañon, leaped across the chaparral, and swung himself up to the rock.

Jim Chilton sat on the granite with hands clasped about his knees. He looked up without flinching at the tall figure of the boy standing above him. Jack looked down, his brows knitted, his mouth set, his whole body alert, as if ready at any moment to spring. Hatred gleamed in his eyes.

Chilton could not help admiring those eyes, because of their strength, their brilliancy, their youth, and the clean vivid fire blazing in them. They were the bright eyes of a boy in superb health, they were the beautiful eyes of a musician, they were the narrowed glinting eyes of a fighter.

Jack's hard set lips parted slightly. He had expected to see a renegade—like any ordinary rustler whom he had trailed down into the desert. Instead he found himself responding to a peculiar thrill: it was the sort of thrill he often felt when he was shown a perfect specimen of life—as for instance a splendid race horse. Nor was the man's face by any means the face of an ordinary tenderfoot. He had the pallor, yes. He lacked the rough, windburned coating of the skin. His face was reddened slightly by the sun, and the short growth of beard gave it a peculiar ferocity—not the ferocity of the cornered Mexican bandit, but a rugged, gaunt ferocity—of a fine stallion, for instance, that has been torn by long rides through mesquite thorn and desert rocks.

Jack Brodell's black eyes met the gray eyes of Jim Chilton and there was a consuming conflict. Both men were, virtually, at a death grip. And yet both men had come together in that first look with a feeling of intense and suppressed worship.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A CHAMPION APPEARS.

**I**T was Jack who broke the spell of that first meeting with his sister's lover.

"All right, hombre," he said, speaking between his clenched teeth. "What'd you call me here for?"

"We decided you were the best one to

find a way out of this little predicament," Chilton replied in a tone that was neither amicable nor threatening. "We want you as a go-between to arrange matters for myself and your brothers."

"Me as a go-between!" Jack exclaimed scoffingly. "That's good! There ain't no matters to be arranged—'cepting only a bit of hemp for to punch your Adam's apple in. If you called me here for to tie up your hands and turn you over to Skeeter, well and good. If not, I might as well vamose back to my brothers and we start the battle agin like it was from the first."

Loretta took her brother's arm. "There are things you must know, before you kill this man," she said. "It won't do us any good to find it all out later. One thing first of all: I myself followed him into this cañon down here into the desert—"

"You followed him!" Jack gasped! "What and the hell, maw! I figured he'd rustled you off after we'd left the outfit?"

"I trailed him because I had something to prove his innocence. You yourself would have followed him for that reason. Neither you nor Buck nor Skeeter would hang an innocent man. You would have trailed him—to save him! That's what I did. I was doing what any Brodell would do!"

"You was in love with him! I knew that from the first!" Jack cried accusingly. "I ain't blamin' you for that, maw. God knows, I kin understand how a gal kin fall for a man—even though he's a plumb cultus gunman like this hombre here. I'm the last to blame you, maw."

"I'm blamin' *him*. Might he didn't actually rustle you down here, but he throwed a snare over you, like. I've throwed snares over gals myself! I know! Buck he wouldn't understand how a man could rope a gal ag'in' her will. And Skeeter he couldn't understand. But me—I understand only too well. And for that reason I'll see to it that this hombre gits the hemp—or else gits plugged by my own six-gun."

"Don't go yet, Jack!" the girl cried, clutching his arm with both her hands. "Wait until I show you something. You can't judge him yet," Jack paused, on the brink of the rock. Loretta then unfolded

the telegram that exonerated Chilton of his first supposed murder.

Her brother glanced at it. He read the last part aloud:

*"Your sacrifice is futile."*

He looked down at Chilton, still seated with hands clasped about his knees, with a cigarette in the corner of his big strong mouth from which a curl of smoke rose perpendicularly into the air.

"Sacrifice?" Jack demanded. "What sacrifice? What-all does this mean? Why do you show me a bit of paper at a time like this? You ain't stallin', maw—and all because this here gunman's castin' his speel over you!"

"A man committed suicide in New York," the girl explained. "You tell him the rest," she said to Chilton.

"In a word all it amounted to was this," Chilton replied. "A friend of mine, a very good friend I might say, was suspected strongly of the murder. He had a wife and daughter who would have suffered had there been a trial. Fact was, there was one chance, a very slim one I admit, of this friend of mine being convicted. At any rate I thought for the sport of it I would masquerade as a fugitive for the excitement. I have not been disappointed."

"That was your sacrifice, was it?" Jack asked slowly.

"I didn't term it that myself," Chilton snapped back with a smile.

"But it *was* a sacrifice, damn you!" Jack cried. "Why and the hell did you go on shootin' up the whole county for? We'd have fixed it all up right. But Skeeter—he cain't forgive no wholesale murderin' like this"—Jack pointed to the cañon floor. Standing up as he was at the brink of the huge boulder he could see the bodies of the man Chilton had killed. "We've trailed a lot of desperadoes, but never any which has bowled 'em down thisaway, like they was nine-pins!"

"It's about that point that I wish to have your brother Skeeter judge me," Chilton said.

Jack shook his head. "It's no use, hombre. You're done for. I wouldn't stand between my brother Skeeter and the law. He'll do what's right. I could guarantee

explainin' about your swipin' my sombrero maybe, and likewise about that there drinkin' flask of Buck's. But you've plugged three men—four, if you count that wounded hombre out thar at the mouth of the cañon. And besides that you've actually rustled Skeeter's hoss! That thar last point means the necktie without no palaverin'."

"What man is out there at the mouth of the cañon wounded?" the girl asked.

"A big man with a flat face like a breed's, and a voice which it was high and soft like a woman's, only much softer than a cantina gal's."

"Was it Smoo Pasqual?" the girl asked, leading up with considerable adroitness to the one point that she knew would win her brother over to Chilton's side.

"Yes, Smoo Pasqual I reckon was what they called him," Jack admitted.

"Do you want to know why this man here shot at him, Jack?" the girl went on pointedly.

"For the same reason I figure he's thrown his gun on everybody else as has crossed his path!"

The girl fired up angrily: "He has not thrown on any one who has crossed his path—except to protect himself—or to protect me!"

"To protect you!" Jack repeated incredulously.

"He didn't fire at you three when you made that dash in the open there—coming into the cañon."

"We was too quick—so Buck figured."

"Did *you* figure that?" the girl asked accusingly.

Jack flinched. "No, I figured you'd made a dicker with him," he said almost sheepishly.

"All right, Jack, you understood that—when Skeeter and Buck most likely couldn't understand. So I'll tell you one thing else which you'll understand: This man loves me and I believe in him."

Jack flinched again. The ground was getting shaky. "Damn it all! I knowed that from the first, too! But it don't let him out!"

"One thing else: Smoo Pasqual was the only one he shot in the back."

Jack smiled for the first time, it was a

grim threatening smile. "We all three of us noticed that thar point!" he said.

"And he did it because Smoo Pasqual was holding me in his arms, and I was fighting desperately to free myself from his hideous kisses."

Jack turned deathly pale. It was the first time in his life he had ever heard, or ever dreamed, of his sister's being held in any man's embrace. No man had ever dared. She was a Brodell woman—and all Brodell women had been revered and feared. But here was a man with Mexican blood who had actually insulted her!

"If I'd been here—"

"You'd have plugged him, Jack. And that's just what this man did."

Jack seemed to collect himself from his daze.

"Then it was to save you, maw, that he did that?"

He looked down at Jim Chilton. Again there was a combat of keen vital glances, a combat which was stripped of hostility as it had been upon their first sight of each other. Jack was looking not at a man whom he hated, but a man who was of his own kind, of his own race. Their contact was not the contact of enmity but of worship.

Almost as if each had had the impulse at the very same instant, their eyes softened; Jim Chilton raised his hand. Jack reached down to him and took it.

In all that range where every man's hand was against his, where every man wanted to capture him dead or alive, Chilton found one man on his side.

And he was as good as seven men, for he was a Brodell.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### JUSTICE INEXORABLE.

**J**ACK BRODELL, returning to his brothers, had a message to deliver which took all that he possessed of diplomacy and skill.

"Now don't you start calling me loco when I say what I got to say," he began, "and I'm specifyin' you in particular, Buck. I don't reckon you got savvy enough

to git my point any way, but I'm bankin' on Skeeter doin' a powerful lot of thinkin' when he hears me."

"For hell's sake, shoot!" Buck grumbled.

"In plain terms, men, it's this," Jack said. "We hadn't oughta plug that gent over there, for the simple reason that we got him down. It's just what I said. Maw's hog-tied him. He can't fire. He give his word to her that he won't fire at us—us bein' her brothers."

"What's that got to do with it?" Buck asked.

"Just this: we can't fire on a man who ain't goin' to fire back. It's cheatin'."

"Of all the locoed jacks that I ever did meet up with!" Buck cried. "If we-all did our man-huntin' on them lines then any Mex rustler could give us the slip by just announcin' friendly like that he ain't goin' to fire on us."

"I thought you was always supposed to be the best sport of this outfit," Jack said.

This was a master stroke. Buck turned a deep purple.

Jack continued. "Of course, I don't mean that we're goin' to let this hombre get away. Not by no means. He's goin' to give himself up."

Skeeter grabbed his mustache and bit it—certain sign of suppressed astonishment.

"Yes, I mean what I say," Jack repeated, "he givin' hisself up to us. But in doing that he goes on the guarantee that we ain't goin' to plug him when he sticks his head above that thar rock."

"For why is he sot on delayin' the party?" Buck asked. "He gets bumped off sooner or later anyways. Why stretch out his agony?"

"He's figurin' on Skeeter here givin' him a trial."

"A trial for what?" Buck asked while Skeeter was chewing at his mustache.

"For killin' them hombres lyin' down there in the sand."

"They're dead, ain't they?" Buck asked. "Well, if they're dead how comes he figures a trial will do him any good?"

"He admits he shot 'em," Jack said, "but there was this here legal twist which they calls it 'extenuating circumstances'."

"Oh, hell!" from Buck.

"One of which is this"—Jack played his ace—"that hombre which calls hisself Pasqual and which we found there at the cañon's mouth—he insulted our sister."

Skeeter stopped chewing his mustache and darted a venomous glance at Jack's eyes. Jack must have been lying. No! He had told the truth. Skeeter could see it. There was no sign of bluffing about Jack's mouth. Jack had told the hideous truth: their sister had been insulted, attacked.

"Pasqual was shot in the back—and by that hombre we're hankerin' for to kill."

Skeeter made an announcement. "If Pasqual dies, that there is one murder we clear this gent of here and now."

Buck had not remained silent. In fact, he had not even remained in the vicinity of his two brothers. As soon as he understood the purport of Jack's words—that that coyote Pasqual had insulted their beloved Loretta, Buck leaped across the sage patches, tore through the mesquite like a rampant bull, and oblivious of any danger from the vicinity of Chilton's rock, he ran toward the mouth of the cañon where he had last seen the wounded Pasqual.

Jack swore in anger at having his recital interrupted at the most vital point.

"Never mind," Skeeter said quietly. "Buck he's gone to kill Pasqual."

That was of course quite apparent. While Buck was absent Skeeter and Jack solved the whole problem—perhaps more satisfactorily than if their bull-headed brother had been with them.

Skeeter's judgment was this: "We'll take him prisoner—bein' he wants to give himself up. They's two good reasons for doin' this—one is that it ain't clean fightin' to open fire on him when he's give' maw a promise he won't hurt us. That means right there that we got to give him a trial. Then this here point you mention about his killin' a man for to protect her—that clears him of one murder good and clean to start with. Then we'll try him for these here other killin's which I don't reckon he's got any chance of gettin' out of." Skeeter lapsed into his sterner self. "So we don't lose either ways."

"I'll go and git 'em then, chief," Jack said to his brother.



Before he went Skeeter made a final announcement: "We'll leave Buck take him back to the Box-B." Skeeter always remembered that Buck liked the office of the conquering hero returning with the spoils. "I'll see that these here men he's bumped off is brought up to the outfit. I'll git a wagon from one of these here muckers. Then all as you have to do is to bring maw home. I reckon she'll like to have a heart to heart talk with you before the trial."

Jack had scarcely left the company of his brother when Buck returned from the cañon's mouth. He had mounted his horse and was galloping furiously across the cañon bed.

He drew up in the sage patch before Skeeter. Something had happened, as Skeeter could plainly see, which had thrown Buck into a violent state of mental confusion.

"Now what-all's happened?" Skeeter asked.

"Damned if I know, chief!" Buck cried. "This here cañon's gettin' on my nerves. Cain't make head or tail out'n nothin'. That hombre Pasqual which we found dyin' out thar beyond them bowlders—well he's disappeared. What do you make out'n that, chief? And his pardner which was with him—he's went also! No sign of either of 'em anywheres. Plumb vanished like they was ghosts!"

Buck took a swig and under its influence was able to make the first rational statement: "What I figured was that them two was stayin' there at the cañon's mouth guardin' it, so as to claim part of the reward. Am I right, chief? Then how come they vamosed when we shows up? Who's afraid of us? Only such hombres as ain't got a clear conscience—that's who! Pasqual he's plumb cultus, I'll bet my last dollar on that, chief!"

His brother Skeeter did a lot of thinking while Buck stumbled on.

"If ever I seen a man who was drawin' his last breath, it was that coyote, Pasqual," Skeeter said. "I figure his pard stuck him on a hoss and shagged out. Bein' Pasqual got fresh with Loretta, I figure he weren't anxious on keepin' company with the gal's three brothers. It only makes me all the

more sot on givin' this bird Chilton a trial afore we hang him."

Buck thought this an extraordinary jump in the process of logical reason, but he had long since found that it was no use doubting the profundity of Skeeter's wisdom. Skeeter was infallible. The mere fact that he could read anybody's face convinced Buck that his judgments were the judgments of a greater mind than Buck's—or any man's in that country.

"Whatever you say, chief, I'll do."

"Take this gunman Chilton to the Box-B, and we'll do a bit of investigatin'."

It was a triumphant entry dear to the heart of Buckshot Brodell—that arrival at the Box-B.

Buckshot led the troop of horsemen. He rode chap to chap with the disarmed prisoner—only, of course, slightly in the lead. Buck's shoulders were held high, his bull neck stiffened proudly, his big square face, flushed and radiant with triumph as well as with red-eye, beamed upon worshipful ranch hands as he jogged slowly up the dusty road, past the round corral, the bunk shed, the calf sheds, and up to the main ranch house.

Following Buck and his prisoner was a posse of riders who had been picked up at various points of the desert as they rode home; young cowdogs who had been scouring the desert in search of the murderer, miners from Seven Mules, gamblers and Mexicans from the Sierra del Aja dive, from Cobb's Coulee and from Mesquite, and finally that mucker, Scoop Hardy, whose trickery had been primarily responsible for this capture, and who claimed a good percentage of the reward.

Following this part of the procession were two riders, Loretta Brodell and her young brother, Jack. The girl might have considered this entry into the Box-B in the light of a triumph. She realized at least that she had won a certain victory—through her own fight—and through the diplomacy of young Jack. But the festive aspect of the ride was completely overshadowed by the fact that Skeeter Brodell, hard, inscrutable, sinister, brought up the tail of the parade with a buckboard.

As Loretta glanced occasionally behind her at the attenuated and raw-boned figure of her eldest brother, a qualm swept over her.

No sentiment in the world had ever swerved Skeeter from his purpose. When a man was guilty he was punished. An eye for an eye—a tooth for a tooth. That was the inexorable law of the chief of the Brodells.

One thing else: The bodies of the men who had fallen in that gunfight were in

that rickety old buckboard. Skeeter watched over them with unchanging vigilance. When the girl looked over her shoulder and caught his eye, the hope she had for mercy vanished in thin air.

Skeeter's face seemed to her eloquent with both justice and cruelty. He seemed to be saying:

"You kin be in love, you kin be soft, you kin be merciful. But who's goin' to pay for these three daid hombres I'm cartin' along here? Just answer me that!"

*TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK*

❧      ❧      ❧

## ***SAFETY FIRST***

*(Guaranteed under the Food and Drugs Act.)*

**D**RINK to me only with thine eyes.

And I will pledge with mine;

Or let us have two paper cups

All labeled "mine" and "thine."

The thirst that from the soul doth rise

Doth leave no germs disguised;

And each who of Jove's nectar sips

Should have it pasteurized.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath.

Not so much honoring thee

As giving it a hope that there

It sterilized might be;

And thou my wreath didst disinfect.

And sent'st it back once more.

Since when it smells to heaven, I swear,

Of H<sub>2</sub> SO<sub>4</sub>.

If old Ben Johnson wrote to-day

In Love's immortal cause,

He'd strain the kisses in his lay

Through antiseptic gauze:

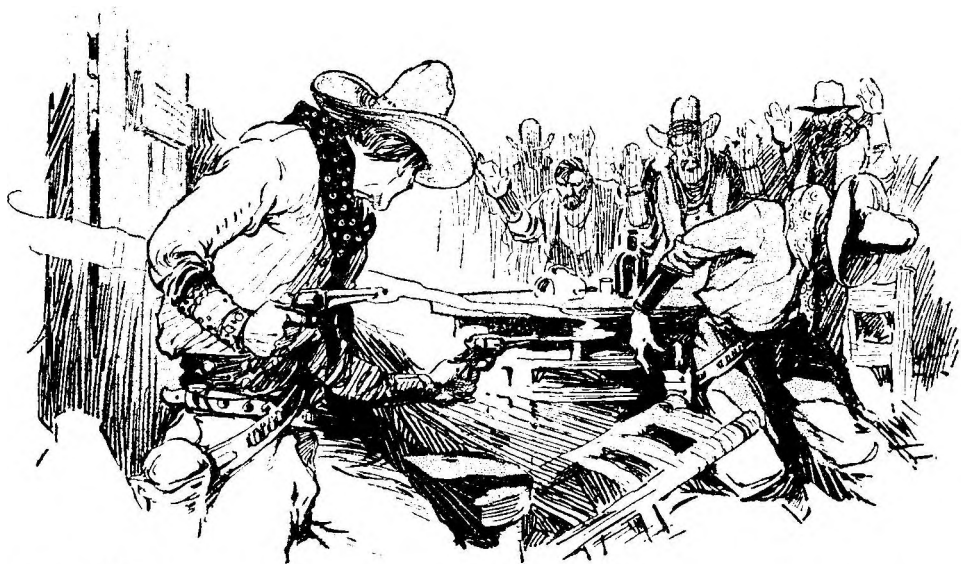
He'd use a prophylactic ink—

Yet never be afraid

Of filthy lucre, with which bards

Occasionally are paid!

*Anna Bird Stewart.*



# Hopalong Cassidy's Pal

By CLARENCE E. MULFORD

Author of "The Coming of Cassidy," "Hopalong Cassidy Returns," etc.

## II—THE RAIDERS

HOPALONG CASSIDY had been ambushed, was hovering between life and death, and his friends and ranch mates had been ordered, in deference to the wounded man's wishes, to stay off the war trail and stick to the ranch. It seemed that Hopalong had other plans.

The group at the horse corral surrounded the foreman, still arguing. Mostly it simmered, but here and there the arguments boiled up strongly, and the foreman's voice was steadily pitching higher and sharper in his replies to his angry and reluctant outfit.

His lowering gaze was fixed on the ranch

house door, behind which lay his old friend and the outfit's friend, grievously wounded. The door opened, framing a moving figure against the yellow lamplight, and closed again. Hurrying footsteps came nearer and the group moved uneasily, their protests momentarily ceasing.

Mesquite Jenkins pushed through the little ring of scowling men and stopped at the foreman's side, his hands slipping under the heavy holsters and holding them out and up for the crowd to see.

"Hoppy gave me his guns, an' th' job you want," he said, his voice icy. "It's a one-man job, an' it's *mine*! What's more,

*This series began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for May 2.*

I'm takin' it. No bunch of mangy coyotes can ambush Hopalong Cassidy an' live to brag about it; not while I'm able to set a hoss or fan a gun. Hear me? It's a *one-man job*, an' *it's mine!*"

There came a rumble of protest, and he stepped back, facing the group, his eyes glinting.

"Yo're all figgerin' me an outsider," he said crisply. "Red can tell you that Hoppy's lookin' to me to fill th' place made empty when his son died. I owe him a lot, an' I'm aimin' to pay up some of it. I, too, scragged him from ambush, before I knowed who he was, an' this is my chance to square it a little. Layin' on his bed, up in that little room, that stinks with medicine, he called me 'son,' an' his eyes was bright as stars when he said it; an' by Gawd, I *am* his son till this thing is washed out! He told me things, too—all I want to know. What 'd he say to you, Buck?"

Buck Peters, the foreman and the sheriff of Twin River County, swore under his breath; but he spoke the truth, and his eyes were moist.

"Said for us to watch our range; an' that you was to go after them skunks as soon as you got back to th' ranch."

Mesquite chuckled, but the sound sent a cold shiver up the spines of the crowd and made tense faces tenser. Good as they were, there was not a man of them but was glad that this youth was not on his trail.

"Well, I'm back, ain't I?" demanded Mesquite. His words became less clipped. "There's no tellin' what's goin' to bust loose on this ranch or in this county. One thing's dead sure—there's a raid planned on Double-Y cattle. Hoppy learned it, I know it, an' Slick Milligan knows it. If you boys are itchin' to shoot, you'll mebbly get th' chance before daylight; an' you can bet that some of them ambushin' dogs will be with th' raiders.

"You may get a crack at some of 'em before I do," he laughed, and again they shivered; "but I'm takin' th' main trail, an' I'm ridin' *alone!*"

Again he lifted the holsters to give weight to his words; those two Colts were proof positive that he spoke the truth, and the outfit knew it. He turned to Buck, his voice

almost a whisper; but it was like a breath out of the Arctic.

"Slick's hoss ain't as fresh as it was, Buck. Gimme th' best animal you got handy, an' some grub. You'll see me agin when this thing's all cleaned up. Ambushin' is plumb goin' out of style up here."

"But where you goin' to start, kid?" asked Red, knowing the other's unfamiliarity with the surrounding country and with its inhabitants.

Mesquite turned frosty eyes on the questioner and his white teeth gleamed.

"Hoppy told me four names. I'm startin' with *them!*"

"Just the same, it ain't no one-man job, kid," replied Red, resignedly: "but"—his hand reached out swiftly to the youth's shoulder—"I'm admittin' it's a Mesquite Jenkins job. Go on with it, kid. Hoppy's guns are warrant enough for me, an' for th' rest of us," he added, turning to face the outfit. He glanced at Buck. "Make him a deppity, Buck," he suggested.

Mesquite flung off the hand and whirled with the soft grace of a mountain cat.

"I don't want no badge holdin' me back!" he snapped. "*I ain't countin' on takin' no damned prisoners!*"

"When it comes to takin' prisoners, kid, a deppity has got to use his own best judgment," replied Buck, who by this time had learned what it was that Hopalong had found in this cold killer that was worth while. "A deppity ain't supposed to git hisself killed tryin' to take a prisoner, an' if a man makes a gunplay it's got to be met, an' beat." He smiled, and was taken a little more into Mesquite's heart. Hoppy was a deppity, kid, an' his authority as a deppity sheriff oughta go with his guns."

Without knowing it, the foreman had made a ten-strike, and unwittingly had brought a little nearer one of the wishes of Hopalong's heart: to awaken a respect for the law in the soul of Mesquite Jenkins.

The law, as Mesquite had found it, was nothing to be proud of or to have any faith in. In the country where he was raised the foundation of law was dirty politics, and the carrying out of legal mandates was done

in ways useful to those in power. He had seen honest men framed, and guilty men let off for political reasons, and gradually there had grown in him a well-founded contempt and hatred for the law and its officers.

Mesquite was like a cornered hob-cat, faced with the mantle of the law he so cordially hated. To be a servant of that law and to act under its badge of office was a pill too bitter for him to stomach.

A retort was shaping in his throat when there flashed to his mind, in answer to the foreman's last words, a phrase enunciated by Hopalong himself down in Laramie, scarcely a month ago: "My authority runs with my friends." The youth had seen what followed, and now he fought with himself for a moment, and then his eyes glinted down a swift resolve, and his white teeth showed in a sudden smile.

Perhaps the law was different up here in this country, perhaps it was colored by the men who undertook to carry its mandates into effect. He had come to a step in his evolution which Hopalong, were he well, would not dare force. He, of his own accord, was bridging one more gap in his moral development.

"All right!" he snapped. "If Hoppy could wear th' damned thing, then I can. Pin it on, swear me in, an' let me go." Under his breath he swore that all his prisoners would make gun-plays, no matter how it was done.

"You can't do nothin' till mornin', kid," said Buck, taking a deputy's badge from Lanky Smith's vest.

Mesquite laughed contentedly as he raised his hand to take the oath, and as he lowered it again it rested for a moment on the shoulder of the foreman-sheriff and part owner of the Double-Y.

"Can't I?" he demanded exultantly. "I can stuff hell before mornin', if th' breaks are anywhere near right an' I'm goin' down now to force th' breaks. I told you before that ambushin' is goin' out of style up here, an' goin' out damn fast."

Some one in the crowd had led up a horse and willing hands had put Mesquite's saddle on it, which was tacit consent to his single-hunting. There came a flurry of

movement, and the sounds of a swiftly running horse grew less in the night along the trail to Twin River, where rode as wild and savage a servant of the law as ever wore its badge.

## II.

TWIN RIVER had changed much since the day, not so many years before, when Sandy McQueen had finished building the Sweet Echo Hotel in almost a virgin and unsettled country. He had crossed the road, admired his pretentious hostelry, and then, with firm faith and blossoming optimism, had walked with dignity into the new edifice, there to wait for the coming of the rails up the valley of the Jones Luck River, and for the swarming homesteaders that would follow them.

He was still waiting, but doubts were creeping upon him, to honeycomb the faith which still persisted with Scotch stubbornness. With the passing of the years he had seen the little hamlet shrink and shrivel. The half-hearted gold rush which had come to tide him over had ebbed swiftly; the farms he had dreamed of were now no more than memories, their boundary furrows and firesteps rank with triumphant bunchgrass, their hastily built huts falling to pieces. The fort had been abandoned with the passing of the last shadow of Indian menace, the present generation of Indians stolidly accepting the government's shameful breaking of the treaty.

No longer did its supply wagons rumble along the Wayback trail to pause before Sandy's door. His choice of a town site had been made with a shrewd and canny judgment, based on fact; what he failed to take into proper consideration was the juggling of a board of directors, politics and land speculation. The valleys of the Jones Luck, the Jill and the Black Jack had been shuffled out in favor of a territory farther west, where the powers behind the railroad had bought thousands of acres of poor land for a song; and it was through this latter valley that the branch line railroad had been run.

Twin River was dying of dry rot, kept alive only by three great ranches, the Double-Y, the Cyclone and the rejuvenated

NM; and ranching interests are ultra-conservative, frowning upon farms and settlers, jealous of activities which threaten to take root in the soil. Aside from other things, they want no double line of fences interposing between the range and the rivers.

Twin River had changed. One by one the buildings of a busy and optimistic settlement had been abandoned, one by one its inhabitants had left for new fields. The great barroom of the hotel which once had shaken to the stamp of many feet, rung with the sound of many booming voices, now echoed hollowly to an occasional pair of boots; the once busy kitchen now found Sandy playing cook, with time hanging heavily on his hands; the doors of the dozen bedrooms were seldom unlocked, dust accumulating on the slats of their beds.

Gone was the I-Call saloon, but Ike remained, for Ike was one of those who could eke out a fairly prosperous existence, if he were not too closely watched, where another man would starve; which often is only a difference in morals. When Dutch Fred, owner of the more pretentious and cleaner-run Why Not saloon, had taken stock and made ready to leave this part of the country while he had something left to take with him, he sold out to his competitor across the river and was seen no more. Ike's tumble-down groggery was burned by its owner, lest it give foothold to some rival, and Ike had taken possession of the Why Not, and added its patrons to his own.

As the gray wolves flanked the buffalo, so Ike's patrons flanked the cattle range, alert for pickings on the edges of the herds. They had sure and unquestioning markets for re-branded cattle, for ear-notched yearlings, and even for skins; cattle strayed into the brush of wild draws among the hills; round-ups missed enough in the wilder parts of the country to keep this pack of coyotes from seeking other fields. So they had remained to prey upon the country round-about and, in time of famine, to prey, snarlingly, upon each other.

### III.

A FAST-RIDING horseman on the trail along the Little Jill reduced his speed when

the lights of the town could be seen from the top of a rise. They made a sickly yellow showing through the darkness, some of them very faint because of unwashed windows; a pitiful reminder of Twin River's better days. He went on at a canter, and then slowed to a walk as a black bulk in the night loomed up before him on a bend of the trail.

This was the last sizable piece of cover to be found between him and the town, and here he dismounted, picketed his horse in the copse, and went on afoot. In his memory, cherished by vengeful hatred, were four names; in his mind, sharply pictured, were four faces; in his soul there burned a steady, unwavering fire of determination.

There had been more than four men mixed up in the ambushing of his friend and mentor, for he had read the signs along the top of the fateful ravine, and believed the number to have been a dozen. He was glad that he had spent a few days with Hopalong before pushing on again, for in that limited time his friend had pointed out many of the denizens of this country, and to the more disreputable of them had coupled shrewd observations and fragmentary bits of history.

Four names, four faces, out of a dozen, and in a country strange to him. He growled in his throat as he pushed on in the star-bright night toward the unsavory Why Not, as inflexible in his purpose as a wolf on the trail of a kill.

The saloon was dark, except where thin strips of radiance faintly marked out the rectangles around the closely drawn curtains, or leaked around the stops of the closed doors. Here congregated, when it was safe, the lower element of the town's fixed and transient population, watching doors and windows and each other.

In the old days of unchecked personal freedom, when a reasonably clever man needed a little else than a horse, rope and running iron to lay by a store sufficient to see him through a Montana winter, the Why Not had been a famous rallying place, whence had gone out many a well-planned raid. Those happy days had vanished with the coming of a tight-lipped, close-lidded breed that had ridden up from Texas; a

breed as tough and tireless as the whale-bone ponies it rode; a breed that had faced and solved far knottier problems under that far-away southern sun than Twin River could offer for solving.

These grim newcomers had shocked the local scourings both in deed and in ways of thinking. That men would ride nearly two thousand miles, and be eager and ready for fighting at the end of the long, hard trail, and from no other prompting than that of friendship, was something the Why Not's evil brood could not understand. The latter's idea of friendship was to keep a wary eye on their friends, lest expediency beckon and hatch out a latent and ready treachery. Misjudging the motives that actuated these Texans, unprepared for madmen with hair-trigger Colts always under deft and ready hands, and faced by a group of hard-riding punchers who were singularly direct when occasion arose for directness, and who laughed at danger and sneered at death, the brood had melted like snow before the Chinook.

Since then the seasons had rolled around and around, and newcomers had floated to the Why Not, and settled there like waterlogged drift in a stagnant backwater of effort. But hope springs eternal, and now its beacons were rising in the night, promising and enticing affluence with a modicum of danger.

To-night there had been an eager rallying in the Why Not, and out of the darkness single horsemen had ridden up to the rear door, following one another closely. They had been called together by the promise of a feast in a time of famine. The master of that Texan breed had been slated to die in ambush that very afternoon; and the fact that no word had come from the ambushers was assurance that there had been no failure.

Hunched over sloppy tables, heads close together, the Why Not gang breathed questions and surmises as they inhaled the pungent fumes of Ike's vile liquors in the generous glasses under their noses.

Hopalong Cassidy, they told themselves, had been shot down; Hopalong Cassidy, the canny leader of the Double-Y pack. Johnny Nelson and Tex Ewalt, the next most

feared, were miles away, leaving lesser lights to avenge their leader and to protect their cattle. Of the remaining pack, Buck Peters, sheriff of the county, was believed to be too old, too easy-going to give much trouble; an old warrior slowed by time and easy living.

Red Connors, always far better in direct action than strategy, would ride and fume and sputter in vain. The others were still lesser warriors, although dangerous enough when Hopalong led them. They would run in circles, making harmless noise and raising barren dust clouds. The cycle of the lean years had reached its end, and the swing was starting back again.

There lay the almost helpless range, pleasantly covered with sleek and heavy cattle, ready money in any market; one well-planned raid would repay amply for the long and hungry wait. The raid only awaited the arrival of a single courier, and was so well-planned that nothing could interfere with it.

One of the compensations for a mediocre intelligence is an enrichment of animal cunning, and in this operation cunning had yielded up its best. Once started, the raid could not fail. The fiery and revengeful nature of that Double-Y outfit had been given full consideration. It could not resist following the trail of the murderers of its leader, and thus would leave defenseless the cattle on the range.

One-Eye leered across the smoke filled room, his words slipping unctuously from a corner of his twisted mouth. One-Eye was something of a celebrity, rumor saying that it was he who, years before, had driven itch-infected cattle from the Cyclone ranch across the river into the herds of the Double-Y. Death had surged like a prairie fire across the latter's range and had taken a bitter toll.

"They was to send us word when they was ready," said One-Eye. "We oughter be gittin' it right soon. To-night's th' night for th' big play, whatever we can clean up later. Time's flyin', an' there's shore a-plenty to do before daylight. I'm beginnin' ter wonder if they aims ter freeze us out?"

"How can they skin us, if they make th' trail for that mad outfit ter foller?"

asked a companion. "We was given th' job of makin' th' sweep an' th' furst part of th' drive. It's us as can skin them, if we're a mind ter."

One-Eye glared at the speaker.

"'Sposin' somethin' happened that gave 'em a chanst to change their plans?" he demanded. "You don't reckon they'd think of us, do ye?"

"Mebby they failed," suggested another. "Mebby Cassidy didn't ride straight acrost th' range, but changed his mind an' follered along this side of th' Bull, or struck acrost ter th' trail along th' Little Jill. He might 'a' changed *his* mind, after we'd signaled."

One-Eye sneered.

"Then they'd be settin' right here with us this very minute, cussin' their luck, an' plannin' fer to-morrow."

"Mebby they tried, but didn't git him cold," said yet another, his face swiftly paling.

One-Eye laughed sarcastically.

"If they'd showed their hand, an' blundered, we'd 'a' seen every mother's son of 'em a-bustin' all ridin' records gettin' outer th' country; an' we'd 'a' had some damn mad visitors long before this!"

"Shore as shootin'!" grunted the proprietor emphatically. The mere thought of such a calamity made gooseflesh on him.

"But we should 'a' heard by this time if everythin' went all right," growled a man in a corner. "They've had time ter lay that trail, split, make a getaway, an' reach th' place we agreed on. I'm givin' 'em half an hour longer. If they don't let us know by then, I'm pullin' stakes outer this country as fast as my hoss kin run. That's flat!"

The low-toned discussion ran on, and then Whisky Jack raised his voice on enlightenment on another subject.

"Who's that yearlin' that come up here with Cassidy, about a month back? That youngster that drifted on agin after a few days? What was it they called him?"

"Mesquite somethin'," answered the man in the corner. "All slicked up, he was, with polish on his boots. Damn stuck-up dude, I calls him."

"Reckon he was some kid they picked up along th' trail som'ers, to play daddy

to," said One-Eye contemptuously, spitting at a sand box cuspidor and making a bull's-eye at ten feet. "Thought a lot of hisself, *he* did."

"Jest th' same, I didn't like th' looks of him," growled a bum, moving restlessly on his chair. "Had a hell of a cold eye, he did; an' a mean way of lookin' at ye. I was glad when he rode on about his own business."

"Huh!" snorted One-Eye, laughing softly. "He's a muley. He ain't growed horns, yet. He couldn't hurt nobody that was a *man*."

"Mebby, mebbly," replied the bum, squirming. "Seems ter me as I've heard tell that a young rattler's jest as pizen as an old un. I'm 'spicious of *any* of that gang, or any of its friends." He shifted his cud, and squirmed again. "Wish ter Gawd them fellers would send us some news!"

"If they don't let us know purty soon we'll find out what happened an' switch th' play on 'em," growled One-Eye, ominously. "If they're playin' us dirt, I'll cussed soon tell Peters where he can find 'em if he wants 'em. Yes, an' lend him a hand in gittin' 'em, too!"

He looked around, read approval on the faces of his companions, slapped his thigh and went on:

"I've done it afore, an' I can do it agin. One time I can remember, allus makes me laugh," and he burst into uproarious mirth as he pictured it; then his voice trailed into a startled and choking silence, as though it were stuck crosswise in his throat. His hypnotized gaze was on the rear door, and his slack jaw was slacker.

To natures attuned to everlasting vigilance for manifestations of danger, this silence was full of menace. Throughout the odorous room there came furtive squirmings, and heads turned swiftly to see what it was that had choked off One-Eye's booming mirth.

The door was closing again, and a step from it, with his back against the wall, stood a cold-faced youth watching the room through icy eyes. He was springily balanced on the balls of his feet, and his hands hung just above the well-worn walnut



handles that jutted out from their battered holsters.

On his dusty, black vest was pinned the badge of deputy sheriff, its glinting nickel-plate no warmer than his narrowed eyes. He appeared to be suffering from a restrained eagerness, and the guilty consciences in the room interpreted that eagerness, each in its own way, and each man reached the same unpleasant understanding of it. Each man felt like a bull's-eye.

"I know four names," said the newcomer, frostily, and sneered at the silence and the rigid postures of the crowd. "Bar-keep, you listen to me; an' keep yore paws in plain sight; you ain't worth nothin' at all to me if yo're dead." His glance flicked about the room. "You fellers can do what you please with yore hands, an' th' sooner you make some use of 'em th' better I'll like it."

The cold eyes flashed back to the man behind the bar, whose outthrust and ham-like hands were the most prominent things about him.

"Yore name Ike?" snapped the newcomer.

The proprietor nodded, gulped, and raised a hand slowly, to run a finger around inside the neckband of his shirt, a garment which never before had been too tight for him.

"I dropped in for th' names of th' rest of th' skunks that shot down Cassidy," said the youth, his lips tightening, his face giving a faint and fleeting sign of sorrow. "There ain't nothin' I'd like no better than to turn both of these guns loose right here."

He paused while he glanced over the crowd again, almost beseeching it to burst into hostile action. "Th' sooner you tell me what I want to know, th' sooner I'll be on my way. Who-all was in that litter that ambushed Cassidy this afternoon? *Spit it out!*"

Ike's glance whipped from the smoking lamp on the front wall to the smoking lamp on the rear wall, a prayer expressed by eyes instead of lips, although the latter were moving soundlessly. His friends were either blind or dumb, for no man moved, and the lamps smoked in peace.

"*Spit it!*" grated the deputy, a growl

sounding deep down in his throat, like the rumble of an angry dog. "If I don't get them names by askin', I'll force 'em loose in powder smoke. Talk, an' talk true, for I'll shoot th' man that lies. *Who are they?*"

Through Ike's mind slipped the names of men dead or gone to other localities, and he moistened his lips to give utterance to them. To his mind came Chatter Spence, Shanghai, Argue Bennett, and others of those freer, richer years. His roving glance and subtle smile apprised his friends that he had not lost his fine art of trickery, and soft breaths of relief arose here and there among the tables.

"I've got four names to check up by, Ike, in case you get careless in yore talk," warned the deputy. "An' what's more, I'm no muley cow; I've growed horns since you saw me last," he added significantly, his glance sweeping over the room, and for an instant a grim smile flickered at the corner of his thin lips and added to the ripple of apprehension passing throughout the gaping crowd. "I hate a liar: spit 'em out!"

Ike's forehead was wet, glistening in reflected light. On his face there came an expression of pain, in his eyes a look of desperate determination. That remark about horns was distressingly apropos to the conversation that had been going on; had this man been listening at a window, and if so, how much had he overheard? Again Ike licked his lips, and temporized.

"Why do you reckon I know any names?" he asked. "Why do you reckon any of us know 'em?"

"I got a feelin' that you do," answered Mesquite, smiling thinly. "If you don't tell me, I'll smoke 'em out, if I has to shoot every skunk in th' room. Come on, now: *spit 'em out!*"

As the agonized proprietor was about to speak the words which might serve as the basis of his epitaph, there sounded the steps of a walking horse. Ike sucked in his breath in readiness for a warning shout, and found himself staring into a pair of eyes which plainly promised death as the price of utterance. The veins stood out on the proprietor's head and neck, and he clenched his hands; but he wavered, and

in the wavering he lost the impetus of his foolhardy recklessness.

The horse stopped at the stable behind the saloon, and hurrying footsteps, made clumsy and heavy by high-heeled boots, approached the door. The deputy's hands dropped a scant two inches, resting on the handles of his borrowed guns. At this motion the crowd sucked in its breath and not even a bootheel scraped.

"Not a word!" whispered the deputy, partly facing the door, conscious of the agony depicted on the faces of those in the room. He seemed to radiate deadliness from every pore, and pale lights glinted far back in his peering eyes. The crowd shivered, and remained silent.

The door swung inward, and swiftly and carelessly closed again, the momentum of the newcomer taking him three steps inside the room. He was so full of the news he brought, so eager to sound the cue for action, that he looked neither to the left nor to the right, but blurted out his message.

"We got Cassidy cold an' clean, an' everythin's ready in th' hills! Th' trail's laid, an' half of us are waitin' for you fellers an' th' drive! Has that damned outfit started follerin'—"

He stopped suddenly, for through his eagerness, hammering insistently to break past the wall of his preoccupation, the warning of those strained postures and agonized expressions at last reached his thinking mind, at length aroused his instincts of danger. His head jerked back, his right hand dropped like the strike of a snake, and he writhed sidewise to follow the direction of a dozen fixed and frightened stares.

The crash of his gun was doubly loud; its smoke doubly thick; and he twisted back to his former position, stiffly erect, and pitched full length across a table.

With the crash of the guns Mesquite had slipped out of the fogging cloud of powder smoke and watched the room, his glittering eyes as cold as the nickel of his badge.

"What's *his* name?" he snapped, and then he laughed suddenly, and the chill of an Arctic frost seemed to pass over the hushed room, constricting hearts and torturing nerves. His half-lowered gun, a thin

wisp of smoke curling from its muzzle, swung up again threateningly. "What's *his* name?"

"Lefty—Trotter," came a sighing whisper from a corner of the room, where a wild-eyed man sat gripped by terror.

Instantly the deputy's gun swung on this weak brother, while the second weapon leaped from its sheath and covered the rest of the crowd.

"Gimme th' rest of 'em!" he snapped, and the pressure of his lips ran thin white lines to take the place of red. "Out with 'em, or you'll trot with Trotter!"

Chattering teeth macerated the grudging list, making it almost useless; but a few of the names could be understood, and among them was one of the four which Mesquite had hugged so jealously all the way to town.

"Stand up," he ordered, and promptly had his wish. "Say 'em over again, slow and plain."

While he strained his ears to listen closely he flashed a glance at the proprietor which again balked recklessness. At the last name he turned slightly and faced Ike, on whose countenance was a thundercloud of wrath.

"That's right, Ike?" he demanded, and read the truth in the little eyes; but while Ike looked the truth, he denied it in words.

"He's a damn liar!" gritted the proprietor, planning death for the squealer. "Not one name was right!" he shouted, and then flinched as a bullet clipped his ear and sent a tinkle of glass down the mirror behind him. His stubbornness slipped away like water and his knees went suddenly weak. "Yes," he muttered, "he told th' truth."

Mesquite ignored him and turned to face the crowd squarely, falling into a crouch behind his poised guns.

"Stand up, hands above yore heads, an' step to that wall—all of you!" he barked.

The hasty movements quickly ceased and the miserable line-up waited for the next command, and when it came, whirled almost as one man to press its collective noses against the rough board wall.

"Ike!" snapped the deputy. "Come out an' take their guns. I'm prayin' you make a misplay."

Ike stumbled from behind the bar, across

the room, bumping into tables and chairs, and passed down the line collecting weapons to add to the growing pile on a table. With the dropping of the last gun he turned miserably and looked at the grim deputy.

"String a piece of rope through th' trigger guards," ordered Mesquite calmly. "An' don't take all night, you fool."

Ike returned to the bar, went behind it and fumbled about under the counter, apathetic with despair. His hand brushed over the loaded bar weapon without hesitation and grasped a length of light rope which lay in a coil in a corner. Shuffling back across the room, he threaded it clumsily as he had been told, and tied both ends together; and again turned to look at the slowly straightening deputy.

"Get that hoss-hair rope from over there," ordered Mesquite, motioning with a gun, and as the proprietor shuffled away the deputy slipped up to the table, shoved an arm through the loop holding the captured weapons and pushed it up on his shoulder. Noisily the collection swung against his thigh, and he chuckled with grim satisfaction. Then he gave the returning proprietor terse but detailed instructions.

Ike, beginning with the man at the nearer end of the line, ran a loop of the braided hair lariat around each quivering neck and tied a tight and non-slip knot. When he had finished with the last man he faced the smiling deputy, the remainder of the rope hanging from his hands.

"That's yourn, Ike," said Mesquite generously. "Loop it around yore neck, an' don't play no favorites when you make it tight, or when you tie th' knot. That's somethin' like it, but you oughta pull it tighter for luck; yore luck."

Here was a sight to make an observer ache with laughter, but beyond a flicker of humor, Mesquite kept his face hard and ominous. Here was a great round-up, a dozen hand-dog jackals, roped in a single line, clumsy feet to climb the heels of those before and to flinch from clumsy feet behind; a baker's dozen, glum and groping, pessimistically dubious as to their end.

There they cowered, waiting for the word to march, they knew not where. There stood the valiant, would-be raiders of a

supposedly helpless ranch, eager to profit by bushwhacking, ready to leap in and steal after murder had cleared the way; there they stood, eyes on the back of the head in front of them, not daring to look aside, each man picturing the silent figure sprawled across the table; each man writing under the prickling grip of hair rope around their unwashed necks, and conjuring a ghastly finish to their evil and furtive lives. Not one of them had ever heard of thirteen men being hanged at once from a single rope; but there was no solace in this thought, for their captor appeared to be capable of almost any originality; and even if he did not succeed in such an attempt, it was bound to be harrowing, no matter how much it was bungled. In their minds they saw Lefty Trotter, expert gunman, slowly arising on his toes to plunge across a table. Lefty had started after his gun before the deputy had reached for his own; Lefty was noted locally for his gunplay and his accuracy; yet Lefty, having been given the best of the draw by a shade, had plunged across the table, dead before he touched it. Anything was possible.

"Ike, you lead th' way to Slick Milligan's bar," ordered Mesquite. "Th' first man that tries to break th' line, or get loose, will never live to be hung. You can bet on that." He stepped forward. "Lift yore feet an' march!"

Through the star-stabbed darkness outside the building there moved a snaky, shaky line, stumbling and cursing behind its stumbling and cursing leader, taking for full face value the threat of the following driver. Not a hand raised to touch the chafing, galling rope; not a man thought seriously of attempting to escape.

Along the dirt street of Twin River shuffled the baker's dozen, each heart seething with murder. Their heavy feet clomped up the steps of the hotel, and Ike flung open the barroom door with a gesture of consuming rage, and plodded steadily across the floor, parallel with the long counter.

"—— ———" whispered Slick Milligan, dropping a full bottle of brandy in his haste to get the six-shooter lying under the bar. His gaping mouth was incapable of further speech as he gripped the weapon.

Sandy McQueen, contentedly dozing in his easy chair in the office across the hall, could have left his seat with no more spontaneity had a bomb exploded under him. His second stride carried him through the barroom door, and he stopped as though he had butted into a stone wall. His mouth clicked shut, his face went crimson and his honest Scotch eyes blazed with fires of wrath; but before he could loose the bellow that was choking him for utterance he heard a crisp voice bark out from his open front door.

"Halt!"

Slick and Sandy both looked in the direction of this order and saw Mesquite step into sight. The youth walked to the bar and slung his collection of captured weapons on the floor at the end of the counter.

"Keep these for me, Slick," he said, kicking the pile with his foot.

"What in th' devil's name are ye bringin' them bums in here for?" snapped Sandy, fire in his eyes. The veins of his throat and forehead were standing out as he glared from the line-up to Mesquite and back again.

"This is th' gang that was waitin' th' word to make a raid on th' Double-Y," explained Mesquite, leaning easily against the bar and scowling at his prisoners. "All set, they was, to steal a herd. Hoppy's ambushin' was th' openin' play. Will you keep these bums for me, Mr. McQueen?"

"Can ye no keep 'em your ownself, instead o' litterin' up my place wi' 'em?"

Mesquite shook his head. "I've got too much to do to-night, an' th' next few days. Twelve dogs like these ambushed Hoppy, an' I'm goin' to find 'em."

"Gie ye luck," said Sandy. "An' how's Cassidy?"

"Doc says he's got a fightin' chance."

"Did th' murderin' dogs all get away? Did they get away clean?" demanded Sandy, the veins swelling a little more.

"Yes!" growled Mesquite. His eyes glinted and his mouth became hard. "Keep these coyotes till you can get word to Peters to lock 'em up. They've got to be corraled for a few days. Tell Buck to hold 'em till he hears from me. Then he can turn 'em loose; but," he turned to glare at the miser-

able baker's dozen, "after they get turned loose, I'm personally givin' every one of 'em just an even twenty-four hours to get out of this part of th' country before I start shootin' on sight. Tell Buck I couldn't take Lefty Trotter alive; he pulled a gun. His body's out in front of th' Why Not."

He raised his arm and leveled it at the weak brother who had called off the names in the Why Not.

"Look at me, you coyote! Where was that other bunch aimin' to meet you fellers an' th' rustled cattle? Talk fast an' tell th' truth!"

"Crow Valley," muttered the weak brother.

"How was you drivin' for it?"

The detailed route was meaningless to Mesquite until it was explained to him by other prisoners, with Slick Milligan checking up on the statements.

"All right; much obliged, Slick," said Mesquite, his eyes returning to the line-up. "If you an' McQueen will keep these tumblebugs close prisoners till Buck can take 'em over, you'll be doin' Buck an' Hoppy a big favor. I don't want none of 'em loose to ride ahead an' carry warnin's. Th' job is big enough without them cuttin' in."

"They'll be here for Buck!" growled Slick.

"Ye mean yer goin' after th' hull gang by yerself?" demanded Sandy.

"Th' whole damned dozen," answered Mesquite, nodding grimly. "Th' rest of th' outfit's got to ride range with rifles across their saddles."

Slick's admiration was obvious, and he joyously waved the six-shooter and glared hungrily at the baker's dozen; and he saw Sandy's coat-tail whipping through the door leading to the office, where an eight-gage, double-barreled piece of ordnance, commonly known as a shotgun, rested across a pair of elk horns hanging on a wall.

Mesquite smiled coldly and again looked at Slick.

"Who was Lefty Trotter's closest friends?" he asked.

"Bill Hoskins an' Tom Short; why?"

"Just wanted to be sure that whimperin' pup told me th' truth," answered Mesquite,

and stepped toward the door. "See you later, mebbby," he called from the darkness. He had a job to do before he left town.

There came a smothered rumble from the hall door, where sandy stood with the ample eight-gage gripped in his hairy fists, his face like a thundercloud.

"Now, then, ye deil's scum," he cried, stalking around in front of the line-up, "move ower ag'in' yon wall, set ye doon ag'in' it, an' don't sae much as let a whisper oot o' ye! Move faist, or I'll kick ye to it!" He glared at them as they made haste to obey, and then he walked to the bar and put his back against it, the generous eight-gage carelessly leveled at his prisoners.

"Slick, ye'll have to ride oop an' tell Peters. I dinna want this mess o' vermin in my hoose nae langer nor I have to. They fair make me squirm!"

"Reckon you can hold 'em till I get back?" asked Slick, more from a loyal anxiety than from any well-founded doubt of his employer's ability.

The reply made him wince, duck and leap toward the rear door; but he stopped short before a window, looking through it in amazement.

"Th' Why Not's burnin'!" he shouted, doubting his eyes.

"An' why not?" asked Sandy. "'Tis an act o' God!" he thundered. "Wull ye mind yer orders an' stoppit standin' there like a fule?" A smile broke through the tense expression on his face. "That Mesquite lad, now: I take it he has gude ideas, eh, Slick?"

Slick turned, nodded emphatically, and once more proceeded toward the door.

"It's a bigger fire than th' I-Call made, an' just as purty," he said. "There ain't no wind a-tall; an' th' river's between us, thanks be!"

"Aye!" growled Sandy, caressing the eight-gage, and thinking that the passing of his last competitor would do no harm to his dwindling business. "Aye! Thanks be!"

## THE END OF No. 2

NEXT WEEK: "RAWHIDE."

## HEADLINES

- "LADY Murders Rival With a Hammer;"
- "Gentleman Feeds Strychnine To His Wife;"
- "Sweetheart Gets Peevish At Her Lover—
- Chops Him in the Plexus With a Knife."
- "Mother Drowns Only Infant Darling;"
- "Father Croaks His Precious Little Son;"
- "Preacher Steals Daughter Of a Deacon—
- Deacon Thinks He Did It Just For Fun."
- "Actress Stages Battle With Policeman;"
- "Movie Hero Weds Helpless Baby Child;"
- "Student Shoots Teacher in the Annex—
- Says Her Accent Simply Drove Him Wild."
- "Artist Drinks Hootch Before Exploding;"
- "Highbrows Sans Pyjamas Caught At Play;"
- "Bootleggers-Bandits Form a Union—"
- Ain't th' headlines lovely every day?

*Earl Wayland Bowman.*



# Dinner for Cynthia

By **EDGAR FRANKLIN**

*Author of "Regular People," "A Noise in Newboro," etc.*

## WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PREVIOUS PARTS

CYNTHIA BLAIR and her cousin, Nora, are nearly out of funds and are too proud to ask aid of their wealthy uncle, who disapproves of their choice of artistic careers. Cynthia's fiancé cancels a dinner engagement with her on the very evening that a hearty meal would have been most welcome to her. Meanwhile, the mother of Neville Ronalds, wealthy man about town, believes that a Miss Blair has designs on her son's millions, through marriage. Cynthia gets the letter meant for her cousin and decides to call at the Ronalds home on a pretext, simply to get invited to dinner. Neville's dominating grandmother is so favorably impressed with the girl's unexpected refinement that she uses her own methods to clinch a marriage between Neville and Cynthia. The strong-willed old lady overrides Cynthia's protests, misinterprets her actions and forces her to remain at the Ronalds home overnight. The maid suspects Cynthia of being a crook and locks her in her room. However, she gets out and is surprised in the dark by a male member of the household who grapples with her, believing her to be a burglar. He sees his mistake as he snaps on the lights, but Cynthia's anxious sweetheart, who has been searching for her in the neighborhood, looks through the window and is scandalized to see his intended wife in another man's arms. In the morning he notifies Nora and they speed to the Ronalds home to demand explanations. Then it is discovered that Cynthia has disappeared. Her wealthy uncle is notified and threatens the determined old grandmother with dire vengeance if the girl is not found by noon.

## CHAPTER XVII (*continued*)

### UNCLE.

MR. FORBES gazed very meditatively across the room for several seconds.

"Of course, if you feel that way about it," he said. "Er—Mrs. Stone, I hadn't

intended to mention this, but I'd better. I think: I rode here with a friend of mine, who is rather high in the Detective Bureau, and we were talking about crime in neighborhoods like this. He told me, confidentially, that at half-past four this morning, on this very corner, a young girl was snatched into a taxicab by three men and

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for April 18.*

that although there were two witnesses, each a block away, there was no more clew to what had become of the girl or the taxi than if they'd never existed."

"It—it was Cynthia!" Mrs. Stone choked.

"It may have been any one else. I have told you—er—because Cynthia certainly isn't in evidence around here; and if anything of that nature *should* have happened to her, Girton would unquestionably move heaven, earth and the other place to square the account."

Judging by sound alone, one would have said that Mrs. Stone was snoring rather than breathing! She squared her big shoulders, though.

"It wasn't Cynthia!" she said, bravely. "And if all the women in New York had been snatched into all the taxicabs on earth, I still say that I'll see this Girton just where I said I'd see him! Hallings don't run, Forbes!"

"Aha?" said the lawyer. "I'll skip out now and see how much can be done between now and noon. I'll leave that money, in case one or two Hallings should change their minds."

"Hallings don't do that, either!" the lady said darkly. "Give me that magazine before you go. I'm going to read myself to sleep and forget the whole dratted mess!"

Yet, when Mr. Forbes had gone, she did not read.

Rather did this remarkable lady extend behind her head the hand which held the magazine; and a wheezing rumble came from her and she hurled the unoffending publication straight across the room. It landed behind the couch, a wreck. Next Mrs. Stone thrust out her large jaw, clutched her cane with both hands, favored the opposite wall with as evil a glare as ever that wall had known and devoted another minute to the same noisy breathing. Then, abruptly, she soliloquized aloud and freely, and of this soliloquy it is infinitely better that there be no record whatsoever.

Still, it reached its lurid end in a very little while. Mrs. Stone poked out viciously with her cane and pressed the button, holding it down almost until Towner arrived, panting.

"Took you some time to get here, didn't it?" she observed pleasantly. "Go tell Mrs. Ronalds and Mrs. Dale that we're leaving town in less than an hour!"

"Leaving?" the butler cried.

"Order the car for eleven, sharp. Then get out one trunk for each of the ladies—a steamer trunk and just one apiece! Then get my leather trunk and fetch it in here!"

The butler mastered his astonishment and bowed.

"May I ask where you're going, ma'am?"

"Yes, we're—hey! What do you mean by that? How dare you quiz me like that? I'm leaving town on business!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONFESSION.

TOWNER still hesitated.

"You're wishing the leather trunk, ma'am?" he murmured. "Wouldn't your blue wardrobe trunk be better, Mrs. Stone?"

"What? Have things reached such a state in this household that I'm not even permitted to know what trunk I want to use?"

"Why, no, ma'am—certainly not, Mrs. Stone, and I beg your pardon," Towner stammered. "I—I mentioned it only because the blue one's in the trunk room on the top floor and the leather one's down in the big closet by the laundry, and—well, the fact is, Mrs. Stone, I haven't bothered you about it, but the cook's been on a wild rampage for three days now and matters ain't going to be improved any by dragging that trunk through her kitchen."

"Is that so?" Mrs. Stone asked, ominously.

"It is indeed, ma'am. She's been behaving out of all reason, so she has," Towner sighed. "This temper fit's worse than the one she's had last month, and I thought then she'd have to be dismissed. The maids are afraid to go anywhere near her, and I ain't particular myself about—"

"Do I have to go down and drag that trunk up two flights?" Mrs. Stone asked.

"No, ma'am," the butler said sadly.

"Get the others first, though. Packing takes 'em more time than it does me. And before you do anything else, tell Mrs. Ronalds we're about to pull up stakes. Send Graves here."

The maid reported within two minutes.

"Towner says you're leaving, ma'am," said she. "You're going south so early and so sudden?"

"Yes—south!" her mistress rumbled bitterly. "Pack, Graves! Put in my old red flannel underwear—the heavies. Shake the mothballs out of that old long sealskin coat and put that in, too, and the cap with it. Winter's darned near here and it's going to be chilly where we're heading—down south! If you can find my old fur gloves, put 'em in along with the rest. Move!"

Graves merely stared at her, lips quivering violently. In her own way, she was devoted to her mistress and she really had a tender streak.

"Oh, Mrs. Stone!" she cried, brokenly.

"Move!" cried Mrs. Stone.

The maid left, head bows and shoulders shaking a little. The late Colonel Halling's daughter muttered on—and glared up again as Mrs. Dale entered. This younger woman, apparently, had been weeping a little.

"What does Towner mean by saying that we're leaving?" she said. "I can't leave!"

"Why not?"

"Because Tom's injured and suffering and—after all, whatever he is, he's my husband!"

"Aha! Where's your mother? Packing?"

"No, she isn't!" Dora replied, with some spirit. "Mother's almost hysterical. She can't leave on such short notice."

"It is? All right! Stay where you are and go to jail!"

"Go where?"

"Jail—jail—jail! That's what Forbes says is awaiting for all of us when that fish-eyed demon gets back and finds I can't hand him his blasted niece. He's probably right; he is as a rule. Personally, you understand, I'm not running away from anything. I'm going off to a quiet spot and think this all over and as soon as I feel able to stick it out to the finish, I'm coming back and fight. I'd advise you to do likewise."

"But—jail!" Dora shuddered.

"Yep. You'll start for there about ten minutes after twelve, I fancy, my dear. As for me—"

"Where are we going? South?" Mrs. Dale asked, and seemed to have reversed herself.

"South of the North Pole, anyway. If you don't know any more than that, you can't blab any more and get a flock of cheap detectives on our trail before we're even settled down. But I'll tell you this much: to the best of my recollection, the thermometer spends most of the winter between forty and fifty below zero, where we're going. Chuck out the folderols and stick in anything that'll keep you warm," Mrs. Stone said, with another dreary sigh. "Now get about it! You haven't more than fifteen or twenty minutes to get ready in, as it is!"

Mrs. Dale hesitated, glancing most oddly at her grandmother.

"I'll have to say good-by to Tom," she suggested.

"Don't let me keep you from that."

So Dora went her way and for a time Mrs. Stone merely sat and thought her own thoughts and listened without enjoyment to divers faint sounds. There was a bumping on the stairs above—and after a time, another bumping, which indicated that Towner was bringing down trunks. Light footfalls were hurrying rather madly, hither and thither, which indicated that the packing process was under way. In and out of her own bedroom, Mrs. Stone gave ear to Graves, who rushed from drawer to closet, from closet to drawer, sniffing, now and then gulping audibly, but still obeying orders.

Then Dora appeared once more. A great change had come over Mrs. Dale, these last minutes. Her moist eyes glowed softly; the strained lines were gone from her countenance; relief and happiness, in fact, showed in every inch of Mrs. Dale. A moment she hesitated; then she ran to her grandmother and threw herself on her knees before her.

"Oh, grandmother, it's—it's all right!" she cried.

"It—what is it?" gasped Mrs. Stone, on



one great and glorious shout. "They've found her? Horray! Horray! Hoo—"

"Oh—her? I don't know anything about her," Mrs. Dale said. "I meant, about Tom."

"Aaarrrh!" said Mrs. Stone.

"He's innocent—he really is. Poor boy, he—he swore to me that she just went in there, apparently by accident, and went right out again! Oh, grandmother, I—I'm so glad!"

"Yep," the lady said gloomily.

Mrs. Dale hung her head.

"Grandmother," she whispered, "I—I lied!"

"When do you mean?" sighed her grandmother.

Dora dabbed her eyes.

"I hated her so!" she said. "She was so—so much prettier than I am and I thought she really had won Tom's love, grandmother. I wanted her to seem just as bad as possible. I'm talking about my sable coat, you know. She didn't really steal it!"

"Hey?"

"No, grandmother. I hid it in the bottom of the trunk I keep in my big closet, and a black satin hat with it. And then I found one of her handkerchiefs in *her* coat pocket and—and took that for additional evidence. I'm so glad—so glad!" Dora sobbed suddenly. "I don't even mind going now. Tom says he'll follow as soon as he's able to be out. That should be in another week, don't you think?"

Mrs. Stone, rather wild of eye, was gripping her shoulder.

"Then, if she didn't have your coat or any other coat, she must have walked out in your pink bathrobe and slippers," she gasped. "Is that it?"

"She—why, yes, I suppose so."

"In the middle of a cold night and headed for the Lord only knows."

Her deep voice trailed away.

"But it's wonderful, grandmother, isn't it, to think that my Tom—"

"Oh, damn your Tom!" the elder lady roared. "Get out of here! Go on with your packing!"

Alone, she rested her chin on one ample fist and for some time glowered at the floor.

So she was when the bell rang and she reached for the telephone.

"Yes?" she said, not so steadily.

"Forbes speaking. Mrs. Stone, I don't know whether you're leaving or not."

"I do!" said that lady.

"Well, I tell you," the brisk voice continued. "When I left your house, four or five men were hanging about. I thought it was my imagination, but two of 'em certainly looked like a pair that Bixel—Bixel's Detective Agency, you know—pointed out to me as his star operatives. Well, I've just left Bixel's office; went in there to hire his whole force and wasted ten minutes. Nothing doing there. Girton's retained him to cover the house and, knowing the resourceful methods of some of those gentlemen, I doubt very much whether you'll get away without some trouble and—"

"I'm not going to try, Forbes," Mrs. Stone sighed. "I'll start Cornelia and Dora off, one way or another—leave that to me and go on with your arrangements for 'em at the Furnace. But I guess Hallings don't run away, after all. I'm going to stick right here and face the music."

"Well!" cried the lawyer.

"That little kid's on my conscience, Forbes. I did it and I'll take the consequences. If it busts me, it busts me—that's all. I haven't so much longer to live, anyway, and Cornelia has enough in her own right to keep the rest of 'em fed and clothed. But that pretty young one has to be found and—and if anything bad has happened to her, damned if I don't join Girton in squaring the accounts and let him electrocute me afterward!"

"Well, by gosh, that's spoken like a man!" the gentleman at the other end of the wire said.

"Thanks, Forbes—thanks," Mrs. Stone said, shakily. "I want you here at twelve."

"You bet I'll be there at twelve!" cried the lawyer. "And don't lose your nerve, either! We'll work this thing out all right and—"

"Say! Don't you worry about my nerve or—tah!" the lady concluded disgustedly and banged the receiver back in place.

She sat back, hands folded now, and resumed her glowering. Graves, entering,

passed toward the bedroom again with quite a whizzing effect.

"Almost through, ma'am," she reported, with an uncertain little laugh. "My, but the house is upset, with all this coming so sudden!"

"Is, eh?" grunted her mistress. "My stufi packed?"

"Why, not yet, ma'am. Towner hasn't brought up the trunk yet, if you please. But everything's laid out and ready."

"Aha? Then put everything back again where you found it."

"I—I beg pardon?"

"And tell Towner to leave the trunk where it is. I don't want it. I'm not going. The other ladies are leaving; I'm remaining at home."

"But—"

"Grasp it, Graves! Grasp it!" Mrs. Stone commanded testily. "I'm not in any mood just now to explain it all over again in words of one syllable."

"No, ma'am," breathed the maid.

"Have you told Towner about the trunk?"

"Why, not yet, ma'am—no!" said Graves, from a distance.

"Well, why don't you do it, then? Why let him lug the thing up here when he'll only have to carry it down again? You don't use brains, Graves; nobody in this household does—and a devilish good reason why!" Mrs. Stone commented, very pleasantly. "A devilish good reason!"

She cocked one eye suddenly toward the bedroom and Graves started, dropped a handful of clothing, smiled as brightly and soothingly as might be, and made for the corridor once more—and, with the door open, stopped.

Far below there had been a violent bump.

"I think he's bringing it now," Graves submitted. "I'll hurry and—"

Far below there came what sounded much like a faint scream.

"That's cook!" said Graves. "I'll hurry and—"

"Say! What's the matter with this cook, anyhow?" Mrs. Stone demanded. "Graves, don't run off like that when I'm speaking to you! I asked you a question: what's the matter with her?"

Graves smiled uncertainly.

"Well, that—that would be hard to say, ma'am, and me not liking to speak a word against another servant, too—except that she has a violent bad disposition. Mrs. Stone."

"Aha?"

"She's a wonderful cook, ma'am, but I think she's possessed, some of the time. Why, she carries on something frightful, Mrs. Stone! There ain't a soul dares go near her unless they have to. Why, it's only yesterday morning, ma'am, when I went down for your coffee, that she threatened to—to—well, what she said was to lay me out with a rolling pin, begging pardon, if I touched so much as a cup before she was ready to hand it to me."

"So?" mused Mrs. Stone, and smiled slightly.

"And Anna told me—and you know how truthful little Anna is, ma'am—that when she—"

"Psst!" said her mistress, leaning forward with increasing interest. "What's going on down there now?"

As one, they listened, mistress and maid; nor was there any great need for straining the ears. Distantly, yet very clearly, a hard, shrill voice came up to them with:

"—with her drunken company layin' all around the house t' be fallen over by decent people! Go up and tell her that! Get out o' here, now! Get out o' here before I throw you out!"

"And that's just a sample of the way she carries on all the time, ma'am!" Graves whispered. "Ain't it awful, Mrs. Stone?"

"No. The awful part is that she's allowed to get away with that sort of thing, Graves. Why doesn't Towner fire her?"

"Well, it—it may be—"

"Hasn't nerve enough for the job, hey?"

"Maybe he—he hesitates a little about it, ma'am," Graves responded, with a small giggle.

Mrs. Stone arose slowly and smiled, almost happily. Mrs. Stone, also, smacked her lips.

"I don't know when I've felt more like just this kind of a job," she murmured. "Graves, you run along and tell Anna to get this she devil's duffle together. She's

going to leave suddenly, about ten minutes hence!"

"Oh, but Mrs. Stone, I—I don't think --I mean, this is a terrible woman Mrs. Stone, and if I were you—"

"Sure enough—but you're not!" the lady chuckled heartily, and gripped her cane and moved ahead.

On she plodded and on, while Graves stood quite petrified, partly with terror and partly with admiration; and so Mrs. Stone reached the head of the stairs; and plodded no longer.

With a strange little cry she swayed against the rail, caught it, and steadied herself. Her head was thrust forward in utter incredulity. So energetically did she peer that her very mouth opened!

"Cyn — Cynthia!" gasped Mrs. Stone. "Well, by the mighty! *Cynthia!*"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE PRODIGAL.

**N**OW, it is rather difficult for even a very pretty and well set up young woman to be dignified while attired in a fluffy pink robe, with lovely hair all rumpled and a pair of oversize slippers on her feet. Still, Cynthia managed very nicely indeed.

As she took the last step of the flight and stood on the level with the dumfounded lady, she drew herself up haughtily as any little princess. She made not the slightest effort to mask the profound dislike in her eyes.

"Good morning, Mrs. Stone," said she, and there was a whole Arctic snowstorm in each word. "May I pass, please?"

"Well—" began Mrs. Stone, and choked. "Well—" she essayed once more, and once more choked; and then exploded with a shout of: "Well, by crickey, young one! Come here to the old woman's arms and lemme hug you!"

Cynthia drew back delicately.

"I don't wish to be hugged!" she said crisply.

"No? Don't blame you!" Mrs. Stone responded, readily and delightedly. "Only after turning the whole world upside down

and scaring the wits out of—Cynthia, in the name of common sense, *where have you been?*"

Cynthia laughed unpleasantly, insolently.

"Well, if you must know, I went down and raided your ice box, because I was hungry!"

"Hey?"

"Yes, I tried to tell you last night that I was on my way to steal something to eat. And I did!" said Cynthia, and for a moment she paused and almost smiled over the memory. "And, by the way, I think that beastly woman who cooks for you beat another of your servants almost to death a few moments ago, when she discovered the wreckage and accused her. That's what wakened me!"

"You went to sleep down in the kitchen?" Mrs. Stone gasped.

"Not just that. I'd finished everything, I fancied, and I was about to sneak upstairs again, when I heard some one coming down. I had had quite enough to do with your household for one night, so I turned out the light and scurried into that big closet beyond the kitchen."

"Yes? Go on, child!"

"Why, there's nothing more to tell. It was Towner, of course, and from what I could see he had come down to fill a couple of hot-water bags. He put the water on to heat and lit his pipe, and apparently was going to spend the rest of the night there. It was warm and comfortable in the closet—in fact, it's the only peaceful, pleasant place I've found in your home. So I found the big pile of blankets at the inner corner and stretched out and pulled some of them over me, to wait. I fell asleep almost at once, I think, and—"

"And *you* were either lying or in that closet, looking for her?" Mrs. Stone rasped, much less pleasantly, to the ascending Towner.

"Madam, I give you my word, I was in that very closet when we were hunting the young lady!" the butler protested. "I even looked at that pile of blankets, Mrs. Stone—all our winter blankets, ma'am; thirty-four of 'em, fresh from the cleaners and ready to be took upstairs to-day. But cook was jawing pretty hard, and we didn't

want to be about the kitchen any longer than necessary; and I'd left my glasses upstairs, ma'am—and anyhow, there should be a light in that closet, Mrs. Stone. I give you my word, ma'am, when I went in there for your trunk and—and the young lady sat so sudden, over in the dark corner. I lost a year's growth and—"

"Tell me the rest of it, Cynthia," sighed Mrs. Stone, and examined the restored one with a little incredulity, even now.

"I've told you already that there isn't any 'rest,'" Miss Blair said, in the same curt, impatient way, which indicated what a very different Cynthia she was this morning. "I wish to go now and dress!"

"I'd be the last one to stop you, honey—I'd be the last one!" Mrs. Stone chuckled, and stepped aside. "You come down and see me when you're dressed, deary; there's a lot of things I want to tell you."

"Yes, and there are one or two that I mean to tell *you*!" Cynthia observed, in passing. "Oh, Towner! Fix that telephone in my room so that I can use it, will you? I want to call up—er—my home!"

Then she moved on, and Mrs. Stone gazed after her, almost as amiably as before, although it was rarely enough that any one adopted just that tone to the lady with impunity.

"Shall I—ah—plug in for her, ma'am?" Towner asked, softly.

"Certainly! Do whatever she wants! Give her the house, if she wants it!" chuckled Mrs. Stone. "I'm so darned relieved to see that young one all—well, what are you standing there for? Fix her wire, and then go tell Mrs. Ronalds we're not traveling to-day, after all."

Cynthia had been thinking.

As compared with the difficulty which had attended the same process last night, thinking this morning was something one did with absolutely ridiculous ease. Why, she had reached more fixed, logical conclusions while climbing three flights of stairs than she had accomplished in the last three days! Last night she had been tired and feverish and bewildered; this morning she was neither tired nor feverish, and as for that bewildered feeling—Cynthia laughed aloud and scornfully.

You will guess that Cynthia was thinking of food. You will be sadly in error. With the amount of training, in the way of starvation, that Cynthia had been through these later weeks, it would be two or three days at the very least before she would think of food again in a really serious way. She was thinking, of course, of William Brander.

To a young woman of less clear vision, it might have seemed that William was irretrievably lost. Certainly he had had provocation enough to send him about other concerns than Cynthia; just as certainly he had gone about them, too. But wherever he might be, Cynthia meant to find William and tell him the simple truth at, in coldest fact, the very first possible moment! If, weak to the point of tottering, she had failed to do that yesterday, she would not fail to do it to-day or to-morrow or next week, or whenever she might catch up with William Brander!

So Cynthia walked straight across her room, after closing and locking the door, and, in a crisp, sharp undertone, demanded a number; and then:

"I want to speak to Mr. Brander, please."

There was a considerable pause, and after the pause:

"Mr. Brander's away on leave of absence," a girl's voice advised her.

"Thank you. Do you know whether he's left town yet or not?"

And after another pause:

"Yes, Mr. Cameron says he thinks he left town this morning."

"Thanks," said Cynthia. "That's all."

She rang for Graves. She faced Graves with an eye as hard and steady as the point of a sword!

"Oh, you've brought my clothes?" she observed. "My hat and coat are somewhere about. Find them and bring them here at once. No, I don't need any assistance in dressing."

Nor did she. Cynthia dressed slowly and with the utmost care, acknowledging the arrival of her hat and coat with a frigid nod, and waving Graves out of the room again. This would have to be the sort of toilette that withstands a considerable rail-

road journey, without the aid of so much as a powder puff—because Cynthia meant to go directly from this unhallowed house to Cleveland, Ohio, just as she was! Ten minutes ago she had meant to return home, leave a note for Nora, pack a little grip. Eight minutes ago it had occurred to her that William was an inordinately impulsive and hot-tempered being, likely to do almost anything rash when sufficiently aroused; and—this being the real point—that there was a very pretty girl in Cleveland about whom William had teased her once or twice—a girl with whom he had gone to school, in fact. Assuming that he was now at the point of madness, it might be improbable, but it was not impossible, that William would descend upon this maiden and, in his cyclonic fashion, marry her instantly! These things have happened.

Money? Oh, that would be arranged, because it would simply have to be arranged! Cynthia plunged directly into the arranging when, after a considerable interval, she appeared suddenly before Mrs. Stone.

"I wish to borrow one hundred dollars!" Cynthia stated, without one word of preface.

Mrs. Stone swayed slightly and blinked once.

"What does that woman keep in her ice box?" she muttered. "I think I'll have to go down and look it over myself!"

"I wish," said Cynthia, "to borrow one hundred dollars. I think this household owes me that much. I'll return it as soon as possible."

"Three hundred of 'em lying under your nose, there on my desk," Mrs. Stone smiled. "Take 'em and put 'em in your pocket, honey, and return 'em or not, as you choose. That's immaterial, so long as you're safe and sound and—oh, take off your coat and come sit beside me, child."

"Thank you—*no!*" said the guest, as she picked out five of Mr. Forbes's twenty-dollar notes and folded them. "I'm going now!"

Mrs. Stone glanced swiftly at the clock, which had moved on beyond quarter past eleven, and beamed at Cynthia.

"I understand, my child. You're not to blame for feeling as you do. I'm an eccentric old fool. But humor me by visiting just a little longer."

"I've visited here long enough!"

"Oh, just until Neville gets back," smiled the lady. "I'm—er—expecting him after dinner—and so are you, you little rascal, I'll wager!"

Cynthia laughed coldly.

"That's quite a monomania with you, isn't it?" she observed. "Nothing under the sun will convince you that I'm not even interested in your grandson?"

"Say! I've heard that idea expressed a number of times now, and I don't believe it yet—no!" Mrs. Stone responded, with sudden warmth. "It doesn't jibe with the facts; and I've been holding to facts all my life, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred I'm *right*."

"Then this is the hundredth time and—"

"I'll believe it when you and that boy stand side by side and tell me I'm wrong—and not before then—and that 'll never be!" the lady concluded quite doggedly. "If I'm wrong about this, I'll—"

"Well, you're wrong," said Cynthia. "Good-by!"

Mrs. Stone dropped the subject of her conviction quite hurriedly; honey dripped from her words again:

"Just a minute, deary—just a minute. Run away, if you must; I shan't go to any great length to detain you. But don't be too precipitate about it; you've had no breakfast, you know. Throw off your coat, youngster, and I'll have Graves fetch up a cup of coffee and a muffin—eh?"

"Thank you, no!"

Mrs. Stone glanced once more at the clock. It was her impression that the clock had stopped.

"Going straight home, honey?" she said, with a touch of anxiety.

"I am not!"

"Aren't you? Why not?"

"Because I don't choose to go home."

"But—but you'll be at home in the course of an hour or two!" the lady pursued sharply.

"I shall be at home in the course of a

few days, I suppose—or possibly a few weeks—or possibly not at all.”

“Where are you going, Cynthia?”

“That,” said Cynthia, “is my business.”

Mrs. Stone looked about her room quite wildly. Her heavy brows came down, her mouth grew suddenly set.

“Well, I—I’m not going to permit you to go off alone in any such frame of mind!” she puffed. “I’ll invite no more impudence by asking questions, but—but I feel a—well, I feel a certain responsibility for you, my dear. I’m going to insist that Graves goes with you and—and delivers you safely to your cousin— It *was* your cousin?”

“That’s more than absurd!” Cynthia laughed, patience straining. “Good—”

“It is not!” cried Mrs. Stone. “These are no times for a young girl to be wandering around alone, day or night, I tell you. Cynthia, my dear! You can humor me to that extent? It won’t take Graves long to get ready. She’ll be ready to start by—by twelve or a very few minutes after. Ring for her!”

“I’ll do nothing of the sort,” the guest responded briefly. “I’m not an infant or an imbecile. And while I don’t wish to be unnecessarily rude, I’m in a hurry. Good-by!”

This time she turned and marched straight for the door, too; and Mrs. Stone started from her chair and, momentarily, halted her with:

“Well, your memory’s a good bit shorter than your tongue, miss, if you’ve forgotten that little matter of my lace pin!”

“You *dare* to mention that!” Cynthia exclaimed.

“You haven’t the slightest idea of what I dare when I really get started! I’ve asked you, as courteously as I could, to remain until I could have you properly escorted to your home. Now I *tell* you to remain!”

Cynthia Blair looked this lady up and down, with curling lips, albeit Mrs. Stone just then did not at all resemble the sort of lady one might look up and down with any great degree of safety. Her chin was out and her hard eyes were glinting. But Cynthia laughed. And then Cynthia

snapped her pink fingers audibly and directly at Mrs. Stone. It was a frightful thing to do.

“*That*,” said Cynthia, “for what you tell me!”

“Young woman,” boomed her hostess, and really quivered with anger, “I have warned you!”

Cynthia snapped her fingers again.

“*That*,” said she, “for your warning! You stop me if you dare!”

And then she strode out, and it would be splendid to relate that she strode directly from the house. But the fact of the matter is that, even before she had reached the stairhead, Cynthia’s knees were simulating the aspen leaf once more.

Undeniably, there was something terrific and overwhelming about Mrs. Stone. She might be sane or she might be insane, but the something was there, and on it sheer bravado made the same deep impression that a dried pea might make on the side of a battleship. And when an idea possessed her, it was there! And if, as certainly appeared most credible, she really did pursue Cynthia with her vile, false charge, it was possible that Cynthia might not only miss her train, whenever that might leave, but miss about everything else in life as well. All the colors in the dread picture Mrs. Stone had painted for her last night were just as bright this morning, admit it or not—and Cynthia, as it happened, was admitting it.

Not that she was giving one inch, understand. Cynthia, while dressing, had determined not to give even the ten-thousandth part of one inch. But at the same time Mrs. Stone might easily accuse her of stealing the hundred dollars as well—and after all, it could mean no more than missing one train if she really did let Graves take her home—and she’d be able to pack a few things, too. Of course it was rather humiliating to go back there and—

“Pssst!” said some one at the foot of the stairs; and Cynthia, halfway down, came out of her unpleasant meditations rather suddenly and stared.

In the lower corridor, all alone, stood a rather small young man of about her own age. There was nothing attractive about

him. His sandy hair was smeared back flatly; his eyes were small and distinctly mean—and his mouth, if not small, was a good sight meaner, Cynthia noted. It was, indeed, the meanest mouth she had ever seen, and nothing much more flattering could be said for the nose above it.

And yet, he seemed to know her and to crave her society. He was beckoning in the most animated way; and as Cynthia came down to his level he seized her arm without the slightest formality and all but dragged her into the reception room.

"I've been pumping Towner," said he. "You're the chicken, eh? I mean, the one that breezed in here and told the folks I was going to marry her?"

"Are you—Neville?" Cynthia gasped.

"You got it the first time. What was the idea of—"

"Pardon me, but I never told any of your folks I was going to marry you or—"

"All right. Listen, kid! Towner says the grandma thinks you're great? He says she thinks you're the ideal wife for me?"

"She did seem to have some such impression," Cynthia dimpled.

One great, inexplicable sigh of relief came from young Mr. Ronalds. His too keen eyes darted from side to side and found that they were still alone.

"Great!" he breathed. "I didn't know there was a girl on earth she'd approve of, but if there is—nuf said. You're Nora's cousin?"

"Yes."

"Wish I'd met you sooner," Neville reflected. "However, that's neither here nor there. I'm glad you're as bright as you are, because I haven't got time to draw out a picture of this thing!"

"This—what?"

"Listen, kiddo!" the young Mr. Ronalds continued in a quite dramatic undertone. "You'll have to get it all as I tell it: grandma has the coin, and I blew in here to make the big, quick touch! See? And you're going to help me, because you're a good sport and the only one alive that *can* help me, too, in just the way I need help. Your name's Cynthia?"

"Yes."

"Well, Cynthia, you and I are going to

flash the glad news on grandma that we were married secretly about two weeks ago!"

"Well, we're not!" the younger Miss Blair gasped.

"But we are!" Mr. Ronalds corrected. "You'd never leave a fellow flat when he was in trouble and one harmless little joke like that could save him, would you? And after we throw the bomb, that's where it stops, of course. I'm going to make a play for ten thousand, flat, from grandmother, and if you're the hit Towner says you are, I'll get it!"

"Upon my word," breathed Cynthia Blair, "I think your whole family must have been descended from Captain Kidd or Dick Turpin or—"

"And then we go straight out of the picture with one grand rush, and leave 'em to talk it over," Neville grinned. "Remember this: we're going to sail on the Bercadia at noon, for about six months abroad, in the way of a honeymoon. That gives us the swift get-away—see?—because it's near half past eleven now. Once we're around the corner, kid, you go your way, knowing you've done a good deed, and we'll go ours—and one way or another the future 'll take care of itself when the ten thousand's spent!"

"We?"

"I and the wife, so to speak," Neville responded. "Oh, yes, I've got a regular wife—I'll tell the whole wide world I have! I married Miss Maisie Mordell day before yesterday."

"When you were supposed to be shooting ducks?"

Mr. Ronalds's grin grew even broader.

"Yep," he said complacently, "I staged that one pretty well. It took time and thought, and I had to make Harry the goat, but he's a good deal of a boob, anyway. Only, this isn't getting us anywhere, is it? Now, here's exactly what we'll do, Cynnie. I'll send Towner with word that I'm home and that you and I have something we think we ought to tell grandma—see? She will have us up quick. We go arm in arm—or a little better than that, maybe—and blush a little and admit it's true. Simple! Then I tell her we have to catch a steamer

and—we're near broke. And grandma reaches for her little magic book and writes the check. Grandma usually has a balance of seventy or eighty thousand, too. I wonder if she'd stand for more than ten? How much *did* she seem to like you, kid?"

Cynthia smiled whimsically.

"And you catch your steamer—and I'm virtually an accessory to a piece of rather cheap pocket picking? No!"

"Steamer? Bunk! We're not really going to any steamer, kid. We're going to Atlantic City and rip up the Boardwalk and chuck it into the ocean, just to show how good we feel. We—oh, look here, kid, be nice about this! The whole thing won't take five minutes, and then we're all out of it. I don't know what brought you here, but I know you're not a family friend and you never have to come back. Starting a loving young couple off on a high-class honeymoon isn't so much to ask, is it?"

He held out his hands appealingly, and Miss Blair quickened.

Because, it did mean an immediate escape, did it not? And that, and the consequent catching of a train, might very easily mean the difference between losing Billy Brander and spending a long, happy life with him. And so far as the ethics of the matter went—well, they were at least open to argument, but heaven itself must have borne witness that there had been nothing exalted or honorable or even halfway right and decent about her own treatment at Mrs. Stone's hands! There were still further considerations. In whatever fashion, the slightly unmoral young man would get his money—and Cynthia herself would probably be living in Cleveland for years to come and—

"Oh, listen, kid, will you?" the young man was saying. "If you'll just help me for a couple of minutes, it'll mean an awful lot to me—to us. I'll pay it back some day, on the level; you send for me, some time when you need help, and I'll put over anything short of a murder for you! You see, Maisie's waiting down the block for me in a taxicab, and she isn't going to wait all day. She was kind of sore because I didn't bring her in, right off; but I know grandma, and I thought I'd better do a little scouting

first. Maisie feels as if she'd sacrificed a lot for me, and I guess she has. She just walked out and left the show flat; they'll probably have to close Saturday. And all you have to do is just drop your eyes and look silly; blush, if you know how; I'll do all the lying. And this thing can't slip, you know. I thought it out in three minutes, but it's absolutely fool proof. And if anything should slip, I'll just come clean and get *you* out of it all right. Gosh, I'm not a crook, you know!" concluded Neville, with whatever accuracy.

Cynthia looked up suddenly. She smiled, dimpling.

"Towner!" hissed Mrs. Stone, as that individual passed her open door.

"Yes, ma'am," breathed Towner, entering on tiptoe and looking about for the cause of the caution.

"Has she gone?"

"Miss Blair?"

"Yes!" whispered Mrs. Stone.

"No," whispered Towner.

"Where is she?"

"Below, ma'am, talking to Mr. Neville."

"Hey?" croaked Mrs. Stone. "Is he home at last?"

"He came about ten minutes ago, ma'am. I thought you knew. I—I fancied the young woman was hurrying down to him from here, judging by what I—er—saw over the banisters," said the butler. "Anyway, they went into the reception room arm in arm."

"Sort of—sort of glad to see one another, Towner?"

"I should have said so, ma'am," replied the butler, after a moment's careful consideration.

"Well, *by crickey!*" ejaculated Mrs. Stone, and smiled widely, suddenly.

"I'll go down, ma'am, and—"

"No, you won't! You stay right up here and keep your mouth shut! Don't even walk around, Towner!" commanded the master of the house, as she arose. "I'll stalk 'em!"

This she proceeded to do with a certain amount of skill. Quite noiselessly, Mrs. Stone made her way to the stairs and then down the stairs. Twice, to be sure, her



cane did bump lightly against the railing—which may or may not have had something to do with the picture which greeted her as she appeared suddenly in the door of the reception room.

Neville and Cynthia were standing side by side and Neville's arm was about Cynthia and Neville was grinning cheerily as he met his grandmother's eye. Still he kept his grip as he said:

"You—you didn't make much noise getting here, grandma! I guess you caught us that time!"

"I guess so, Neville!" the lady said, rather thickly.

The young man glanced at Cynthia. Her eyes, indeed, were dropped and she was blushing brilliantly; and even if this did happen to be because Cynthia was thoroughly ashamed of herself, the effect was wonderful. Mr. Ronalds sighed lightly and, without visible reluctance, held her much closer.

"It's all right, though, grandmother," he said evenly. "We were married two weeks ago yesterday."

"Married!"

"Aha!" said Neville blithely.

And then even he, well poised as he was, started back before the gust of sound that came from Mrs. Stone.

"Well, by the piper that played before Moses, *I was right!*" that lady observed in one great, triumphant roar. "*I was right!*"

## CHAPTER XX.

### ALLOTTED.

ONE of Mrs. Stone's outstanding features was the total lack of senility's very first suggestion; inevitably one carried away from her an impression of force and virility which even Time would have some trouble in conquering. Yet now, perhaps because sheer, unadulterated delight is so closely associated with the childish state, her cackling chuckle might have come from a lady of ninety-five!

"Well, by crickey!" she cried. "Every last one of you tried to lie to me about it, and I knew I was right and *I was right!*"

"You—you approve?" Neville asked.

"Approve! Why, she's the most wonderful girl alive!"

"Yeah!" breathed Neville, and gazed steadily at the blushing Cynthia for a moment and, perchance, wondered whether one of his young life's greatest errors had not already been made. "Well, that's what I surely think, grandmother!" he pursued. "That's—"

"Only why the Sam Hill did you do it secretly?" his grandmother demanded. "Why didn't you—well, you little rascal!" she cried at Cynthia as a great new thought came to her. "You weren't lying to me, were you? You *were*n't engaged to him—you weren't *going* to marry him!"

"No," Cynthia conceded, without facing her.

"I tell you, grandma," Neville went on glibly, "there were a lot of reasons for keeping it quiet; I made Cyn promise not to breathe a word of it. First, we thought we'd say nothing till I'd made a lot of money; then that seemed too long to wait. You see, I was pretty sure you'd like Cyn—and then again I couldn't be dead sure. So finally we planned for a honeymoon at a distance, in case of accidents. I've been busy these last two days, selling off some things and raising the wind generally and—we're going to sail on the Bercadia at noon!"

"To—to Europe!"

"Living's pretty cheap in Italy, if you have to live cheap. We thought we might have to do that till it blew over. Then again, if we *don't* have to, we can enjoy life as well as any one else."

Mrs. Stone's wide grin faded out; she nodded slowly.

"Meaning, about how much from me?" she asked.

Neville looked quite confused.

"Well—of course, that's mighty nice of you, grandma," he murmured. "I—why—well, I suppose, if we keep an eye on the pennies, ten thousand ought to carry us over six months, eh? We thought we'd stay about six months."

"Ten thousand dollars!" Mrs. Stone murmured; but she was looking at Cynthia and she smiled again. "Well, it's just possible we might go even a little bit better

than that, boy, and see whether you're fit to handle money yet. But as for this Bercadia business—bosh! You take some other boat, some other time!"

"Oh, but we can't do that!" Neville said quickly. "We've got passage all booked and paid for on that boat!"

"I'll pay for it next time!"

"No, but—you see, Cynthia's counting on sailing on that particular boat. Aren't you, darling?"

"Er—yes!" Cynthia agreed.

"Cyn's got a sort of sentimental attachment for the Bercadia," Mr. Ronalds explained further. "One of her uncles was the first captain and Cyn used to play around on the old tub when she was little. She—"

"It's twenty-five minutes of twelve now. You can't catch her!"

"Grandmother," said Neville, "you do your part and we'll catch her!"

Mrs. Stone frowned meditatively.

"And another thing," said she. "I don't think that boat sails at noon—I don't think any of their boats sail at noon. In fact, I'm positive they don't!"

"Well, you're—you're mistaken about this one, grandma, because—"

"I'm not mistaken so very often!" the lady snapped. "Wait a minute!"

She faced about and walked out. After that her behavior was slightly peculiar, for Mrs. Stone moved straight to the telephone, hidden beneath the stairs, seated herself, paused and then delivered a monologue directly at the corridor itself.

"Hello!" said Mrs. Stone after some preliminary rumbling in an undertone. "I want to know what time the Bercadia sails? . . . What's that? . . . Noon? . . . Eh? . . . Just this one time, eh? . . . I see . . . Well, that's good; I'm glad of it . . . What's that? Lord, no! Anything but an inconvenience; give some of my family a chance to get aboard . . . Yep . . . Thank you. Good-by."

Therewith she arose and returned to the reception room, smiling comfortably.

"Well, you were right and I was right, Nevvy!" she stated. "Most of 'em go out at twelve, but they're holding the Bercadia till one o'clock to-day. Got to wait for

some darned official mail, or something of the kind. You sit down and wait a few minutes."

"Are you—you sure you heard that right, grandma?" Neville asked.

"I am absolutely positive about what I heard or didn't hear!" Mrs. Stone replied as she turned away.

"Well—gosh! Then if we rushed like mad, Cyn, we might be able to go get your other trunk and take it aboard," the inspired Neville said brightly. "All right! That's fine! We'll just have to lick it out of here if we're going to do that, but we can make it, grandma, if—er—"

One last moment, Mrs. Stone paused to beam on them:

"All right, sonny—all right!" she said amiably. "You can spare the time it takes for an old woman to write a check, can't you?"

Then she moved out, not very hastily, and up the stairs again; and once in her own apartment Mrs. Stone brought forth her check book, examined her balance, smiled and pushed the book away again. She then examined the clock carefully. Next, Mrs. Stone sighed her own vast personal relief on several counts, picked up a newspaper and placidly set about reading the full account of last night's big fight, one of the bloodiest encounters in the history of the ring.

In the reception room the minutes hurried by. Neville counted them for a while, then:

"My mother's home, isn't she?"

"I think so."

"Hope to goodness grandma neglects to tell her the big news for a while. That 'd mean more excitement and delay. What do you suppose is keeping her?"

"Possibly she's coming to her senses and deciding not to give you your loot!"

Neville opened his mean eyes.

"You don't have to be peevish about this; it's not your money!"

"I can be ashamed of being mixed up in it, I suppose?" said Miss Blair. "I thought we were to rush out at once. That's why I consented."

"Well, didn't you see and hear me doing my best to put over the rushing out stuff?" Neville demanded. "Could I tell

ahead of time that they'd postponed their blasted sailing for an hour?"

"Probably not, but—see here! I think I'll leave now. You can say that I've gone to wait in a cab or—"

"Not on your life!" Neville said, and gripped her firmly. "You're too valuable here!"

"But I have to go, I tell you! Look at that clock! It's almost five minutes to twelve now."

"Well, that clock isn't worrying you one-tenth as much as it's worrying me," Neville smiled grimly. "You're just fussing about keeping some date, I suppose; I'm sitting on top of a TNT dump, with a couple of forest fires on each side of me! You don't know this wonderful little girl of mine. She knows just how good she is and she was sore as a pup when I didn't flash her on the family and let 'em bust into wild cheers. I used up an awful lot of apple sauce before I could make Maisie wait for me in that taxi! Lord, if I'd known it was going to be as long as this I think I'd have taken a chance and brought her in!"

"Oh, no! *That*," said Cynthia, quite caustically, "would have been the manly thing to do!"

"Aha!" mused Neville, and scratched his ear reflectively. "I never thought of it in just that light. You may be right. However, this isn't making the get-away, is it? I wonder if it 'd start trouble if I chased old Towner up to ask—"

"She's coming now!" Miss Blair said suddenly.

"Come here and pose with me, kid!" breathed Neville Ronalds, and once more encircled her with his arms.

Mrs. Stone paused in the doorway, glanced curiously at the entrance of the home for a moment, and seemed to be waiting for something. Mrs. Stone, then, opened her eyes and her mouth together.

"Aha!" she cried, rather strangely. "On the tick!"

"Yes, it's just twelve, grandma," Neville said swiftly, "and we haven't a margin of more than five minutes now, if we do all we want to do. Is that the check? No, I'm not going to snatch it, and I want to ask you if you'll break the news to mother

and—and get it all smoothed away and settled down for me? You're a good sport, grandmother; you always were! You—well, what's all this?"

It was another of those questions with an excellent reason.

Towner had passed the doorway; Towner, then, it seemed, had opened the outer door to some eager visitors, for there was a lively movement of feet and with astonishing suddenness the company was swelled by the presence of Nora Blair and of William Brander and of Daniel Girton himself!

This latter gentleman acted in what was, apparently, his characteristic fashion.

One glance sufficed to give him a general idea of the situation. While glancing he walked directly to Cynthia. Another keen stare of one second's duration apprised him of the fact that Cynthia, gazing back amazedly at him, was quite uninjured. He bestowed a chilly kiss upon Cynthia and patted her shoulder for the first time since her earlier childhood.

"You're quite all right, my child?" he asked. "In every way?"

"I? Why—yes, Uncle Dan!" Cynthia managed.

"You are certain of that?"

"I—of course I'm—I'm certain!" Cynthia stammered.

"I am very glad," her uncle said simply, and stepped back to Mrs. Stone; and there he paused only to say: "You were wise, madam!"

"Eh?" came gustily from the lady as her shoulders squared.

"You will excuse me now, Nora," Mr. Girton stated. "I have been neglecting some very important matters this morning. If you need further assistance, seven of Bixtel's men are just outside. Good morning, and let me hear from you soon."

He moved away, toward the door.

"Well, wait a minute, you! Just wait a minute!" Mrs. Stone thundered. "I've a thing or two to say to *you*, my hearty! You took it upon yourself to come into my house, two or three hours ago, and make a number of threatening—Towner!"

"Yes, ma'am?" said Towner.

"Don't let that man out! I want to talk to him first!"

"Well, I'm sorry, ma'am, but he's gone already," the butler reported. "He just stepped out this very second!"

"All right—let him go! I'll write him a letter and tell him what I think of him!" Mrs. Stone chuckled. "I can talk to you instead, Miss Nora, and to you, you handsome young devil!" she said to William Brander, who, eyes upon Cynthia and him who embraced Cynthia, had not yet drawn one full breath since entering. "You two did a lot of threatening and yapping also, didn't you? Well, if I'd wanted to at the time, I might have made a good guess and told you what I tell you now: there's your Cynthia and there's my grandson, *and they've been married this fortnight!*"

William Brander shuddered back to life, manifesting that condition by a long, low cry.

"Cynthia! That—that's not so?"

"Oh, it's so, all right enough, my lad!" boomed Mrs. Stone.

There was stern stuff in William. One instant only, he closed his eyes. Then he straightened and marched right directly at the surprised pair, with his hand outstretched.

"Well, if it really *is* so, and if it is what you—you want, Cynthia, then I want to con—to congrat—"

Thus spake William and could go no further. His hands dropped to his sides and clenched; dark red color surged to his cheeks. William seemed to be tightening, all over.

"No!" he cried suddenly. "I can't do it! It's not in me to congratulate him! *I've got to kill him!*"

And he lunged at Neville Ronalds and, with one thunderstruck shriek, Neville Ronalds bounded straight to the right. He did this successfully, too, for William, snarling, shot through the space Neville had just occupied and all but lost his balance. He caught himself and wheeled about swiftly, however; he was growling now like a greatly annoyed tiger. He crouched and sighted Neville, at this moment poised in the doorway of the drawing-room across the corridor, and seemed to estimate the distance between them. Then, tiger-like still, William reached the drawing-room!

It was rather a narrow squeak for Neville, too. He had, apparently, determined to stand his ground and then had changed his mind at the last moment. He turned wildly, hurled a chair directly in William's path and sped down the room—and over this chair William went like a dry leaf in an autumn gale and so on after Neville, who was making splendid time down the drawing-room and toward the rather small door in the corner. This door slammed violently after Neville—and, perhaps one-tenth of a second later, was burst open and sent crashing back against the wall, just as violently—and with a stumble and a nimble recovery, William found himself in the dining room, with Neville just across the long table, clawing out wildly in the direction of the sideboard.

His vicious, cowardly fingers closed upon a heavy metal tray; he swung the tray around his head and hurled it at William Brander. Even as the thing crashed through the heavy glass of that aged china closet, upon which Mrs. Stone insisted as the proper decorative note for any dining room, William had ducked low—had bounded up and dived straight across the table—had once more missed Neville Ronalds and was once more on his feet, panting. Distantly, there seemed to be quite a little screaming; to this William gave no heed at all. Neville Ronalds was making for the front of the house now and for the stairs and, once up these, he might be lost to William.

So young Mr. Brander put on a little extra steam and overtook young Mr. Ronalds just as he had caught the newel post with one frenzied hand and was about to swing himself upward; and William's strong hand clutched Neville's tender throat and the unfortunate young man backed into his newel post with a forceful bang.

"*Now,*" began young Mr. Brander, gaspingly but with the utmost enthusiasm, as he drew back his hard fist, "here's where you—"

He failed to finish his declaration; something distinctly odd had happened to William Brander just then. Down the back of his collar, strong, rather slim fingers had been slipped; William was jerked back from his victim and twisted about—and as

his fists clenched anew and he prepared to annihilate him who had interfered with the slaughter, a weakness came upon William and he could no more than gape foolishly. For this interfering person was not of the "him" variety; this was a lady!

A strapping young woman she was, too, as finely built and handsome a young woman as one could have found in a day's journey. Her eyes were violet and her shingled hair was yellow; her shoes arrested and held the attention; there was much fur about her red coat, and a hat so entrancingly rakish and still so strikingly modish never before had entered that particular house.

"What's the idea of it?" inquired this person.

"Well, what—well, who—" William stammered.

"No more of that stuff, buddy!" the newest girl said firmly. "That's the only husband I've got and I don't want him spoiled."

William straightened up and winked, thrice.

"The only what?" he asked.

"The word was—husband!" smiled the girl.

And now Mrs. Stone's voice rose, for Mrs. Stone was speeding to the center of the action.

"Lunatic, hey?" said Mrs. Stone. "Where'd she come from? Anybody here ever see her before?"

The girl laughed quite musically and considered Mrs. Stone with interest.

"You must be the one he's so scared of!" she said. "Nevvy's told me all about *you*."

"He has?" Neville's grandmother said, quietly enough. "Well, he hasn't mentioned *you*, as it happens. I think you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, and the sooner you get out—"

"Is that so? Well, I'll say that I'm in the right place at the right time!" clicked crisply from the stranger. "What right has he to leave me out there in a cab, to die of old age? Is he ashamed of me? Are you ashamed of me?"

"Well—no, Maisie," Neville conceded, with an uncertain grin. "I'm certainly not ashamed of you. I—"

"Then why does she say I'm in the wrong place?" the girl asked further. "I'm your wife!"

"You sure are!" said Neville. "You—"

It was here that Mrs. Stone regained her breath.

"Here! What devil's poppycock is all this?" she demanded. "This woman bewitched you, Neville. There's your wife—Cynthia!"

Neville shook his head rather sadly, caught the inquiring eye of the Maisie person and shook his head most emphatically.

"No, grandma! Not in a million years!" he said. "That was—that was just a joke! That's all it was, a joke! Have to tell you all about that some time and you'll just laugh yourself sick!"

"And me, too," Maisie said, softly, after a narrow inspection of Cynthia. "You'll have to tell *me* all about that, too!"

"I certainly will, Maisie! Ha! ha! ha!" said Neville. "It was like—"

"Never mind what it was like," Maisie responded, opening her handbag and extracting a folded paper. "There's my marriage certificate, beautiful! Have you got anything like that?"

"I—no!" Cynthia faltered. "I—you see, it—Neville thought it was a—a joke and—"

The new Mrs. Ronalds folded her arms and regarded her husband.

"'S funny, but I never could see that kind of a joke," said she. "Give me the right of this *now*, quick!"

As concerned Cynthia herself, things were passing into a reeling fog. In whatever way, Billy seemed to have recaptured her; his arms were about her and she was weeping aimlessly upon Billy's shoulder, and for the moment that was enough. The rest of them seemed to be talking—Neville, especially, who waved his hands and spoke at great length and with tremendous earnestness, chiefly addressing his bride. Mrs. Stone, she observed, leaned upon her cane and assimilated it all rather grimly; and after a time, when Neville had come to the end of his oration and was mopping his brow, Mrs. Stone seemed to have passed to a minute inspection of the bride.

From feet to head did she examine the

new Mrs. Ronalds, dwelling for a long time upon the face. Undeniably, there was that about Maisie which assured one that, whatever her goal might be, Maisie stood an excellent chance of reaching it quite fresh and unwinded and even ready for more!

"Well, at that," Mrs. Stone grunted, grudgingly, "I shouldn't wonder if you'd be the making of the brat!"

The bride tucked back one of her curls and smiled faintly, tolerantly.

"Why, no; I shouldn't wonder such an awful lot if I was!" she said.

"Only I could have sworn," said Mrs. Stone, as her dark gaze roved back to Cynthia, "*I would have sworn* that—say, what did you mean by telling me you loved Neville so you'd be glad to die for him and—"

"I never told you anything of the kind!" flared from Cynthia. "I wasn't talking about Neville at all! I—"

"And that'll do!" William Brander, scowling, barked at Mrs. Stone. "You're not going to bully her any more! Understand that?"

"Aha?" rumbled Mrs. Stone; and her gaze passed back to Maisie and again to Cynthia; a pained, baffled light was in her deepset eyes. "Well, by crickey!" she muttered. "Not that I won't get over it, you understand; I've gotten over too many things to have this one worry me very long. Only I could have *sworn*—"

There she shook her head again and addressed one who was, to Cynthia, a total stranger—a distinctly good-looking youngish man who seemed to have dropped into the hazy picture from nowhere in particular and to be rather bewildered.

"Two or three minutes late," he was explaining. "Something the matter in the subway and—"

"All right, Forbes—all right!" Mrs. Stone said drearily; and her meditative stare rested on Maisie for a full minute. "Forbes!"

"Yes, Mrs. Stone?"

"I'm going to switch my will around again. You're pretty bright. Can you fix me up a trust fund that the devil himself couldn't bust into?"

Then there was Nora, who seemed to

have spent so much time patting Cynthia's shoulder. Nora was on pins and needles just now!

"Honey," she was saying, "if you're really all right, do you mind if I leave now? I can catch Morse before he goes out to lunch at one."

"Well, catch him! Catch him!" Cynthia wept afresh. "I'm so sorry I—"

"Billy, you'll keep a sharp eye on her?"

"Will I?"

"I mean, get her out of here and be sure she's safely home?"

"Say, Nora," said William, with considerable feeling, "I don't think you need give me any instructions about that!"

"Fine!" said Nora, and flashed out of the fog!

"And now you stop your crying, Cyn," William pursued soothingly. "Here! I'm going to dry your eyes. Where's your handkerchief? In this pocket or—well, what's this money?"

"Oh—that's hers!" Cynthia sobbed, indicating Mrs. Stone.

"Well, we don't want anything from *her*!" said William Brander, and slapped the hundred dollars down upon the nearest table.

It was only in the taxicab, however, that Cynthia's fog really began to clear. William had insisted upon the taxi, perhaps because it was the only sort of conveyance in which he could keep an actual, physical grip on Cynthia without attracting undue attention.

Natural enough it would be to picture them riding along thus, all wreathed in smiles, blissfully happy and with the unkind world forgotten. Such was not quite the case, however. They were holding hands tightly, to be sure; otherwise, they were gazing ahead in a rather dazed, unsmiling fashion. William was even frowning.

"Gosh darn it!" William muttered. "I ought to take that night train to Cleveland!"

"Oh!" cried Cynthia, and awoke suddenly. "You really got the job, Billy?"

"I—oh, strictly speaking, no. I didn't close with it," William sighed. "That is, Morton was tickled to death with what I could tell him, but I was—oh, sort of

rattled last night, you know. Still, Morton as much as told me that if I'd get into Cleveland before to-morrow night and show him the rest of it, I could have the job."

"Billy!" Cynthia cried joyfully.

There was one block of complete silence.

"Doggone it! I *ought* to take that night train!" William submitted.

"But you are going to take it!"

"Not me!"

"What? Why not?"

"I'm not going to leave you again, kid!"

"Oh, but that's ridiculous! That's—"

"Oh, no, it isn't ridiculous, Cynthia," William growled harshly. "Any one who can get into a mess like that isn't fit to be left without a keeper!"

"But Billy—" Cynthia faltered.

There was another block of complete silence. Then William nodded with great finality.

"I'm going to take that train!" he announced.

"Of course you are, because—"

"And you're going to take it with me!" young Mr. Brander pursued. "We'll get married first and then scare up some lunch and then you can pack!"

"But I—I can't do that!" Cynthia gasped. "I can't just desert Nora! I can't—"

"Nora'll have to take care of herself," William responded, and from his smile one knew that, under certain circumstances, his heart was of the hardest flint! "She's got a lot of work coming to her now, anyway.

And she's getting dead stuck on Dick Salter, too, whether she knows it or not, and he's been wild about her for three months. Another thing, there was some talk this morning about your uncle buying a house for himself and you girls taking care of it. He's got quite a human streak, when you come to know him. So Nora's all right," William concluded, "and whether she is or isn't, I'm going to get myself the legal right to buy your dinners hereafter and know that *you're* all right, too!"

"Yes, but—Billy—" Cynthia faltered.

William, however, gave no heed. He was tapping on the glass just then and when the driver turned he said sharply:

"Say, do you know where to get a marriage license in this man's town? You do? All right! That's where we're going next. Step on it!"

"But—Billy—" Cynthia essayed once more, faintly, as he sat back.

William Brander turned on her almost in exasperation.

"Well, you haven't any real objection to marrying me, kid, have you?" he demanded.

To Cynthia it seemed that his eye was growing very hard and angry. She shuddered slightly, although not unpleasantly. This William, of course, was a very strong character, perhaps to be feared a little, but also to be loved vastly. Abruptly Cynthia dimpled in her own maddening fashion.

"Not the tiniest little objection in the whole wide world!" she said, quite candidly.

### THE END



## THE WALLED GARDEN

A STILL, walled garden is my heart,  
Where silver shrub and tree  
And flower stalk, beneath the moon,  
Their gifts bear gallantly.

A garden where, unseen, buds break  
Where thrush and blackbird call;  
Yes, a walled garden is my heart,  
But you have scaled the wall.

Mary Carolyn Davies.



# A Raid on Montmartre

By LAROSA MARTEL

**I**T is a curious thing how few travelers—no matter how cosmopolitan—ever really penetrate the surface of the countries they so assiduously visit year after year. Your American, perhaps, is the worst offender in this respect. He wears his Americanism as he would a pair of colored spectacles, and thus his outlook has a reassuring sameness wherever he goes.

He travels as he would go to the theater. He sees all sorts of things, as he might on the stage, things that are strange and bizarre, and, often, terrible; but he sees them with the detached interest of one who says: "Well, such things may happen, I suppose, but not in America and not to me."

And he is right. Such things don't happen to him—often. That is because the American tourist has made a well worn and circumspect path all over the Continent,

and the native, except those who have something to sell, seldom crosses that path.

This is especially true of Paris where, every year, more good American dollars are turned into francs than you would think possible; where more broken English is spoken by all classes than in any other city on the Continent; where the tourist feels as safe as a baby in its cradle. And rightly so. An unmolested tourist is a rich source of revenue. He is everywhere protected by those whose purses he feeds.

But the most faultless machine is liable to accident. There are instances, within my memory, where the spectator of some European "show" being staged for his benefit, has been dragged behind the scenes, as it were. This is what happened to one James Adams—though that is not his name—who came from Chicago to Paris.



The memory of that whole affair is framed by the clamor of the bell on my front gate. I had been sleeping for a pair of good hours when it began to invade my dreams. The wall which separates my *pétit jardin* from the Rue Falguerie and the side of the house on which is my bedroom, are plumb with the pavement. It is a quiet street by night, though at dawn, when the farmers' carts start lumbering past from Vincennes, Ivry and Fontenay, one could not say so much for it.

But it was not yet two, and the street was deserted when my bell began to ring loud enough to wake the peaceful dead in the Montparnasse cemetery, which is not so far distant, and yet not loud enough to disturb the slumbers of my *bonne* upstairs.

At first I dreamed of bells, distant and tinkling like those on a goat's neck. Then the goat turned into the tower of Notre Dame and the tinkle became the great Bourdon warning me that my house was on fire.

By this time I was out of my bed, shaking with cold, for it was January — and fumbling with the heavy wooden shutters of my window. When I had thrown them open and stuck out my head, I saw the street beneath me silent and tranquil as a sleeping virgin, save for that hideous clamor at my gate which had never ceased.

Though the night was black, the feeble light from the nearest street lamp showed me a tall man without a hat pumping at the bell on my gate as though the safety of the entire city depended upon his never leaving off. I decided that he was drunk, and raised my voice:

"*Assez!* Be off, *soûlard*, before you see the inside of a jail."

He dropped the bell handle, and in two strides was beneath my window.

"Let me in, will you? I want to see Mme. Martel! *Je demande madame—toute de suite!* Get me? *Comprenez-vous?*"

I smiled, though my teeth were chattering. An American or I had never met one!

"My friend, I do not receive callers at this hour—"

"Oh! *You're* Mme. Martel! But you'll have to see me—I mean, it's urgent."

"To-morrow, then!"

"Good Heaven, no! I tell you I'm in trouble."

I jerked down my blinds and picked up my *robe de chambre* and cursed in two languages as I went down the stairs and pulled the cord that releases the latch on the gate. He came through the door like the north wind, puffing and blowing, and I took him into the *salon* where there was no fire, and turned on the light.

"You must think me crazy—acting like this—and I *am* nearly crazy with anxiety! I've been to the police, but I might as well have taken a walk in the park for all the good that did me. Albert Cortot told me I'd better come to you. I called him up—my wife's been arrested, and I've got to get her, but I don't even know where they've taken her!"

His hair stood up like the fur on the back of an angry cat. He was a big, handsome creature, though his face was haggard with worry and exasperation.

"Come," I said, "you must begin at the beginning if I am to help you. Your wife, you say, has been arrested and taken to jail. How did it happen. What did she do, then?"

"Do? My Lord! You don't think she *did* anything! We were in a café on Montmartre and the place was raided. The landlord, or whatever you call him, warned us, and the lights went out, and we all made for the back door. I had hold of my wife, or thought I did until we got into the street, then I saw it was some one else. We searched the whole neighborhood—"

"Whom do you mean by 'we'?"

"Some other Americans who were there, too. I never saw them before. They decided she must have been pulled in."

"Were others 'pulled in' as you say, also?"

"I don't know. I shouldn't think so. We all scrambled out in double quick time."

"Then what did you do?"

"Got a taxi and told him to drive like hell to the nearest *gendarmerie*. He took me somewhere—I don't know where. There wasn't a man in the place who spoke a word of English—"

"What do you expect a Frenchman to speak?"

"I know. You must think me an idiot. Well, anyway, they didn't know what I was talking about, so I called up Albert Cortot—we were at Yale together. He advised me to come to you."

"Where is this café, and what is the name of it?" I asked him, and reached for the telephone.

"Somewhere on Montmartre, and the name has something to do with a bird—*oiseau*—"

"Was it the *Café de l'Oiseau Chanteur*?"

"That's it! Singing bird, isn't it?"

I called for the number of a certain magistrate of my acquaintance and talked to my young American while I waited.

"There will be some formalities, you understand. The main thing you desire, I expect, is to locate your wife. You will be asked to go bail for her—"

"I only want to get her out. Think of her—in a filthy jail! Damn their hides! I beg your pardon—but some one, I assure you, is going to pay for this! It's an outrage."

"You will be the one to pay, my friend," I told him. "You should have thought twice before taking your wife to a place of that type—exposing her to arrest."

"I never dreamed there was any danger. The place seemed decent enough. Nothing the matter with it except that it was dark—and dirty. The old boy who calls himself *Père Oiseau* sang some songs and played the banjo. I suppose the songs were smutty, but I knew Sally couldn't understand them."

"How did you happen to go there?"

"We went for the lark of it. Some friends of ours told us about it. They said it was risqué, and that it had been raided once or twice—"

"Then you knew you were running that risk."

"I never dreamed they'd arrest an American."

I got the number I had asked for, at last, but it was some time before I could get the information I needed. While I talked my visitor paced the floor, dropping cigarette ashes on the rugs as though they

had been laid for that purpose. When I rose he said:

"Well, found her all right? I've got a cab waiting outside. Will you come with me? Oh, my poor darling."

I knew he referred to his wife, but I was halfway up the stairs.

"I shall go with you, my friend, no fear of that," I told him.

I am a heavy woman, and not so quick as I was twenty years ago, but I was dressed to my hat and cloak in three minutes and speaking to the sleepy *cocher* of the chugging taxi in another.

"To the *Oiseau Chanteur*, and fifty francs above your fare if you make it under ten minutes!"

"Say! Where is he—you told him to go back to the café, didn't you?"

"Get in, my friend—and quick!" I tumbled him in, muttering and protesting, and we shot down the *Rue Falguerie* with such speed that we both landed asprawl on the seat. Then I said, when I had got my breath: "Americans are noted for their courage and good sense. You are going to need both these qualities, *monsieur*."

"You mean we're going to have trouble? Did they say they wouldn't—"

"I mean that your wife is not in the hands of the police, as you believed. They made no raid on *Papa Oiseau's* place. Come, now, I told you that you should need your courage. A clear head is almost as important. Has it occurred to you that your wife might have gone back to her hotel after she missed you? We might stop there."

There is an element of surprise in Americans that lends a fillip to one's intercourse with them. This young man, who acted like a maniac when he thought his wife might have to spend a few hours in a French jail, was so stonily silent when real danger threatened her that I thought for a moment the shock might have rendered him unconscious. Then he spoke, and I knew he had used that moment to good advantage.

"I dropped off at the hotel on my way to you. What—what do you think may have—"

"A detective doesn't 'think' on a mat-

ter like this, my friend. I mean by that he indulges in no conjectures until he has something to build them on. I am as mystified at present as yourself, and with more reason. This Papa Oiseau has made his fortune on Americans—which means that you should be as secure there as a child at its mother's breast. Tell me, your wife was young—and pretty, perhaps?"

"Oh! Yes—she is—beautiful."

"How long ago did this raid take place?"

"It must have been an hour ago—nearly that."

"Has she any friends in Paris to whom she might have gone?"

"None at present."

With the promise of that fat *pourboire* hanging before the *cocher* like a bag of oats before an ass's nose, I thanked God that the streets were empty. We had to cross the city, and we took our direction as the crow flies, skirting the boulevards and cutting down the narrower and ill-lighted streets that lead direct to the Pont Neuf. The whir of our engine and the honk of our horn made conversation almost impossible. I hoped they had the same stultifying effect on my young man's thoughts, but once he said:

"Perhaps she's up there—at the café—waiting for me to come and get her."

"Perhaps," I agreed.

"Nothing could—could happen to her. Nobody'd dare—"

A lurch of the cab cut him short. I was glad for that colossal assurance of his, though I wondered at it, too. It seemed to me there was little reassurance for him in the scenes flying past our windows.

Paris at night, once you leave the Grand Boulevards behind, is still the Paris of the Louis' and the bloody *débâcle* that disposed of them. When night settles on the city, it seems to blot out all traces of the last civilizing century and old Paris once more triumphs over the new.

So it was to-night. The narrow, twisting streets with their cobbled roads, were the same streets through which François Villon once led his merry band of cutthroats. The barricaded shop fronts and closely shuttered windows, were a heritage of that day when heads were carried about like para-

sols. The towers of St. Sulpice, the grim bulwark of the Conciergerie, the shadowy outline of the Palais walls, the obelisk standing guard over Place de la Concorde—all these are milestones along a gory highway. Scarcely a street we traversed that did not have its own memory of bloodshed and lawlessness, yet my American could say—"Nobody'd dare—"

I was relieved when we began to climb the slopes of Montmartre. Here there were lights and crowds and laughter, too, of a sort. The throngs around the *loterie* wheels on the Boulevard Rochechouart were wrangling noisily. A *chef de gaufre* on the corner could not make the hot, waferlike waffles quickly enough to satisfy his buyers. A group of students out for a lark, swung down the street, their voices raised in song—"Ah! *Quelle cohue, ma tête est perdue—*"

"Merciful Heaven, can't he hurry?"

"You see the crowds, my friend! Besides, we have not been more than seven minutes."

We left the Boulevard and began panting up the incline toward Sacré-Cœur, and now the streets became steep and tortuous. Many of them so narrow that the pavement was little more than a foot wide and the old houses hung over them inquisitively like slovenly, idle women. There were lights and music here, too, but mostly they seeped through the warped doors of cafés no larger than a *salle de bain*. Once a strain of American jazz struck us as we rounded a corner.

In the Place Tertres two *poilus* were wrestling in a ring of excited spectators to the tune of raucous bravos and obscene jokes. A woman with the light of desperation in her eyes and the drag of hunger at her mouth, stood in the shadow of the Church de St. Pierre patiently stalking her prey.

The Café of the Singing Bird sets off by itself at the top of a steep impasse, an ancient stone cottage with a primitive lantern crooked like a beckoning finger above its front door. The place is a favorite with the knowing tourist, partly because of its antiquity, partly because its shrewd host early learned to gauge the desires of his

guests and has made no concessions to modernity.

It looks down through the blear eyes of a pair of unwashed windows on a swarm of dirtier lanes and hunchbacked roofs. Its own roof and the weedy strip of yard at the back make a handy asylum for the broken bottles and outused utensils *de cuisine* of the houses on the higher slope behind it. The dark back room which is the café, with its sanded stone floor and its nicked benches and tables and its feeble gaslight, is the same as it was half a century ago when more than one neat *illegalité* was laid and hatched over *un petit verre*.

We left our taxi at the foot of the impasse and hurried up its cobbled length. Save for the lantern over the door, the place was dark, but the faint twang of banjo strings hung over it like a haunt. The door gave on a narrow bar and we had no sooner let ourselves in than a buxom barmaid greeted us rapturously:

"Bonjour, *monsieur et madame!* You are welcome—"

"I would see Père Oiseau—and quickly," I told her, and laid my hand on the American's arm as he would have pushed past me. "No, my friend, you will do better to remain near me."

"But she may be in there."

"Not so. Can't you hear? The café is full."

"But, *ma chère*," the girl at the bar was protesting sweetly, "Papa Oiseau sings to his guests at this moment—"

"He will sing to the *gendarmerie* if he does not show me his face within the moment! Tell him the Martel is waiting."

Perhaps the name meant something to her, for she went quickly enough. The American was breathing hard and his hands moving like pump handles.

"Why—the place is going again—in full swing."

It was going, there was no doubt of that. From behind the length of burlap that separated the café from the bar we could hear the "singing bird's" voice raised in dissonant melody. The sharp tinkle of glasses, the laughter of his guests, the fumes from half a hundred cigarettes seeped

through the curtain before it parted and our host appeared with his back to us, making his apologies to his guests.

"But for a moment I leave you, *mes petites!* I shall return—never fear! Antoine! Son of a cabbage! Sing to my guests—if they will permit!"

Then he dropped the burlap and hurried toward us, a ludicrous figure, shaped like one of his own wine skins, with his corduroy trousers bagging down over his shoes, a dirty *mouchoir* looped about his fat neck, ragged white hair cascading over his faded blue eyes. This was Papa Oiseau, the fad of Montmartre whose unkempt and unwashed person was as much his stock in trade as the inferior wine in his cellar. There was fear in his eyes as he greeted me, but none in his manner.

"Ah, *madame!* I am overcome! This is an honor—"

"Ask him about her. Hurry!" begged my companion.

Half a dozen words were enough to convince me that my poor young man's hopes were as vain as I had feared. Papa Oiseau's face went as white as it could under its crust of dirt and a moment later we were closeted in an unswept and unaired little room off the bar. When the door was safely closed he faced us, spreading his arms tragically.

"*Sacré Dieu!* You ask me this! By all the precious saints in heaven, I know nothing of this young man's wife—"

"What does he say? For God's sake—"

"Patience, my friend," I begged, for the American's eyes were burning. Then to the trembling landlord: "It is a pity if you speak the truth, for she has disappeared and from your café. Perhaps you know nothing of the raid which took place here less than two hours ago."

"Ah-h! *mon Dieu!* The raid, you say?"

"You heard me. There was a raid, then!"

"Ah, to be sure! Have I denied it? But this raid, it was of no consequence. Mine is a respectable place—a nursing mother might safely rear her young here. My clientèle is large—too large. That is the reason for the raid, you understand, but may I roast for eternity in purgatory if it is

more than an innocent matter of business. As to the gentleman's wife—"

"Do you mean that you were not raided by the police?"

"But naturally not, *madame*. Have I not told you that my place is above reproach? My conscience would not have it otherwise! I engage no wicked *cocotte* to dance for my patrons; no *chanteur* to sing my songs! I depend upon my own resources—"

"The raid, fool! Speak!"

"*Voyons!* Am I not then?" He was fairly leaping up and down with terror and excitement. "It is a simple matter of business, this raid. Must I not please my guests? And my guests are intrigued by the thought that they come to a place naughty enough to be frowned upon by the police. And if I cannot afford these attractions which would bring me into disfavor, am I to be criticized for raiding myself if it pleases my guests?"

"Raid your own café!"

"What harm is there? Besides, they stay too long! They will sit for half a dozen hours together and listen to my entire repertoire, while others come for whom there are no tables. To-night this thing happened, and when Antoine had collected for all the drinks I whispered that the police were coming and turned off the lights. This pleases them, and they will come again. But as to this man's wife, I know no more of her than himself, or may I never sing again—which is to say, may I starve, *madame!*"

That he spoke the truth I did not doubt for a moment. He is too fond of his own mottled skin to risk it in so mad a venture as the abduction of a grown woman—no matter what the profits. His teeth were chattering with fright as he protested his innocence.

"Still, you are responsible for her safety," I told him. "It was during this mock raid of yours that she disappeared. Come! Your guests were mostly tourists to-night?"

"Entirely, *madame!* Americans—and a few English, I think."

"No. French?"

"None, *madame.*"

9 A

"*Monsieur*, think again—and remember that the magistrate will not question you so amiably. You have more than one friend who could draw the inside of a jail. Were none of these present to-night?"

He laid his dirty hand upon a dirtier shirt above his heart and his mouth worked for a moment before the words would come forth.

"*Madame*, I speak to you as I would to my confessor. It is true they do not come—often. My place is too virtuous for their tastes. But occasionally I persuade them—"

"Persuade!"

"To lend my place a touch of color, as it were, *madame*. It is understood that when they are in need they may come here and drink for nothing, provided they sit where they may be easily seen by my guests."

"And to-night?"

"*Madame*, I am being honest with you! To-night there were three!"

It was another five minutes before I had their names—three names as famous in the sinister history of the underworld as any three lauded heroes in our own.

"They were here when you sounded your alarm for the 'raid'?"

"But yes, *madame*, and drinking *vin rouge* until I thought they should drown in it."

"*Monsieur*, you are not to leave the Oiseau to-night, and if this man's bride is not in his arms before dawn you will know the cost of a mock raid."

A moment later I had my man outside and we were tumbling down the impasse to the tune of his frantic words:

"What did he say? For God's sake, tell me! Where are you taking me? I shall lose my mind—"

"But not your courage. Come! Get into the cab, my friend."

Our *cocher* was dozing, but I hung another fifty francs before his nose and gave him an address. We lurched forward before I had time to close the door, and I cut off the frantic harangue of the American. "Patience! Would you have me waste time in words when minutes are so precious?"

"But can't you see—this suspense—my wife! Did he tell you—"

"He had nothing to tell. He would give an arm if he had. As for your wife, we know no more than before. It may be that I have a clew—but it is a slight one. However slight, we must follow it since we have nothing more tangible."

"A clew! Then you think—you must tell me what you think."

I grabbed the strap to keep from pitching forward.

"Exactly. Well, then, I am afraid that your wife—or her jewels, perhaps—if she wore jewels—"

"Her engagement ring—a necklace, I believe. I don't quite remember—"

"... has taken the fancy of some one who collects his treasures without the formality of making any effort of paying for them."

"Oh, no. God—they wouldn't dare! Then are we going to the police? You mean to say they'd—they'd carry her off bodily!" He gave a hoarse guffaw. "Why, this is the twentieth century!"

"This is Paris, *monsieur*," I reminded him none too gently. "Look out there, if you think otherwise. As for the police, naturally we shall ask their help—in the morning—if that is necessary. If we should go to them now we should lose one hour—perhaps two, before their first step could be taken. Like all big machines, it gets under way slowly. Moreover, when it begins to move, its creak penetrates into every obscure courtyard and den in the city. Our underworld has its own wireless system, remember."

His face was like a distorted mask in the light that seeped in through the cab window.

"Then—then what are you going to do? Where are we going now?"

"We are going to the Taverne Diderot on the Boulevard Clichy. We should be there in another pair of minutes."

"To a tavern? When—"

"You will remember, please, that I told you we have nothing tangible to follow. We have no time to expound theories and hunt footprints. I tell you frankly this is an unusual case. It has the mark of a des-

perate impulse. The *apache* generally plans his work more carefully."

"*Apache!*"

"Ah, you thought he was a fiction character, no doubt. Naturally you would. But I have worked for thirty years among them and have never lacked employment, my friend. To go back to this one—who is still a figment of my brain, you understand—if he was desperate enough to carry your wife off bodily and almost under your nose, he will have no scruples in disposing of her to suit his convenience. No, wait! I am not trying to frighten you. I may be wrong, but we have no time to consider that possibility. There were three men at Père Oiseau's to-night, any one of whom is capable of doing this very thing if he were desperate enough. To see that each of these three is accounted for is what we must do within the next hour."

"But how—you know them, then—where they live?"

"I know them, yes—but not so well, perhaps, as they know me. As to where they live, they do not live. They are nomads. They exist everywhere and nowhere. They have as many retreats as the Sultan has wives. To hunt for an *apache* with the blood of a fresh crime upon his head is to hunt for a pea in the Seine. But I have, as you say, a friend at court, a boy who was—is still, perhaps—one of them and knows their ways. He is indebted to me, for I saved his neck not so long ago by proving him innocent of a crime for which he was to die."

"Have you a five-franc note? Come, you should control your hands, my friend! They may have to use a pistol before the night is done!"

I took the note and tore a triangle from the corner.

"You see, we are nearly there. His name is Jules, and he plays the violin for what the patrons of the Taverne Diderot will give him. I shall stay in the cab, for my face is no recommendation on Montmartre. You will get out and place this note in his hat. Then you will walk down the street and he will follow, and I shall pick you both up before you have gone a block."

He was admirable. There was little else for him to be, I fear. I ached with pity for him, for when he got out of the cab before the Taverne Diderot he moved like one in a dream—and doubtless that was the way he felt about it by now—as if it were a bad dream.

The sidewalk tables were full, for four coke brasiers were sending out blasts of red heat. Students, dandies, *cocottes*, ancient *roués*, down-at-heel actors, American tourists, and sallow-skinned Occidentals were lounging before their glasses of beer or wine or huge cups of steaming chocolate in which they soaked their *brioche*. The wail of Jules's violin wove their voices together in a polyglot medley.

I could see him standing just inside the door, his head drooping forward on his beloved fiddle, his tattered coat and broad collar with its flowing tie, picturesque in the glare of the red brasiers.

I watched my American make his way through the tables and carelessly drop the five-franc note in the hat at the player's feet. Then he turned and strolled away. Jules bobbed his head and picked the note out of his hat. Still playing, he came out and threaded his way between the tables, but he kept his eye on the American and presently tucked his violin beneath his arm and walked casually after him.

Two minutes later they were both in the cab with me, and we were parked beside the curb in a dim side street. There was no polite preamble.

"Jules, what do you know of André Feroud?"

"I gave him five sous not half an hour ago to buy a cup of coffee for his sweetheart."

"Was she with him?"

"Yes."

"And Henri—the 'white rabbit.' Have you seen him to-night?"

"No; but André had it that he was lying under a cabbage stand at the Halle in a drunken sleep. He is but two days out of prison, as you know, perhaps, and celebrates in his own fashion."

"And Jean Duval—the *grand amoureux*. Do you know anything of him?"

"Nothing more than that his *affaires*

*d'amour* are becoming troublesome. It is said—though I do not know it for the truth—that he can seek refuge in none of his favorite haunts because in each there is a sweetheart awaiting him. It is not wise to be so popular."

"Then you have not seen him to-night?"

"No, *madame*."

"Do you know if he is in need?"

"I should not suppose so with so many to look after him."

The American was becoming troublesome, since he could not understand a word that passed between Jules and myself. I silenced him as best I could.

My thoughts were crowding like small devils into my mind even as I talked. Of the trio who had drunk at Père Oiseau's expense that night there was but one on whom suspicion might now rest. This was the biggest and handsomest; the most foolhardy and fearless outlaw in all Paris—Jean Duval. Because of his popularity among his own coterie of devotees, he had served only two or three terms in prison for outrages covering a lifetime. And the loyalty of his male comrades became adoration in every woman he deigned to notice. Of all three, Jean Duval would be most likely to commit an act as unorthodox and daring as abducting an adult woman under the very nose of her husband. All this was in my mind at the moment when I spoke to Jules.

"My friend, you told me half a year ago that you owed me your life—"

"I repeat it, *madame*!"

"You are willing to risk it for my sake?"

"When I recognized your signal a moment ago, did I not come at once hoping that I might be of service?"

"And you shall be. You must take us to Jean Duval—wherever he may be. You know his haunts and if you know me at all, you know me for just. You will betray him in the name of justice if he is guilty. No harm shall come to him through me, if he is not. We must find him within the hour."

"*Madame*, it is the same as done—though I give my neck for it. But within the hour, that I cannot promise. Jean Duval has as many hiding places as he has

had sweethearts. It would take more than an hour to visit them all, but—"

"Wait!" I took hold of his shoulder. "You spoke of his sweethearts. He has one now—yes, yes, I understand what you would say, that he has many—but he must also have a favorite as every wise gallant has. Use your brains, my friend. Give me the name of the woman to whom he goes upon his release from prison; the one who adores him and hates him and sees that he does not go hungry—quick!"

"There is Marcella Drouet. He has, it is said, treated her badly, yet she has done all these things for him—"

"Where is she?"

"She dances at the Café Cercle which is on—"

"Would she be there now?"

"She will be there as long as there are customers for her to entertain."

"Then direct the *cocher* and let us pray that it is a good night at the Cercle."

Though we had not been at the curb for three minutes, it was a comfort to be moving again, even though we had no more reasons for going than a vague intuition and an unfounded suspicion. The American had been quivering as though his body housed an infernal machine—which I expect it did by this time, and I knew that he, too, would find relief in motion. When we had started once more, Jules said respectfully:

"But, *madame*, if it is Jean Duval you would find, why waste time on this Marcella? I have told you that I should do my best—"

"And she will do better if we are fortunate enough to find her at the café. *Attendez!* Every man, no matter how strong, has a vulnerable spot if it can be located. When he is vanquished, it is because the enemy has found that spot. With our friend Jean, it is women. Eventually he will hang because of this weakness."

"Still I fail to see—"

"Marcella will take us to him, once you have whispered to her that her lover has succumbed to a new *amoureuse*. You see now, where you may still be of service. She will not mistrust you and you must be convincing. Where you know of a dozen places

that might harbor Jean Duval, she will know of one—or two. Come, have I made myself clear, *monsieur*?"

It was arranged that we should dismiss the taxi a block below the café and this we did, leaving our *cocher* blessing the dazed American for his generosity as we walked away.

If there had been a moon, it had set, and now the stars were beginning to pale. We hurried along the Rue St. Eleuthere and on our left loomed the great dome of Sacré Cœur so big and pale and so much a part of the January mist that it seemed the phantom of some extravagant dream. On our right the steep Butte Montmartre fell away and beyond it lay the city, her peaks and spires, her virtues and her vices, blanketed by the same impartial night.

The Cercle is built on the edge of the Butte close to the cable tramway and the railed steps that mount the steep slope. It is a round building stuck like a burr above the city, with its rear entrance giving on a paved court fifty feet below the front. The café, which is on a level with the Rue St. Eleuthere, is necklaced with small windows. These were alight as we approached and, with my final warning in his ears, Jules hurried forward, while the American and I kept in the shadows and moved stealthily toward one of the windows at the side.

The tables formed a ring about a small, cleared space in the middle of the floor. A couple of musicians on a raised platform near the bar, were smoking between numbers. The place wore the stale and sleepy look a restaurant has just before the closing hour; not more than a score of persons were scattered about at the tables.

At one of these, occupied by a trio of heavy-eyed young men, stood a girl; a buxom creature with the high cheek bones and muscular red arms of the peasant. The scanty black dress she wore scarcely covered her knees and clung to her body like a glistening sable skin. One could hardly guess at her features, so buried in make-up were they, but her mouth was wide and her full lips painted like a bloody gash across her face.

We saw Jules saunter in and seat himself lazily on a table near the door and pat back



a yawn with his violin bow. The girl threw him a greeting and then strolled over to him, her hands on her hips.

For a moment they chatted easily enough, then I saw the girl make a threatening gesture while Jules shrugged his shoulders and made a kissing sound with his lips. The color came up her bare throat and shone through the thick coating of powder on her cheeks and I knew, with a thrill of relief, that I had not counted in vain on a jealous woman's passion; Jules was hinting at her lover's perfidy and she was defending him with her lips, while her heart told her that he was guilty.

At last, with a sharp cry of rage, she brought her palm against the young fiddler's cheek with a resounding smack. Then she was running furiously across the room to a door beside the musicians' platform, while those patrons who had witnessed the encounter, guffawed with mirth.

A moment later Jules was beside us, his hand pressed against his cheek.

"Quick! She will leave by the rear door. Take the steps. They pass the court—whatever you do, don't let her see you!"

Hand in hand the American and I flew down the steps that crawl up the slope of the Butte. When we were on a level with the back door of the Cercle, we flattened ourselves against the building until we heard the slam of a door and the click of the girl's heels on the stones.

She went past us like a gust of smoke blown from a chimney, holding a cape together with both hands at her throat. She was on her way to verify Jules's report of her susceptible knight. If she had known there were three of us, instead of one, she would have led us anywhere but to him, even though she killed him later herself. But the fury that lent wings to her heels burned every other thought from her mind.

It was no simple matter to keep her in sight, for she led us almost at once into that maze of crooked lanes and streets that still cling like old scars to the slopes of Montmartre. With the American's hand beneath my elbow, we followed her and in two minutes we had left the new century behind for a network of twisting, sinister alleys lined with moldering houses and

paved with loose cobblestones that slipped perilously beneath our feet.

Here and there a sagging gas lantern above some door sent a feeble ray of yellow light through its unwashed glass to show us an area of chipped and sweaty wall, or point the way to the barricaded door of some underground gambling den. Once or twice a lurking figure detached itself from the darkness ahead of us, only to dissolve again into the security of a doorway at sight of my tall, hatless companion.

At times we were panting up a passage so narrow that a reach of arms would have spanned it and so dark that there was nothing but the click of the girl's heels to guide us. Again we were stumbling through a crumbling archway to find ourselves in an open, unpaved court with a decaying cypress rearing itself in the center of a ring of squalid, sooty old houses. Once the night rang with the sound of a woman's laughter and the walls that caught and echoed it and tossed it back and forth kept the hideous sound in our ears for a hundred yards.

Though it seemed to me that we had been running for hours, it was not more than twenty minutes after she had left the café that the girl turned into an impasse and swung through the door of an ancient brick house. As we started after her, I thrust my pistol into the American's hand.

Straight up a flight of stone stairs the girl had gone, and we could hear her labored breathing as she climbed. She paused for an instant on the first landing before she started up the second flight, and now we were forced to go slower for the steps were so worn that it was difficult to get a foothold. Thus it happened that when we reached the second and top landing, she had eluded us. We stood for a moment peering through the darkness before we saw the open window and the narrow bridge suspended from it.

There are many of these hanging *passerelles* still in the older sections of Paris; precarious affairs of wood, sometimes stone or tile, linking one house to another like an abnormally developed ligament. Perhaps their original mission was innocent enough, but they have aided the escape of

countless criminals and robbed the police of more than one triumph. This one was less than a yard wide with waist-high railings of rotting wood, and I breathed a prayer as I followed the American across, for beneath us yawned a black chasm, God knows how deep.

That chasm was no darker than the house into which we stepped now. There was a musty odor of onion soup and stale cheese and dust in our nostrils as we felt our way along. I began to fear that we had indeed lost the girl, when a heavy thump as of a falling body came from directly in front of us, and now I saw a faint streak of light that might show beneath the crack of a door.

"Level your pistol, my friend," I whispered, and laid my hand on the knob just as the sound of a woman's scream came to us.

Whether or not our dancing girl and the American's wife were behind that closed door, a pistol would not come amiss, judging by the sounds that were sweeping through it. Just as the girl, in her frenzied jealousy, had failed to look behind her once during that chase from the café, so she had neglected now to lock the door, and it gave readily enough to my somewhat feeble touch.

It was no sooner open than I heard the American gasp and warned him sharply:

"Steady, *monsieur*, and shoot if necessary!"

But there was small need for that advice. The room we had come into was not ten feet square and the grime and dust of ages clung to its plaster walls and lay heaped in the corners. There was a table in the center with a pack of greasy cards upon it and some tall wine bottles, one of which was empty and had a candle stuck in its neck. There were a couple of wooden chairs with broken rungs and a stack of chipped and broken dishes heaped in an iron sink that was situated in the corner of the room.

Sprawled on the floor was the huge, limp body of Jean Duval with a knife beside him, and a stream of blood trickling through his shirt near the shoulder. He was groaning miserably and the girl we had followed

was standing over him with her doubled fists raised and cursing as only a Parisian *cocotte* can curse. On a dirty, tumbled bed at the opposite side of the room, with her hands at her throat and her light dress soiled and crumpled, was the American's wife.

We had entered without sound, and it was the wild scream of the young woman as she recognized her husband that cut short the vile torrent of the dancer's epithets and the groans of her vanquished lover. I rescued the pistol just as the young wife threw herself upon my companion, and drew an arc with it between that sprawling figure on the floor and Marcella. They knew me, as I saw, but there the girl remained defiant, Jean Duval's eyes stared up into mine with the malignity that one would see in a cornered rat.

I doubted if he were badly hurt. In an encounter of this sort with his women, an *apache* generally makes it a point to go down with the first blow as a sure protection against a second. It was the American who spoke first:

"Sally, are you hurt! Tell me has he—has he hurt you?"

"No! No—not at all much—but, oh, Jim!"

"Yes—it's all over now—all over—"

"Is it possible," I snapped over my shoulder, "that you have been in the company of Jean Duval for two hours or more and are unhurt?"

"He tore my dress—he gagged me—"

"What about your jewels, are they safe?"

"My jewels—yes!"

"It was you he wanted instead of your jewels!"

"Oh! I don't know! It was terrible. I kicked him—I scratched him. Look at his face. I nearly tore his eyes out—he had to set me down—and I screamed and nobody paid any attention!"

"Screams are as natural in this neighborhood as silence in a graveyard, *madame*," I told her. "Outside of gagging you and spoiling your frock, he did not harm you much—"

"Fiends of hell! Let me—"

"Wait, *monsieur*! You can do no more

than kick him in his present position, and your wife has seen enough violence." Then I spoke to the man on the floor in French. "Come, get up. The wound is nothing to what you may expect."

"Ah-h! Good!" shrieked the French girl. "Son of a dissolute pig! *Canaille*, would I had killed you!"

He got slowly to his feet, and though he did not shrink from the glare of the American's eyes nor from my leveled pistol, he did shrink from the maniac fury of his erstwhile sweetheart. It was to her that he addressed the first and last words we had from him until he was safely ensconced in a *cachot de detention*.

"She smiled at me," he announced sullenly.

The dancer received the words with a sudden, wild sweep of her arms and a rattle in her throat that became a terrible curse.

"So-o! The white-faced  *salope* ! It is true! I might have known—I would have plucked out her heart! And thou, *mon amour*—"

She fell upon him, tearing his shirt from the red wound she had inflicted, dabbing at the blood with her handkerchief, muttering a thousand endearments. I heard the American behind me:

"Ugh! Let's get out of this!"

"We are ready, *monsieur*," I told him. "There is a *poste de police* not far distant. I shall ask you to carry the pistol. If he makes any move to escape, you had better shoot, though I don't think he will. He will probably welcome the attentions of the prison doctor. These fellows are fond of blood, perhaps, but not on themselves."

It was not yet sunrise when we stood again in the street, the three of us. The gray sky was slashed through with pale light and the dome of *Sacré Cœur* was faintly haloed with the coming dawn. The pretty face of the American's wife was wan and white. Something of her husband's assurance had fallen from him during those strenuous hours. A cab was at the curb before the *poste de police*, where we had left our cavalier and his sweetheart, who had been so riotously contrite that she had been given a cell herself for the rest of the night.

"Madame Martel, I can't thank you. If you will let me come to see you to-morrow, perhaps I shall find words—"

"But none of thanks, if you please. You may congratulate me on having a useful friend among my coterie and thank the girl for guiding us so surely."

"What an awful night," his wife said, and shuddered against her husband's arm. "But somehow it never seemed quite real—it was like something out of a book. That girl—first she stabbed him and then—"

"And then she forgave him, yes?"

"But why should she change all of a sudden?"

"That would be hard to explain—to you," I told her. "For myself, at first I couldn't understand how even Jean Duval should risk a mad venture like that. Now, however, I do." Their faces were puzzled. "May I ask, my dear—did you smile at this man when we were at *Père Oiseaus's* café, perhaps?"

"Smile at him? Why—yes, I shouldn't wonder if I did. I thought him rather striking looking and it all seemed so informal and he smiled at me so, well—yes, I did."

"Ah! You see, that explains much—his daring and his sweetheart's forgiveness. They have their creeds as well as you and I. Your smiling at him exonerates him, in a way."

"You mean," snorted the American furiously, "that if a woman smiles at a man it entitles him to abduct her bodily—"

"Perhaps not quite that, but in his world—and you have seen something of his world to-night—it does mean that he may at least try his charms. Doubtless Jean believed that your wife had conceived a sudden fondness for him. If he had said as much to the girl at first, she, instead of Jean, would have felt the knife thrust."

Their shocked faces stared at me. But I realized that even now they did not know what they had escaped. They were safe—they had seen, but they did not believe. As the wife had said, it had been like something in a book. The American cried:

"But that's monstrous—barbarous!"

"My friend," I said gently, "it is Montmartre—and Montmartre is in Paris."



# The Fire Queen

By **FRED MACISAAC**

**I**T was after I had put on a few fights and made a little money that my wife walked out and bought a fur coat without consulting me. She said if she had consulted me she wouldn't have got the coat, which was right, but just the same it put me in bad because it cost a thousand dollars.

And it wasn't as if she expected to freeze to death, because it was early summer, but she explained that she saved a lot of money by getting it at this time. My wife's idea of saving money was not paying as much for a thing as they asked at first.

Anyway, I am sitting at my typewriter trying to grind out some sporting notes and wondering how I can help out the old bank balance when Joe Graham blew in.

Joe was one of these down at the heels promoters. He was always thinking of some wonderful production in the open air, playing to a hundred thousand people—a carnival, or a pageant, or a grand opera or something that a hundred thousand people wouldn't turn out to see free. He had a

wild look in his eye and the police were after him for a show he put on in Blankton a couple of years before called "The World in Flames."

It was bad enough not to pay the actors and the carpenters and the people that made the scenery, but he forgot to pay the police on duty, and for that they intended to soak him hard. I supposed he had blown the town, and I was surprised to see him sneak into the office with the wise look he always wore.

I put up my arm to ward him off.

"Whatever it is I'm not for it. I ain't got any money and I couldn't be associated with you, anyway."

"When you hear what I'm going to put over this time you'll change your tune."

"What is it, a trip to the moon or baseball on the ice?"

"This is the greatest proposition you ever heard in your life. I'm going to hire the baseball stadium, that seats fifty thousand people."

"For a nickel you can hire a telephone booth. It'll hold your audience."

"In it I'm going to pull off a tremendous fireworks spectacle called the 'Destruction of War.' It'll be the biggest thing ever done in America."

"It's all right with me. Go and do it."

"I'm handicapped in this town because I haven't any money or credit. I've got to get some one to go into it with me."

"Yeh. How much will it cost?"

"Practically nothing. Just the rent of the park and the advertising. I got a fireworks company that will play with me for fifty per cent of the receipts."

I began to get interested. If I could pick up a couple of thousand I could take care of the bill for the fur coat and have a little over for pinochle. I let him go into details. It was the sanest scheme he had ever thought up. Properly exploited and using a popular catch word like the "Destruction of War" for a title, the thing might go. But not with Graham hanging around. If anybody ever had Jonah written all over him, it was this poor skate.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said I. "If you will promise to get out of town and stay out until this thing is over, I'll give you a commission of ten per cent of the profits. If you poke your nose round here once while the thing is being worked up, it's all off. You get nothing."

He gave a wild kind of grin.

"You'll do it?"

"Yes. Get me a contract with the fireworks company agreeing to take fifty per cent. Then I make a contract with you and you vanish."

For a fellow who was turning over his own proposition for a very small interest I thought he agreed very easy, but it looked all right with me and I didn't worry about him.

I engaged the ball park for two nights in July, and wrote to the fireworks company to find out if this fellow had dreamed it all. It was on the level; they were crazy to do it. They didn't have any spectacle called the "Destruction of War," but they said they would paint over a panorama of the "Eruption of Vesuvius" sort of symbolic, and give their regular show. I asked

them to send me pictures and publicity matter, and got busy. Being in the sporting department of my paper, I supposed I could get a lot of stuff in, and I knew the fellows well on the other papers and didn't expect any trouble.

There was a lot of money had to be spent in advertising, but my credit was good. Anything that didn't have to be put down in cash didn't keep me awake. If my wife had only bought the coat on the installment plan—but never mind.

I wish you could have seen the pictures that came from the fireworks company. I showed them to the managing editor. He smiled sadly.

"Anything else I'll do for you, MacShay, but don't ask me to run a picture of a rocket. And a pinwheel is just as bad. We like pictures of beautiful girls; the less clothes, the bigger we make the picture."

"What have beautiful girls to do with fireworks?" I said bitterly.

"Find a connection, my boy. That's your job. In the meantime, get out of here."

"Beautiful girls," said I to myself. "Fireworks, the destruction of war, how the—I give it up."

I got the idea in the middle of the night and I took the next day off, and grabbed a train to New York. A friend of mine that used to be a gambler was running a theatrical agency. I went to him.

"I want to get a very beautiful girl that can keep her mouth shut."

"I had one on my list, but she's dead. She was dead a long time, but they didn't notice it."

"I'm serious. Somebody that is a whale for looks, has a million photographs, and is dumb."

"They're all dumb, but I think I know what you mean. I think you are describing Martha Washington."

"What name?"

"Martha Washington."

"I thought it was a hotel for old maids."

"It's her name. She says she is a great-granddaughter of George Washington, the Father of His Country."

"He's the guy that never told a lie. She won't do."

"Martha has been in the show business for several years and she wouldn't mind a fib or two. Besides, General Washington never had any children, so the family character isn't very strong in her, in all probability."

"Get her on the phone."

He did, and in half an hour she blew in.

If I was one of those descriptive writers I could describe Martha. I'll do the best I can. She was a Mack Sennet as far as figure went, a perfect thirty-six. In a bathing suit she'd speed up the tide. She wore her yellow hair frizzled like a Fiji Islander; it stood out a foot, all round her head. She had a baby face and big blue eyes set wide apart. If an idea ever was born in her brain it never got out through that face. It was a nonconductor. But I could see how she would photograph. She had her pictures under her arm.

"I had a photographer for a sweetie," she tells us. Her voice was like a bum phonograph record; it was awful.

"I thought you said she was dumb?" I told the agent.

"I never said that."

"Too bad," I says.

"How do you like my pictures?" demands the descendant of the Washingtons.

I'll say that photographer was her sweetie. If he was her husband, she had no right to take off so many clothes to have her picture taken. And to have her standing alongside of me showing me how she looked as the Venus de Milo! And my wife nicking me a thousand for a fur coat. Oh, well.

"You'll do," I said. "The art is elegant. Bring it with you. We're going to Blankton—on separate trains. I put you up at a suite at a hotel for a day. Next day you give up the suite and take a room."

"What am I going to play in?"

"You're going to play in nothing."

"But what's the idea?"

"You are the Queen of Fire. You are the human interest in a fireworks spectacle. You are the only woman manufacturer of fireworks in the world. You pick the colors of pinwheels and rockets the way an ordinary girl picks the colors of a dress. You are fearless. You possess many secrets of fireworks construction."

"I think you are crazy," said Martha. "I'm afraid of fireworks."

"If I didn't know you, MacShay, I'd say you'd been drinking ether," says the agent.

"I'm crazy like a fox. The editors won't run pictures of rockets. I can't get any publicity for my fireworks show. But when I walk in and show them how Martha Washington looks when she runs the water out of the tub, and explain to them what I've just told you, they'll run all the pictures I want."

"And what do I get?" asked Martha.

"A hundred dollars, and expenses within reason."

"Oh, you darling!" she exclaimed in that wheezy voice of hers. "Let me kiss you!"

"One kiss and you're fired! I'm a respectable married man and I love my wife, even if she did set me back a thousand for a fur coat."

They both laugh at this. And then Martha says:

"Do I go right away?"

"You come to-morrow. I'll go to-day. Gimme some of those pictures and I'll plant them right now."

So I get back to town and go up to the office with a bundle of photos that would make any art editor go wild, though, in Blankton, the newspaper artists would have to paint clothes on some of them that were all right for New York.

Then I got down the Encyclopædia Britannica and began to find out what fireworks are anyway. It's a funny thing how few of us know anything about fireworks. We look at them and say, "A-ah!" when the rockets go off, but how they make them do the things they do, nobody knows. And a lot of the best kinds of fireworks are secrets made under the most stealthy conditions. I got a lot of dope out of the encyclopædia and began to rewrite it in the form of interviews given out by the Fire Queen.

If I walked in with the straight dope and offered it, the editors would throw it on the floor, but accompanied by a picture of Martha about two-thirds out of an evening gown, and with the reading matter set in quotes, they ate it up.

I had the gall to have an advance sale of tickets for a ball park that seated fifty

thousand. The public is a funny bird; if he wants to go somewhere he thinks everybody else wants to and he gets afraid he'll get crowded out. That's why there are ticket speculators.

Until the stories about the Fire Queen began to come out we didn't have enough demands to indicate that a corporal's guard would attend the function. But as soon as Martha, wearing a smile and a Turkish towel, landed in the amusement columns with a line of talk about the comparative explosive qualities of gun cotton and wood alcohol, my advance sale barometer showed signs of fair weather.

I had telegraphed Martha not to come for two or three days because I wanted to arrange a reception for her. And I told her to wear a red dress.

When she got off the train I had six photographers, and eight reporters to meet her. She would have talked her fool head off, but I whispers:

"If you open your trap, you're fired!"

So after I converse with her I tell the reporters that Miss Washington is train sick and while she can pose for a few photographs she can't give out any interviews. A statement will be issued from her hotel instead.

When Martha took off her hat to be photographed hair shot out on all sides as though every curl was a spring. I'll tell the world it made a sensation.

The reason I went to the expense of having Martha come over instead of just springing her photographs was because I had to prove she existed. The gang around town knew me pretty well and, while they didn't doubt my word, my nickname was Ananias MacShay. So I had to show them something to prove there was a Fire Queen.

We rattle up to the hotel in a taxi and the clerk behind the desk gives me a knowing wink when I breeze in with the Queen on my arm.

"Well, well, Mr. McShay, I didn't know your wife looked like this," he says.

"She don't," I replies, and adds "Thank God," under my breath. For though she did stick me for a thousand dollar fur coat, my wife isn't a flamboyant nut like Martha.

"This is Martha Washington, the Queen

of Fire, only woman director of fireworks pageant in the world. She is here to inspect the ball park and lay out her plan of campaign for the big event."

The clerk changes his manner and becomes most respectful. The big goof had read the stories and believed them.

"She wants a nice cheap suite, for to-day only," I said.

"I shall be here several days. I think I shall need this suite during the whole period," blaa's Martha.

"I'll take it out of yer hundred," I whispers.

"On second thought perhaps one day will be enough. And then I'll just want a room," she says, coming out of it.

I conducted her to the suite and made a few brief remarks.

"You're here on a press stunt. The only one who can blow the works is you and the only way you can fail to do it is not to talk to any one, not even a waiter. Act natural. Be dumb."

"But why didn't you let me talk to the reporters. It was such a big opportunity and I had a nice speech all ready."

"Because you are supposed to be the 'know-it-all' of fireworks and you don't know the difference between a set piece and a lamb chop. Any kid that ever lit a Chinese cracker is a bigger authority than you.

"So if you talk to anybody, you are sure to give the show away, and then you don't get paid. Remember that."

"You needn't be so brutal, dear Mr. McShay."

She comes over to me and lays her white hand on my arm and looks at me so prettily. She evidently thought that she had to be nice to the boss. It would have served my wife right if I fell for this jane, after she got me into the jam by going out and buying that coat, but I was strong, and, besides, maybe this Martha was out for blackmail. So I says:

"Can the vamp stuff. You keep hid in this room and don't see a soul."

"You give me a pain," says Martha. "I hate to eat alone. Come back and have dinner with me, or I'll call up a man I know in town."

"All right, I'll come; don't you call up anybody."

The next day the papers are full of the arrival of the Fire Queen and her remarks about the value of black sand and sulphur in the construction of pinwheels. The way she looked in the pictures and what she talked about, amused the editors, and made them go to it strong. The sale of tickets went up.

Now I didn't happen to mention to my wife anything about the Fire Queen. First place, it was strictly business. You know that. Second, instead of feeling a bit ashamed and willing to be reasonable after setting me back a thousand for the fur coat, she is just as nosy and inquiring as ever, and she is always jealous of anything I do.

But she reads the papers and she sees pictures of the Fire Queen. One comedian of a photographer snaps a picture of her holding on to my arm and publishes it, labeled, "The Fire Queen and the Hot Air Gusher."

Of course Mrs. McShay gets hold of this picture. In fact she had three of them brought in by three different neighbors.

"What's between you and this woman," she demands.

"What woman?"

"The Fire Queen."

"Why, she happens to be working for the fireworks company and she is here to represent them. I'm the local manager and naturally I have to meet her and get her some publicity."

"You never told me about a woman when you said you were going to put this show on."

"I didn't know anything about her then."

"This woman isn't respectable. Nobody with hair like that could be respectable. I can't understand any fireworks company giving a chit like this one an important job."

I shuffled around in my chair. If I told her the plant she'd bell it all over the neighborhood and put the show on the bum. So to change the subject I remarked:

"Now if you was to take that fur coat back to the store, maybe they would give me my money back."

I changed the subject all right and the rest of the evening I listened to a lecture on the tribulations of a wife. And when she was all through she got back on the subject of the hussy, as she called Martha Washington.

Next day I go to the hotel and look over Martha's bill. That girl had the most voracious appetite in the history of the world or else she was entertaining a gang at my expense. Her food was averaging ten dollars a day.

I decided that I didn't need Martha in town any longer. She had come, been seen, registered at a hotel and was known not to be myth. Besides, a representative of the society of Revolutionary Gazebos was on her trail to inspect her credentials to the name of Martha Washington.

So I send my card up to Martha, and, as she has moved into one room now, she sails downstairs to see me.

"My dear Mr. McShay," she says, "I've been longing to see you."

"Quite unable to take nourishment," I retorts sarcastic.

"Quite so."

"Your restaurant checks say different. Take a good look at me because you ain't going to see me long."

"Why not?"

"You are going back to New York this afternoon."

"Why the indecent haste about it, Mr. McShay?"

"There are some people who want to see you about the name you are using. They claim to be able to prove that George Washington didn't have any children, and you can't be descended from him. I want you back for a day or two before the show and if you beat it now they won't have a chance to get you."

"All right, I'll go. What could they do to me if they proved I didn't own the name?"

"Something terrible. I don't know what. Here's your fee. I'll take care of the hotel bill. On your way."

And with this I left her.

When I got to the office next morning there was a long telegram signed Giovanni Mustaphini, he being the wop that owned



the World Renowned Fireworks Company. It read:

Authorize you to deny reports woman named Martha Washington is directress of World Renowned. She is an impostor. I personally direct all productions. If she is pretty as pictures, will give her job as my secretary. Mailing my own photographs, which you may use for publicity.

I got a laugh out of that. Imagine me trying to get photos of this ex-barber past the editors. I wired him: "Martha Washington more beautiful than pictures. Promise you introduction. Using her for publicity. Mind your own business."

Then I went around with a lot more pictures of Martha and a fresh crop of interviewers about "hairbreath escapes I have had." There was one entitled: "How I was carried up, by mistake, on a skyrocket" that was a lulu. Best story I ever wrote.

The sale was certainly going great. Ordinary fireworks shows asked fifty cents and were glad to get it, but I demanded a dollar for the bleachers and two dollars for the grand stand for the great spectacle, the "Destruction of War," and they were buying.

The bleachers were better than the grand stand for this show, so much of it was up in the air. The grand stand had a roof over it so those who paid two dollars could only see about a quarter of the show. But the public had always been educated to pay more for the grand stand than the bleachers, and who was I to run contrary to tradition? The best place to see this show was outside the grounds about a quarter of a mile away, but I knew it would take them about two or three days to get on to this, and by that time everything would be over, and I would have a lot of money, maybe.

But every rose must have a thorn, and every picture of Martha that came out my wife got hold of and she made things unpleasant for me.

"It's kind of peculiar the way you are boosting this female," she says. "Mrs. Quinn was over to-day, and said all the neighbors thought it funny you took such an interest in her."

"For the millionth time I don't take any

interest in her. She is a dumb-bell. I need a beautiful woman to help sell tickets for the show.

"Then why don't you use my picture. Or the twins. That group with me holding them in my arms."

"Holy mackerel! How many tickets do you suppose the twins would sell?"

"It's a decent, respectable family group—not like that naked, scarlet woman you are so fond of."

"Well, the twins are out."

"You are an unnatural father."

"All right."

"But my picture as the wife of the manager of the 'Destruction of War'—I'm sure that would be a great help."

"Lizzie, you are a good wife and mother, but as a siren to lure the shekels from the pockets of the sports you're a dud. You never was any beauty, and your good heart wouldn't show in the picture."

Now, this was a foolish speech for me to make, even if I was mad, and as a result I had to run out the back door without my hat and wander around the suburb for two hours before I dared go back. And then she was crying all over the place and talking about leaving me.

The days went by, and the sale kept going up. A week before the show I was over the nut, which means the advance covered the expenses; everything else was going to be profit. But I'd run out of dope about the Fire Queen, and there was a story in taking her out to the field to superintend the workmen who had arrived to set up the show. So I wired Martha to step on a train and visit us once more.

That night at eleven o'clock a telegram came to the office, and as I was on my way home the telephone girl gets my house.

"A telegram for Mr. McShay."

"I'm Mrs. McShay. I'll take the message."

"This is personal. I ought to give it to him."

"I'm his wife. He has no secrets from me."

The phone girl giggles. "This reads as though it ought to be delivered to him personally."

"You give me the message," says Lizzie, getting hot. "I'll take all the responsibility."

"I don't know. Do you know anybody named Martha?"

"Certainly," says Lizzie, determined to hear the telegram.

"Well, I'll take a chance. 'To Thomas McShay. Arriving Central Station at 7 A.M. Friday. Meet me. Love. Martha.'"

Lizzie gives a whoop and hangs up the receiver. As innocent as a lamb, I elect this minute to open the front door and come whistling into the room.

In the interest of young folks thinking about marriage, I shall omit the painful scene.

For the first time in ten years or more of more or less peaceful married life, I felt like murdering Lizzie, and only thoughts of the innocent twins and the electric chair restrained me.

There wasn't anything I could say. No alibi. Was I to blame if this Martha dame never gave up hope of vamping me. It would have been all right if I had got the message at the office. But to have that half-baked idiot of a telephone girl pour that loving message into my wife's ear. Oh, glory!

There was no sleep in that house all night, and at six in the morning I got up, followed by threats of divorce, and took the street car in to meet Martha at the railroad station. I offered to take Lizzie along, and have Martha explain everything, but she was not to be moved. And maybe that was a good thing, because I didn't trust Martha's explanation of anything much.

I was in a vile mood when the yellow-headed vampire got off the train. She comes toward me with a sort of running jump and I think she was planning to leap onto my neck, when the look in my eye warned her.

"Ain't you got sense enough in your fool head to find your own way to a hotel at this hour, instead of dragging a hard-working business man down to the station to meet you, let alone busting up his home and maybe getting him into the divorce court?"

"Why, what did I do?" she says, looking at me innocent-eyed.

"What's the idea of putting love in a business telegram?"

"Well, it wasn't entirely business, Mr. McShay. I kind of like you. Don't you like me?"

"As the devil likes holy water."

"You mean thing," she says, and begins to whimper. If she had an onion she couldn't have brought the tears quicker. I softened up. To myself I said:

"She don't know beans, but the poor thing has a good heart after all. It isn't her fault if she's gone and got a crush on me."

So I pats her on the arm and take her to breakfast. She wanted to know all about my wife, and I told her a lot, including how she trimmed me by ordering a fur coat for a thousand bucks without telling me anything about it.

"Where did she get it?" asks Martha.

"Down at Nichols & Brown. They're the worst holdup men in town. I went down and tried to get them to take it back, but nothing doing."

So we talked pretty friendly, and then I went to the office. I had a hard day. But the publicity was going good. The new crop of pictures and stories were planted, and several photographers went out to the grounds and saw Martha in overalls walking around looking things over. She was a funny sight in overalls, with that yellow mane flying, but it was good picture material.

A couple of days went by. My wife wasn't speaking to me at all, which wasn't so bad at that.

Monday night I went home, however, and found things different.

Lizzie wore a triumphant air. She was breathing hard. She looked me over with a sort of "My property is safe" air.

"What's eating you?" I inquired politely.

"I am a good wife to you, Tom McShay, and I won't have any other woman stealing my husband. Virtue will always win over vice if virtue is strong."

"You talk like a movie caption."

"I went to the hotel to-day and saw

that woman. I have driven her out of town. She's gone."

"The deuce you have! Then you've put the show on the bum."

"What do I care about your old show? Shall I permit a designing New York hussy to rob me of the man I've borne children for?"

"More movie stuff! What did you do?"

"I called on her. I threatened to have her arrested if she didn't leave at once. I pulled out some of her hair and gave her a few scratches."

"You pulled a fight?"

"It was nothing at all. She wouldn't fight back. She agreed to go to-night. I called the hotel an hour ago, and she'd gone."

"Well," I said, "maybe it's all for the best. I've got all the publicity on the show now that I'll need. She wasn't going to do anything at the performance, anyway. So I save a couple of days' board at the hotel. And if she's gone, she didn't collect a fee for this second trip. Lizzie, maybe you've saved me money."

"And is that all you cared about her?"

"Certainly. You are the only woman I ever loved."

"What a fool I've been!" says Lizzie, and begins to cry.

So we had a reconciliation, and I didn't even mention the fur coat, that's how grateful I was.

But, wow, the next day! I went to the hotel to pay Martha's bill. They handed me a slip for \$1,097.

The yell I let out could have been heard for miles.

"The ninety-seven dollars is bad enough for three days' board, but what in thunder is this thousand dollars for?"

The manager came forward.

"Anything wrong, Mr. McShay? You told us to honor all charges incurred by Miss Washington, and this is payment of a squirrel coat sent up by Nichols & Brown, and ordered by the lady."

If the manager hadn't had a flask I would have died right there on the floor. Two fur coats! Two thousand dollars! My own wife was bad enough, but

this deceitful, designing, unscrupulous vampire—pretending to sympathize with me and getting the name of the firm that did business with my wife out of me, and then going down and ordering another!

"She left you a letter," says the manager, with a mean grin. "Want to read it?"

I took it and went off in a corner so no one would share my shame. This is what it said:

DEAR MACK:

Your wife called on me to-day; she injured my hair and complexion about a thousand dollars. She made me agree to leave town by threatening me with arrest. I knew a scandal would hurt your show, so I am leaving. And as a parting gift from you to me I am sure you won't grudge me a fur coat just like your wife's.

Lovingly,

MARTHA.

And all the time I had thought she was a dumb-bell. There wasn't a darn thing I could do but hope the show would take in enough money to let me out even. I tore up the letter and went down to the office.

The night of the show came. It was a beautiful night, clear and warm, and no moon—ideal for fireworks.

The park was a modern concrete stadium, with about twenty-five turnstiles. The mob was piling in about five hundred a minute. The wop that owned the fireworks company stood alongside of me crazy with delight. In all his life he had never seen such a turn out. Every five or six minutes he would say to his foreman:

"Tony, set off ten more rockets."

"Tony, put on ten more bombs."

"Tony, use twenty more snakes."

"But, boss, we won't have any stuff left for to-morrow night."

"Never mind to-morrow night. Give them the greatest show they ever saw to-night. We'll wire to send more stuff over to-morrow."

In the bleachers there must have been ten thousand people. There were fifteen thousand more in the grand stand. The crowd at the turnstiles was getting thicker and thicker.

And then I heard a stamping in the bleachers. It was a steady rhythmical stamping and it was accompanied by a concerted shouting. I paid no attention at first and then it kept getting louder and louder.

"What the deuce are they saying?" I said to myself. And I went up one of the runways to hear better.

This is what they were saying, over and over again, and with a sort of threatening note in their voices:

"We want Martha Washington."

The voice of a mob is a terrible thing. From ten thousand pair of lungs this call was coming. Every time they repeated it they wanted her more. They were working up to a pitch. I understood now how those old Roman emperors who wanted to be merciful had to turn their thumbs down when the mob called "To the lions!"

What a queer bird the public is! Here was a magnificent fireworks spectacle, and the foolish old wop was telling his foreman to put on more rockets and more bombs, but the crowd wasn't out there to see fireworks at all. They had paid their good money to see Martha Washington, the lady directress, the Fire Queen.

I made the mistake of a lot of publicity men, taking no stock in my own stuff. Martha had been nothing but some pictures to carry stories about the show. And it was Martha that drew the crowd.

The shouting was louder and louder. You know what mobs are. Pretty soon it was going to get mad and swarm on the field, and pull things down and demand its money back.

I was absolutely, completely desperate. I rolled my eyes around like a drowning man looking for a straw, though why a straw should be out where a drowning man could get it I never understood.

And then I saw a nice, fat girl with rosy cheeks operating a hot-dog stand. She had on a white dress and she must have weighed about two hundred pounds.

I went over to her.

"Sister, would you like to make ten dollars for doing nothing?"

"I'm an honest girl."

"I said doing nothing. Just walking across the field."

"You are on," she retorted, evidently seeing that I was not a trifler, but was in earnest.

"Then lock up your frankfurter stand for ten minutes and come quick."

By this time the wop had understood the importance of that Martha Washington outcry, and he was pale around the gills.

"Let me introduce Martha Washington," said I to him.

He took one look at her. "That private secretary job is off."

"It was never on."

"Take Miss Washington out on the field. It's pretty dark now. Walk her around among your set pieces and let her start one off. Then send her back here."

Martha was wiping some mustard off the front of her dress as I talked, but she smiled up at him, disclosing three or four good teeth, and the pair departed.

I ran up the runway to watch. The mob was getting frantic and the shout was louder and louder.

"We want Martha Washington."

And then away over in the corner of the field I discerned a white dress. So did the crowd. It yelled with delight. It cat-called and whooped and was happy. What it wanted it had got. It applauded and cheered as Martha waddled around. The wop stuck a torch in her hand and pointed to a set piece. She went in the wrong direction and set off another.

It hissed and sizzled and burst into a square of flames and then out sprang two words:

**GOOD NIGHT!**

Martha had touched off the last piece of the evening.

A shriek of laughter shook the grounds. The wop quickly started his show, and I went to the box office happy and satisfied.

When a crowd laughs it is not dangerous. The show was a great success. I made two thousand and one dollars. I never saw Martha again.

**THE END**



# *A Seven-Letter Mystery*

By **PAUL SAND**

"I'M going to Japan. or. China!" shrilly announced the formidable Mrs. Cornelius Bummion in the lobby of the hotel in Honolulu. "They don't have 'em there."

The furtive, subdued little individual to whom she addressed her remark nodded apologetically and admitted that perhaps they didn't "have 'em there." He was a worn, spare man, with sparse, white hair, and a conciliatory nod. He was apparently an old family retainer.

"And I'm going on a Jap boat," went on Mrs. Bummion, shaking her earrings and stamping her broad-gauge hoof. "On that boat from Frisco they were as thick as fleas to begin with; and what did they have to do but send more by radio every day!"

The man smoothed his hair nervously and admitted what Mrs. Bummion said was quite true, though he expressed the humble opinion that Hawaii seemed about as immune from "having 'em" as any place

they were likely to find, including the Gobi Desert and the fastnesses of Tibet.

"Uhn-uhn!" denied Mrs. Bummion decisively. "Even if they don't have 'em here as bad as they might, this Aloha Oe language reminds me too much of 'em. In Japan they write crow-foot, and they can't have 'em—or at least, I won't know it if they do. There's one of them Jap boats touching to-morrow. You go down and get tickets right away. It 'll be heaven!"

Cornelius Bummion—for the man was, unfortunately, no other—did not agree about the heaven part of it, but he did not say so. Obediently he engaged a stateroom for Nagasaki on the Obi Maru, of the Geisha line. He signed "Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Bummion" with a pardonable flourish, for it was one of the few remaining tokens of his self-respect. Never yet had he had to sign it "Mrs. and Mr. Cornelius Bummion," though once or twice he had added below, "By Mr. Bummion."

The Obi Maru was not large, for the bigger Geisha ships take the northern route. The steward, naturally, seated the Bummions at a table with the few passengers of western tongue and color, which was not to Mrs. Bummion's taste, but the Occidentals on the Obi Maru made no obtrusive efforts to insinuate themselves into conversation or acquaintance. Shipboard camaraderie varies with each ship, and the Obi Maru seemed to contain a very stiff and diffident company. It was not necessary to be aggressive, however, to irritate Mrs. Bummion. Two passengers, though they were quite unconscious of it, roused her to the point where it needed only a match to set her off.

One of these was a remarkably well-designed young woman who sat across the table. Mrs. Bummion's attention was first called to her by the fact that Mr. Bummion's fork would frequently miss his mouth; and Mrs. Bummion was not slow to observe that his eyes were attracted by the clear features and becoming apparel of the young woman opposite in a way that was hardly appropriate in a husband of Mrs. Bummion. At such times Mrs. Bummion vigorously squashed her husband's foot with her own—she called it nudging—and he, knowing how futile it would be to pretend to misunderstand her meaning, would return, temporarily to his food.

The other undesirable neighbor was the queer young man who sat next to Mrs. Bummion. He was a rather careless, absent-minded person, though he would have looked normal enough if he had combed his hair and sat up straight in his chair. He was always mumbling over his food, or digging lines in the cloth with a spoon. Mrs. Bummion didn't like him because, when his gaze wandered her way, he looked at her as indolently and insolently as if she weren't there.

Things came to a crisis with this unconventional person the very first day out of Honolulu. Twice Mrs. Bummion requested the spinach of him and had apparently not been heard, though she was convinced otherwise. The third time she repeated her demand with the additional suggestion that he come out of his hop dream.

This time he passed her the dish, mur-

muring something; and before the unsuspecting fellow could defend himself, Mrs. Bummion rose, purple with rage, and emptied the soppy greens upon his luckless person. She intended them for his face. Only the roll of the ship by mere divine accident averted this, and the astonished young man suffered no more indignity than the necessity of picking wet fingerfuls of spinach from his shoulder and shirt front.

"What in the name of Ra," he cried, "is the ism of this belneation of chenopodiaceous pot herbs!"

Everybody—Americans, Europeans, and Orientals—were thinking the same thing, though perhaps in not quite the same words.

"You young jellybean!" roared the wrathful Mrs. Bummion. "You'll not insult *me* when I ask you a civil question!"

"Insult!" echoed the young man. "Dis-honor, affront, desecrate, disparage, vilipend, deride, snigger, sneer, gibe, jeer, flout, flee, gleek, ridicule. Madam, for the love of Vishnu, how did I insult you?"

By this time the second steward and several underlings had come swiftly to the scene, but they hung back momentarily with an instinctive prudence.

"Nobody," announced Mrs. Bummion in public justification, "can call me a female sheep and get away with it!"

"My dear! My dear!" muttered Mr. Bummion, pulling his coat together. "He didn't call you that!"

"He didn't, didn't he? The low-life! Three times I asked him for the spinach, as polite as any lady in this room; and when he does finally pass it, he says in that low, sloppy way of his: 'You female sheep!'"

Everybody gasped, and those outside Mrs. Bummion's field of vision began to smile. As to the young man himself a light of understanding broke upon his face and he opened his mouth as if to laugh—but thought better of it.

"My dear madam," he explained. "I was not even aware of your presence, and certainly I had no intention or desire to shy fell names at you. I assure you I was talking to myself."

"Talking to yourself!" sneered Mrs. Bummion. "Calling yourself a female sheep, I suppose!"

"No, madam," went on the young man, his face twitching between amazement and embarrassment. "The words I said—though at the time I was not aware I even said them aloud—were merely a word and its definition: Ewe—E-w-e, do you understand?—which is a female sheep. I was wrestling with a central island of three-letter words in a puzzle—"

Light now broke upon Mrs. Bummion, but, strange to say, it did not soften her attitude. She became very white and clutched the tablecloth in a manner that made the apologist back away lest the same hand seize his throat in like manner.

"Puzzle!" she cried. "A crossword puzzle! And I've gone half around the world to get away from 'em. Two-letter words, three-letter words, four-letter words, five-letter words! Beginning with this or ending with that! Antelopes, prepositions, Jewish mystical ornaments, suffixes and adjectives meaning 'Is it or is it not?' I'm nearly wild with the whole mess—cross-cues, unkeyed letters, horizontals and verticals—everything! Lemme out o' here!"

Nobody stopped her. A path cleared among the dinner guests that a drunken driver could have driven through safely. As she vanished, the tension broke. The Orientals began jabbering in combined amazement and hilarity. The Americans looked at each other and asked each other if they had ever seen the like; and tourists who had refused to make any such admission even in the Grand Cañon or at Mt. Ranier, succumbed.

Cornelius Bummion stood hesitant as his spouse departed, and then went manfully over to the young man who was still picking spinach from the breast of his coat.

"I want to apologize, sir—" Cornelius began.

"Stet!" interrupted the other. "That's all right."

"But I certainly—" Cornelius started again. This time he was interrupted by a voice over his shoulder speaking past him to the young man. It was the good looking young woman across the table.

"Did I understand you to say," she inquired, "that you were constructing a crossword puzzle?"

"Yes."

"Isn't that remarkable!"

Mr. Bummion could not see that it was remarkable, nor, apparently, could the puzzler.

"I don't—" he began dubiously.

"But do you happen to be Professor Matthew Née, professor of Ratite Ornithology at the University of East St. Louis?"

"I am," admitted the other, more perplexed than ever.

"Well," smiled the young woman, "I'm Eve Holliday."

She said it with the confidence that it explained everything; and, indeed, Mr. Bummion saw young Professor Née's face expand into a smile of frank surprise.

"Not," he ejaculated, "not Eve Holliday of the Dictionary Corporation of America?"

"The ilk," she nodded.

"Egad!" he exclaimed, extending his hand. "I'm charmed beyond metage to salute you." Turning absent-mindedly toward Cornelius, he added: "This is my friend, Mr. ah—Mr.—"

"Bummion," assisted Cornelius. "Cornelius Bummion. Pleased to meet you, Miss Holliday."

The oddness of Cornelius's inclusion in the introduction was sympathetically overlooked; and he gave no sign of leaving Professor Née's side. He seemed to be waiting to say something.

"I read in *The Interlock*," said the professor, turning back to Miss Holliday, "that the D. C. A. people were sending you to China to transliterate the entire language and its dialects into English, or rather Latin, letters, in order to open up the field for a much needed expansion in the puzzle world. You're on your way now, I take it?"

"Aye," smiled Miss Holliday. "I hope to start in at once and have the work ready for the Christmas trade. And are you on business or just a pleasure jaunt?"

"Oh, a modicum of both," laughed the professor, trying to smooth the matted hair that continually fell down over his eyes. "I'm on my way to Australia and New Zealand to find some undiscovered cousins of the emu and the moa and name them with certain three-letter words that the language is in sore need of."

"Certes! EAE and IEO and YKN and—"

"Exactly."

"I say, old man," interposed Mr. Bummion in a low tone, "but you seem to be just the fellow who can help me. Do you happen to have any puzzles with you? I haven't had a real good crossword puzzle since I left San Francisco. I laid in a stock, but she—" Cornelius nodded his head in the direction last taken by his wife—"she found 'em and threw 'em overboard. She's death on 'em."

"What's ado with her?" asked Eve Holli-day.

"Well," Cornelius recounted painfully, "it started when she entered one of those endurance contests—for three months, it was—and she bought the paper every day. Once she nearly quit; it was when they wanted a three-letter word for Springfield ending in BZ; and if my brother hadn't suggested the radio call signal WBZ, she would have thrown up the whole thing then. But she stuck it out to the very last day. The last puzzle was the final straw. It called for a five-letter synonym for CHOS-EN. She racked her brain and my brain and the brains of all our relatives and friends and all the librarians and college professors she could reach. Selected, picked, pickt, opted, coöpted, voted, culled, preferred, choosed, choiced, choicy; none of 'em would fit five letters with an R in the middle."

Cornelius wiped his brow.

"She never got it. She nearly went crazy. When the paper printed the solution, she *did* go crazy. The word was KOREA."

The two puzzlers nodded their heads.

"And you say you haven't been able to get a puzzle since you left San Francisco?"

"Well, when I said that, I didn't count the awful stuff they give you in Honolulu. They're terrible! Mistakes in numbering. Even whole definitions twisted!"

"I've got just the thing for you," suggested Eve kindly. "Try one of these."

"But," protested Cornelius, gazing bewildered at the tiny design and lists of definitions, all on a card not as large as a theater ticket. "I never saw 'em so small!"

"They're engraved," explained Eve. "The company is experimenting with them for production in case of emergency. Some of the States, you know, have passed laws against puzzles, and we want to be ready in case we wake up some morning and find a Federal amendment against them."

"But how do you work them?"

"I'll lend you my lens and microstylus," she offered graciously. "The puzzle can be rolled up, if necessary, inside the stylus, which, you see, looks just like an ordinary pencil at a distance."

"You're a peach!" blurted Cornelius. "I don't know how to thank you!"

"Oh, that's all right," waved the girl. "And if you have any trouble with it, I'll be glad to help you any time."

"Thanks!" said Cornelius from the bottom of his heart.

He left his dinner unfinished and hastened off to the card room with his puzzle. The old thrill of piecing together orlops, ymirs, personal adjectives, prehistoric manuscripts, and Patagonian devices for lifting mushrooms, was the more intense for his long involuntary abstinence. It was a good puzzle, too, aged in the wood, with words just stiff enough to stimulate him with that tingling glow of mellow ratiocination.

After a while Eve and the professor also sought the card room. Cornelius saw them at a table in the center talking philology and orthography and phonetics. Cornelius was not so far gone in his puzzle but he found opportunity to wonder why two young people, who seemed so normally fitted to each other, should spend the whole evening talking business. If he had been Mat—as he mentally nicknamed the professor—and there had been no Mrs. Bummion, he would have been out on the deck with a girl as pretty as Eve, watching the moonlight on the waves and talking puzzles merely as an excuse.

About ten o'clock Eve said good night in a businesslike way and Mat went back to a corner mass he was making up entirely of words taken from "Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers." Cornelius shook his head hopelessly and returned to his puzzle. He would have liked to set a stick



of dynamite under Mat to wake him up to the opportunity he was missing.

At eleven o'clock, Cornelius had almost finished his puzzle. The card room was deserted except for several tables of bridge and mah jong and a poker game in one corner. Even these showed signs of disintegrating. Suddenly a face appeared at the door.

"Cornelius Bummion! Are you going to sit up all night?"

"All night? No, my dear."

"What are you doing anyway?"

"Doing? I—I'm trying to get a splinter out of my finger."

"With a pencil!"

"It's a very sharp pencil, my dear."

"Come on to bed!"

Cornelius obeyed. If he had had one more word, he would have obeyed almost cheerfully. For half an hour he had been racking his brain for a word in seven letters meaning an undergarment worn by women. Mrs. Bummion, he felt, must know the word; but it would be barefaced self-betrayal to ask her for a seven letter word meaning anything. Perhaps he could get it out of her by stratagem.

With this in mind, he puttered around until she had got back into bed, where she had spent the evening a nervous wreck and whence she had risen only to sound belated curfew for Cornelius. When she wasn't looking, he pushed a likely undergarment of hers off the chair to the floor.

"What's this on the floor?" he remarked guilefully, reaching over for it as Mrs. Bummion turned and followed his motion.

"Oh, your uh—your uh—"

"My shirt," snapped Mrs. Bummion.

"Put it on the chair."

"Yes, of course," agreed Mr. Bummion, reflectively. "What do they call 'em nowadays—I forget—"

His voice faded into nothing. Mrs. Bummion was eying him with suspicion.

"What ails you, Cornelius Bummion?"

"Nothing, my dear; nothing." And he began to take off his other shoe.

"Wonder if I have to take a bath to-night," he said aloud, as if nothing were more distasteful at the present moment than a bath. "Guess I'll have to."

His heart leaped as no objection was made to this. Carefully concealing the micro-stylus and the puzzle in the pocket of his bathrobe, he rang for the boy and locked himself in the hot bath. Soaking in the tingling, steaming water, he thought and thought and thought for a word of seven letters that would spell an undergarment worn by women that would fit the H in HIE, the M in GEMMATION and the E in REEVE. He was still thinking when a knock came at the door.

"Who is it?"

"Me," piped a respectful voice. "Me. Bat' boy. Missy say you die. Missy say you die in bat'."

"All right," sighed Cornelius, torn between the cross words of his wife and those of his puzzle. "Tell her I'm coming as fast as I can."

He went to bed, shutting his ears to the growls from the berth below; but he could not sleep. The undiscovered seven-letter word kept tantalizing him until he was convinced he should never get to sleep until he got it. Quietly and cautiously he got down out of his berth and put on his bathrobe again.

"Cornelius, where are you going?"

"Sick, my dear. Stomach all upset. Can't sleep. Thought I'd go up and get the steward or somebody to mix me up a good whisky and soda."

"Weil, don't drown in it like you did the bath."

With the joy of a clear field, Cornelius found a boy and made it clear that he wanted—that he *must have* the key to the ship's library. There was an English dictionary in it, he knew—not an unabridged, but probably comprehensive enough to contain the word he wanted.

He found the dictionary, but not the word. The word might well have been there, for Cornelius was not a proficient looker-up-of-words, especially in the middle of the night on a ship that had been dizzily rolling to and fro ever since it had left Honolulu.

Fearing the consequences of being found at a dictionary by Mrs. Bummion, he reluctantly gave up the search and shuffled slowly down and along the corridor, giving

his brain a final opportunity to redeem itself. Once he almost thought he had it. He stopped to think; but no, there were too many G's in LINGERIE.

As he glanced up, he noticed the number on the stateroom door before him. It was fifty-seven. It seemed to offer him an open sesame to his difficulty, for it was the stateroom occupied by Eve Holliday. He remembered her saying that she had no roommate. And hadn't she offered to help him any time he needed it? Certainly he needed it now. What harm if he should rap and ask her for the word that would placate his restless mind?

He tapped softly, but received no answer. He was about to rap a second time, louder; but he reflected that it might attract attention elsewhere than intended. He tapped softly again, but without result.

With a glance up and down the passage, he turned the knob and quietly opened the door. The room, as he had expected, was dark.

"Miss Holliday!" he called, just deeper than a whisper.

Some one in the lower berth moved.

"Who is it?" It was Eve's voice.

"It's me—Mr. Bummion," explained Cornelius. "Don't be alarmed. I just dropped in to see if you'd—"

"For Heaven's sake, turn on the light," interrupted Eve, not without a tremor, "and keep the door open."

"Yes, of course," assented Cornelius. "Where's the button?"

"Over on that wall."

Cornelius fumbled about among toothbrushes, pearl beads, cold cream and various wraps before he found a button.

"Here it is," he announced triumphantly, "but it doesn't work," he added.

"Zounds!" exclaimed the girl. "That's the call bell! Don't you hear it ringing?"

"Why, so—"

He didn't finish the sentence. His hand struck a glass and sent it crashing to the floor. He was unnerved for a moment, and it took but a slight roll of the ship to unbalance him physically. Stumbling over a chair and grasping vainly at hanging garments that offered no support, he crashed against the boarding of the upper berth.

Just as Eve screamed, the boy appeared in the door to answer the ring. Rousing noises came from adjacent staterooms and heads were stuck out into the passage to gauge the necessity of putting on life preservers.

If Cornelius Bummion wanted anything more than to get out of the door and back to his own room without being seen, it was to jump out of the porthole and drown or to be able to turn back the clock fifteen or twenty minutes and shoot the scene over. He saw several mistakes that had been made in the continuity of the picture as it stood.

Any one of these desires was just as impossible of realization as another. His efforts to leave Eve Holliday's berth as far behind him as possible, had resulted in his unconscious dragging of the counterpane with him, which caused the young woman's protests to increase.

He made one lunge for freedom. He got as far as the door. Here he was impeded by several curious attendants and passengers, but especially by Professor Mat Née. Professor Née's curiosity was outstanding. He seized upon Cornelius and stepped into the room to conduct an investigation.

Now Cornelius Bummion was mild enough in the presence of a large and dominating woman legally entitled to love, honor and obey him; but the impression of docility that this threw about him was deceptive. He resented Professor Née's seizure and showed it with a wild swing to the jaw. It put the two of them on even terms.

Back and forth in the dim stateroom, they fought blindly and without any set rules, neither knowing for what principles or objectives he was exerting himself. Eve shrank further back against the wall of her berth to avoid the crashing of bodies and the chance hit of a carelessly thrown water bottle.

The struggle ended abruptly when a steward braved the confusion of battle and turned on the light. Each combatant had suffered considerable surface damage. Cornelius's lips and knuckles were bleeding, and there were visible lumps here and there that were new. Considering his age, he should have had the decision.

But there is little justice in this world. As the steward jabbered meaninglessly, Eve Holliday, presumably the prize, if there were one, drew her kimono about her shoulders and allowed herself to be drawn within the manly arm of the bruised but dauntless professor of Ratite Ornithology. And at the same moment there appeared in the doorway, as monstrous as a vengeful Norn, Mrs. Cornelius Bummion.

Mrs. Bummion took command of the situation as far as her husband was concerned. The steward deemed it wise to permit her the custody of this one prisoner. Certainly no custody was more effective.

Cornelius was marched back to his room by a steady lash of vituperation, which did not cease even to allow him to bind up his wounds.

"Don't you get blood all over my clothes," snapped Mrs. Bummion as Cornelius fumbled about for a washcloth.

"It's only an undershirt," mumbled the prisoner feebly.

"Undershirt!" flared Mrs. Bummion. "I'll have you to know that's an eight-dollar and seventy-five cent all-silk chemise!"

"Chemise!" murmured Cornelius wearily. "Chemise! Why didn't you tell me that three or four hours ago?"

### THE END



## IN REPLY

I MUST admit,  
Dear Sir, that when  
You kiss me with such boldness,  
It's hard to reason  
Clearly, or  
To act with proper coldness.

For when I feel  
I ought to scold,  
I find my lips tight sealed,  
And in your dark  
Disturbing eyes,  
A new sweet world revealed.

Now if I thought  
Your kiss would keep  
Its magic charm forever,  
I'd marry you  
At once, dear, too,  
Nor be regretful ever.

But I'm afraid  
That things might change  
Once I became your wife,  
And so I think  
I'd sooner, dear,  
Just be *engaged* for life.

Enid M. Griffis.



# The Unwritten Law of the North

By **HOWARD E. MORGAN**

CLEARED of the snow by persistent gales, a windswept stretch of utter bleakness, a gray-white wilderness with dimmed borders: And, slithering across this frozen, snow blurred mirror, a man, on snowshoes, with the wind at his back. Hurrying sheets of snow dust continually outstripped him: his breath whirled ahead and vanished in them so that his advance over the icy glare had a labored air as though he were lagging amid universal hurry.

Actually, the man was moving rapidly, lightly, mechanically shaping his course to take full advantage of the blizzard at his back. Bits of ice on the lashes hid the man's keen gray eyes: through a watery blur they looked out upon the flying wraiths of whiteness. Snow plastered his back, but was chafed away in places by a shapeless gunny sack which hung loosely suspended by babiche thongs from his shoulders.

The glare ice gradually gave way to a cementlike roughness which retarded his pace, but made the going more certain. He swung onward into the light snow on the lake shore. The wind-harried pines on the forest edge one by one took form before his moisture-laden eyes.

At the base of a knoll, where the trail led into the souging blackness of the forest, the man rested, pawed the ice from his eyes with a frozen mitten, and adjusted the pack gingerly.

"Whew, some pull. Gittin' heavier, too. But it's worth it—five hundred dollars—doggone — old Andy'll be tickled pink." The ice-coated beard parted in a grin. With a final hitch to the pack he turned into the forest.

Among the thick, long-trunked hemlocks the blustering storm was a futile thing. Closely interwoven tree tops bandied the fitful, snow-laden winds about, accepted

some small portion of their burden, and filtered it gently to the ground.

The man was oppressed by the sudden stillness. His ears whirled unpleasantly. The woosh, woosh of the beartrack snowshoes broke upon the darkening quiet like the tentative tread of a clumsy man in a big room. He found himself starting involuntarily at the slightest sound, the snapping of a twig, the creaking of a bough. A strange uneasiness stole upon him, took possession of his tired body.

At regular intervals he stopped and listened, cupping his ears down wind—then plodded on, ashamed of the inchoate fear that tugged at his heart. The silence was painfully oppressive and palled upon him until his nerves were a jangle.

Suddenly he stopped in mid-stride, motionless, as though frozen in his tracks, eyes and ears intently alert. From far beyond the shadows of the immediate forest a dismal, wavering cry, beating upwind during the intermittent lulls, reached his straining ears. He shuddered involuntarily; but the nerve-racking tenseness left him reacting into a certain inward satisfaction at this proof that his vaunted sixth sense had not played him false.

The gunny sack jumped about queerly as though partaking in some subtle manner of the man's alarm. He tightened the thongs about his chest, loosened the short ax at his belt, and hurried on toward the next open space, a pinpoint of light in the distance.

Long trunked hemlocks soon gave way to a jungle of tangled scrub pine and spruce, but with the unerring instinct of the born woodsman the man held unswervingly to the trail. Without slackening his pace he kept close watch on the backward path: his keen eyes searched perpetually among the low-flung branches of the second growth timber. The open space ahead assumed definite proportions. The man hurried his step.

A sharp yelp from a near shadow stifled the breath of relief half formed, and chilled the racing blood around his heart. The gunny sack jumped about spasmodically.

He did not slacken his pace, but kept on confidently. It would never do to appear

afraid. At the entrance to the clearing he paused, motionless, watching, searching the blinding whiteness for evidence of his enemy. But no living thing appeared. Hungry winds lifted the snow from about the tree tops and hurled it in savage blasts into the open. The hurtling ice pellets stung the man's bearded cheeks into a ruddy glow. He glared into the face of the blizzard and swore fervently.

After one lingering backward look he stepped into the open and made his way boldly across the narrow strip. At the entrance to the opposite forest he turned again and inspected the razor-backed drifts through which he had just passed. A gaunt, gray shape slid out of the fogged shadows, nosed his tracks for a short distance, then sprang away at an angle, and running low, belly almost touching the snow, scurried silently across the open. Others immediately followed—half starved, menacing beasts—a veritable horde of them.

With an oath the man turned and plunged into the thicket, unstrapping his rifle as he went.

He had not gone fifty paces when he saw greenish, almond-shaped eyes peering out at him from the shadows, ghostly gray forms slipping silently across the open places, gleaming, foam-flecked jaws snapping hungrily as he passed them. A close drawn cordon of the gaunt, hunger-ridden beasts completely circled him. And as he plodded onward, this ominous circle seemed to draw closer and closer about him. Despite his well sustained nonchalance, the man's breath came in short, staccato gasps; his heart pounded wildly, stifling him with its erratic throbbing.

A huge, dark beast, bolder than the rest, rushed in from the rear. Scarcely deviating from his methodical stride, the man struck out with the short ax and sank the blade deep into the flat skull. Instantly a yelping, snarling mass of gray bodies centered upon the dying wolf and tore it to pieces. Profiting by this brief respite the man hurried on. At the base of the next ridge, scarcely a mile ahead, there was a creek, banked by a sheer wall of frozen shale. Once there, and with his back against the wall—

The mêlée of half crazed, ravenous beasts about the dead wolf broke away quickly, and spurred on by the taste of fresh blood, waxed bolder, followed close on the man's heels, snapping, snarling; flitted silently before him, back and forth across the path, always just out of reach of the short ax.

They closed in tentatively from both sides. He struck out right and left and they fell away. An emaciated she wolf, with foaming, gumless jaws, the light of madness in her bulging eyes, fronted him. He lifted the rifle. The report held above the furious yelps like the roar of a big gun through the shriek of shrapnel. Following the shot, the gray horde vanished for an instant.

All was silent except for the uncanny sobbing of the dying she wolf. The man carefully avoided the beast. As he passed on the wolves gathered about the writhing thing in the snow, but none touched her. Well they knew the menace of those foaming jaws.

An open space, burned clear of all undergrowth: fire blackened stumps, gnarled and twisted, poked through the first thin sheets of swirling snowdrift, like the shattered bulks of big guns on a fog-blurred battlefield. In the dimmed background the creek bed, the wall of shale. Not two hundred yards to go, yet it seemed that the desperate beasts read his purpose.

Unconsciously, perhaps, he hurried his pace. He was instantly surrounded, close pressed on all sides. He struck out furiously, temporarily clearing a space about him. A tawny, wild-eyed beast reached the gunny sack and clung tenaciously. The sack heaved mightily and shook the wolf off of its own volition, nearly throwing the man to the ground.

He redoubled his efforts until the snow was strewn with crushed and bleeding bodies; then, obeying a sudden impulse, he shifted the gunny sack to the snow, and with a rapid motion, tore it open.

A huge lynx sprawled out headforemost, and, bewildered for the moment by the blinding light and the shifting sea of snarling faces all about, lay low, close hugging the snow, tufted ears flat against its head.

The big cat was a beautiful specimen;

a positive giant of its kind. Erect it stood thirty inches from the ground, deep chested, thick necked, mighty jaws; long mauve-colored fur running to silver white on the legs, slender loins knotted with flowing muscles as elastic and tough as tempered steel.

The wolves circled warily, ears cocked, tongues lolling out like great dogs, uncertain as to how best to approach this formidable new antagonist. But the lynx was in no mood to wait. The querulous yelps acted like red pepper to the raw edge of her already much abused temper. With a screech of long pent-up fury she sprang into their midst, landing on all fours, ripping and tearing with her three-inch claws, gnashing and worrying with the long incisor-like teeth.

No single wolf was a match for her; no two of them faced her for long. They tried in vain to take her by storm. She was here, there, and everywhere, a relentless, steel-clawed fury; an intangible, fearless slayer, with eviscerating claws that tore madly but skillfully; great jaws that clicked together through everything they seized.

Grinning his approbation, the man backed away to the wall, dropped on one knee and emptied his rifle again and again, slowly and carefully. The lynx gave way strategically, then, with her back against the wall, furiously renewed the attack.

The inner circle was soon piled high with dead bodies. The man's rifle burned his mittened hands. The front lines, faced by the two deadly alternatives, attempted to draw away. Those in the rear pushed forward. They fought among themselves. The continuous bark of the rifle added to the confusion, and the unfailing aggressiveness of the big cat finally completed the rout. Snapping, snarling, fighting, in pairs, in groups, they moved away, melting into the shadows, like smoke wreaths into the night.

Forefeet braced far apart, arbitrarily alert, the big cat fronted them until the last gray shape disappeared.

The man gazed ruefully upon the blood-stained hero: "Five hundred dollars gone t' hell. It's a cinch the zoo'll never see you, old-timer. Doggone, won't Andy be sore."

At sound of the man's voice, the lynx

crouched, belly to the snow, and eyed him belligerently.

He shifted the rifle hurriedly, but held his fire.

"Now, now—how come, old-timer? Ain't no call fer us t' argue. We're all square. I saves your life an' you saves mine. Fair enough, I calls it—howsomever—"

But with a mighty bound the lynx reached a brush tangle, and in a smother of snow dust, zigzagged out of sight.

The man glimpsed this sudden vanishing of his small fortune, a doubtful half smile on his lips, then with a shrug, turned away and plodded wearily along the open ridge top toward a distant snow blurred smoke ribbon reaching upward from a cabin drift hidden in a gully.

## II.

WITHIN hailing distance of the little cabin the man stopped, leaned against a smoke blackened stump and lit his pipe. Poor old Andy! This was the last straw. The lynx gone—no money. And there was no meat. All day he had not seen so much as a snowshoe rabbit. And he had promised Andy a moose steak. And a can of tomatoes, from the cache. But he had been unable to find the cache, despite Andy's minute directions.

Andy had cached most of their supplies late in the fall before the scurvy got him. Now it could not be found. With his sickness Andy may have forgotten. It was a damned shame. A couple of cans of vegetables would mean new life to the scurvy-ridden sick man. Red meat, too. Andy needed red meat.

But neither of these necessary foods might do the trick. Andy was a sick man, a living, breathing skeleton of the Andy that was. He needed medical attention. The man's pleasant face tightened into hard, firm lines. He should have it too. Steve Broderick had never yet failed a friend.

In the cabin the sick man lay propped up against a heap of mangy furs in the narrow bunk. Yellowish, parchment like skin stretched tightly over the fleshless angles of his face. A week old growth of scraggly whisker hid the bloodless lips and

yellow teeth. Small, saffron tinted eyes—that had once been blue—staring furtively from out deep, black rimmed sockets, mutely questioned Steve Broderick as the latter swung into the snow blurred framework of the open doorway.

"No luck—as usual." It was not exactly a question. The thin voice was irritably positive.

Broderick shrugged and forced a laugh.

"I got the lynx, Andy—but—you'd never believe it—the wolves follered me—o' course they're half starved an' desprit—an' d' you know, that darned cat saved my neck. Fight, say you oughter seen her, I—"

Crouched on the edge of the bunk, his lean, weather browned face smiling, Broderick recounted his misadventures. But the sick man did not respond to his partner's heroic attempt to create good cheer. As is true of most strong men, this, his first real sickness, had taken the heart out of him. The scurvy had reached his knees and the cumulated pain was as the pain of a dozen throbbing toothaches. Despair had already worked its subtle way into his heart. Appreciation of his partner's valiant, if unsuccessful efforts, did not penetrate the looming walls of self pity.

"Wolves, hell—it ain't possible. It never happened, to you 'r nobody else. Why d' you hev t' lie t' me, Steve? You lost the cat; got away frum you most likely—an' you know Louis Goldstein offered you five hundred dollars—five hundred dollars—why, with five hundred dollars we could buy some of old Tom's dogs an' a sled an' git t' Dyea, somehow. I got t' git to a doctor, that's all. You know it. I'm a sick man. Gittin' sicker. I won't last long neither, up here—hell of a lot you care—"

Midway of the sick man's tirade, Steve Broderick rose and set about methodically preparing supper. And although his lips smiled pitingly, apologetically, he felt his partner's unwarranted sarcasms keenly. Of course, Andy couldn't help it. He was discouraged, a sick man. But it hurt nevertheless.

Supper consisted of half a dozen thin slices of bacon, a sourdough biscuit apiece, some very weak tea. Broderick's heart

sank as he mentally listed the scant store of food remaining. Something must be done and that soon. It was not yet Christmas. No food. No money. No dogs. Two hundred miles to civilization. The wilderness was in the grip of the worst famine in years. There was no fresh meat to be had.

The sick man's plaintive voice drifted on and on, dismally, interminably: "I'm a goin' t' cash in, I tell yu, Steve. I ain't never goin' t' see Annie an' the kids again. I feel it in my bones. Gittin' sicker every minute, I be— Yu don't give a damn, I know. You ain' sick—you—"

As always Broderick met the sick man's childish accusations with a smile.

But when Andy finally drifted off into restless slumber, the smile left Broderick's face. He crouched before the fire, stared unseeing into the flames, his face grim and hard.

Poor old Andy! Something—something must be done. But what? It seemed a hopeless situation. In a lifetime spent in the wilderness, never had a tangle like this presented itself.

No food. No money or furs to buy even odds and ends from the half starved, unfriendly Indians. Broderick knew this cruel Northland. None better. His sympathies ran strongly with the hardy men who lived the life he offered. Always before he had had plenty. Always before he had been the one who had offered freely to the needy of his had earned substance.

It was the unwritten law of the wilderness—that no man should ask for help and be denied. It was the very foundation on which life in this frozen land was built. But now—when, for the first time in his life he needed help—for Andy to be sure—it had been denied him.

There was Dion Moree at Pontiac Pass; ten years ago, at the risk of his own life, he had trailed for miles through a raging blizzard to Moree's assistance. He had grubstaked the old miner several times. And now—to-day—he had called at Dion's cabin at Pontiac Pass, had, for Andy's sake, begged for food—a few cans of vegetables would have been sufficient—but Moree had refused him. And there were a dozen cans of tomatoes in plain sight,

And there was old Tom, the Cree Indian. An independent fur trader. With plenty of everything. In the old days he had staked Tom through one entire season when the Indian's sled with his winter catch of furs had gone through the ice into the Yukon. Tom had never repaid him. He hadn't expected it. Now—old Tom trapped the Latholoyah Flats just over the Golden Horn divide; Broderick had paid him a visit—and—old Tom had refused him, even a slab of bacon.

A month since, he would not have believed that such things could happen. Even now he didn't understand—could scarcely grasp the fact—that he and Andy, recognized old sourdoughs, known and well thought of from Seattle to the Arctic Circle—had been refused—food—not a grubstake or money or dogs—but food, the where-withal to keep body and soul together.

Why—a single can of tomatoes would have put new life into poor old Andy. Spruce tea had long since ceased to be efficacious. But—he had been refused—a single can of vegetables—and Moree and old Tom both had plenty.

Slowly but persistently, a new angle on life as he had known it for forty years, presented itself to Steve Borderick. For the first time he realized that to many people the first great law of the North meant nothing. And with this understanding a formidable array of events out of his crowded life presented themselves in an entirely new light.

Instead of doing the right thing, perhaps he had been a sucker. He had always had plenty, but had never been rich. Had never been rich—why? He saw now, it was because he had been too open handed. The shallow channels of his memory refused to chronicle the numberless instances wherein he had grubstaked this one and that one. Sometimes they returned the debt. Sometimes not. More often not, perhaps.

Why, only last Fall he had loaned Joe, the French-Indian breed, who swept the floors at the Olympia in Dawson, one thousand dollars. Joe had told him a wild story about a cache of genuine sea otter skins—worth thousands of dollars—some, where up in the Winijou country, that were



his for the taking. He had promised Broderick half. Broderick had listened to the breed's story and although he had hardly believed—out of the goodness of his heart he had loaned the fellow one thousand dollars.

Joe was no good. A lying, thieving knave, by all accounts. Unfamiliar with winter trails. He would never come back. And even if he did, the thousand dollars was gone.

Steve Broderick clenched his hands impotently. There were dozens of instances—similar in many ways to this one—that came ready to mind. Why had he done it? Fool. But no—it was the thing to do as he had seen it, at the time. When he had plenty he was willing to help, all too regardless, perhaps, of the exigency of the case. It was life as he saw it.

His natural interpretation of the ethics of this, his country, exaggerated a bit no doubt—but then—he had never been in need. Always it had been the other fellow. He had given of his substance willingly, gladly. And now in his bitterness he saw that it was wrong, all wrong. Now—he was in need and those whom he had helped—had refused him. Turned him away from a well filled larder, empty handed.

Subconsciously perhaps, he chose Joe as the axis on which to turn his new thoughts about. Joe was a foreigner in the first place, a lazy good for nothing, and not one of them. That thousand dollars would buy dogs from old Tom who owned a dozen or more prime Yukon huskies. One thousand dollars gone. Gone on a wild goose chase. The fact that Joe might never return from his hazardous journey—providing he had gone away at all—produced no satisfaction in his hardened heart. He longed to confront the greasy, shifty-eyed breed.

And from this thought generated a new resolve, applying alike to all hard fisted, grasping humans. They must be all alike. One and all it seemed had trimmed him.

Very well, he would go them one better. While there was food to be had, he and Andy should have it. He would take what he wanted. In the light of his many contributions, the world owed him—food at

least. Strange, he had never thought of it in just that way before.

The unwritten law of the wilderness that men prated of—hell and be damned to it. It didn't work. Andy knew it. After all there was much that was true in the sick man's rambling patter. Well, he, Steve Broderick, knew it now. To-morrow he would again visit Dion Moree—and—he would come away with a pack full of food—coffee, potatoes—vegetables for Andy.

In the sudden flare of impotent rage that consumed him, he visioned himself beating the old man over the head with his gun. But even his new resolve refused to sanction murder of a white man, but—clamoring for outlet, his bitter thoughts turned again to the breed, Joe. If only he could come upon Joe! The Winijou country was not far away. He would shoot the breed on sight. One thousand dollars! The greasy parasite.

The fire had burned low and Broderick roused, shivering. He was surprised to find his face and head were hot. A fever. His joints were stiff. He was dizzy too. Dull pains centered in the pit of his stomach. He had eaten no more than a single square meal altogether in a dozen days.

He rolled in a blanket before the replenished fire. But he couldn't sleep. Urged by a touch of fever, his thoughts skipped erratically here and there through the unnaturally vivid pages of his memory. For the first time in a healthy, happy-go-lucky existence, the world seemed topsy turvy, all wrong. He drowsed fitfully. Dreamed horrible, distorted dreams.

Always these dreams dwelt upon the strenuous events of the day, the heart-breaking journey through the blizzard, the wolves; always he faced Dion Moree and old Tom—fought with them through flames, through seething deserts of hot sand; always he awoke when in mortal combat with Joe, the breed. It was the fever of course. But he was not sick. Just a touch of scurvy, fatigue and hunger.

Finally he roused, crouched on a wooden stool before the fire and sought to collect his scattered wits. The sick man awoke and took to sobbing childishly. Broderick forced him to drink a mug of steaming

spruce tea and then with infinite patience quieted the sick man's hysteria.

For long after Andy was again sleeping—peacefully for the moment—Broderick stood at the foot of the bunk looking down into his partner's twitching white face. When he finally turned away his mouth was set in a hard, straight line, and his pale blue eyes gleamed determinedly.

With noticeable lack of the method which as a rule characterized his every action, Steve Broderick collected together odds and ends of dufile, shells for his rifle, a scant strip of bacon, some tea. Thrice he apportioned and reapportioned the slender store of tea. On his projected journey tea would have to do for food, a stimulant to help his weakening body bridge the frequent periods of terrible cold and fatigue. Tea to him meant life. To Andy, in the warm cabin, it didn't matter so much. However, he ended by dividing the precious stuff into two equal portions.

Long before dawn, a red-eyed, fever-ridden creature, Steve Broderick followed the drifted backward trail along the ridge top. He held the long rifle tightly in his two mittened hands and as he went his lips mumbled ceaselessly in wordless patter.

Toward noon he came upon some wolves feeding on the carcass of a deer. They refused to budge at his unearthly yells and it was not until he had killed several of them that he was able to come near. But the deer had been picked clean; only some bones remained. From these he made a weak broth. Drank quarts of the tasteless stuff. But it put new life in his aching body.

The fever left him temporarily. He rested on a hillock and studied the gray-white stretch of windswept bleakness spread out below him that was the Virgin City trail. To the north, on the border of the Winijou country, was old Tom, the Cree Indian; to the south, Dion Moree. Which should it be? Some fearsome instinct warned him that there would be death involved—murder.

He waited until a black speck moving slowly along the trail in his direction should identify itself and pass on. But the black speck moved very slowly. At times, it did

not move at all. Lay quietly in the snow. Broderick pondered disinterestedly. His thoughts were centered on Dion Moree—what would he say and do—how would he go about forcing the arbitrary old sourdough to part with his supplies? There would be a fight, yes—and murder, perhaps—but no! No—not murder—not—

The black speck identified itself suddenly as a man and a sled. No dogs. The man was on the verge of complete exhaustion. This much was evident even at a distance. At times he staggered and fell, lay for long minutes deathlike in the snow. But each time he struggled to his feet and mushed on, always dragging the heavy hand-sled with him.

The lone watcher on the hill was interested despite himself. The man was on his last legs, no question of that, badly in need of help. A mug of hot tea was what he needed. Broderick built up the fire and started some snow to melting in a pan. The stranger was down again. This time he did not rise. Broderick slipped into his snowshoes and hurried down the icy slope toward the sprawling figure.

The going was difficult. He was tired. Paused often to rest. During one of these pauses, the utter absurdity of what he was about to do—in the light of his new resolve—occurred to him. Back in the old rôle of Good Samaritan. Fool. All his life he had been lending a helping hand to some one. To what end? The answer was—Dion Moree and old Tom had refused him in his hour of need.

Chances were he did not even know this man in the snow. Even if he did know him what difference would it make in the scheme of things—if he should die now. Death was not unpleasant—in the snow. But—the man was moving again, crawling on his hands and knees, pushing the unwieldy sled before. Poor devil! He was game. Some hot tea, a bit of bacon—

But no—that handful of tea leaves, that small strip of rancid bacon, stood between himself and starvation. By what law of man was he called upon to take food from his own mouth to feed this stranger? The unwritten law of the North? Bah! It didn't work.

The stranger had fallen again, face forward in the snow. Unconsciously, Broderick hurried his step. The man did not move when he came near. With much effort Broderick lifted the inert body up on the sled. Eyes swollen and bloodshot, dimmed with snowblindness, stared out of a whiskered, frost blackened face, which bore scant semblance to anything human. The man tried to speak but his swollen lips only moved inarticulately.

Moved by an inherent sympathy which temporarily overshadowed all else, Broderick braced the sagging body up against a roll of furs on the sled and leaned his weight into the moosehide thongs which served as harness.

Arrived at his little camp on the hillock, he built up the fire, made tea and fried several slices of the precious bacon. The heat put new life into the stranger. He ate—ravenously, like a beast. It was not until the man spoke, that Broderick knew him. Joe, the halfbreed!

Broderick laughed, loudly and long. It wasn't funny. He laughed—like a man the realization of whose last hope has fallen so far short of expectations as to be ridiculous. Then, too, there was hysteria there, a touch of madness.

He had firmly intended to kill the breed on sight. Somehow, this dark skinned man crouching before the fire, hands shielding his frozen face from the heat, had become the crux of his resurgent thoughts, typified the grasping, selfish, pitiless Northland, as he now saw it. But now that the man had fallen into his hands, a pitiful creature, altogether helpless—he couldn't do it. Even constant thoughts of Andy failed to generate even an approximation of the hate he wanted to feel, needed to feel before he could lift a finger against the half dead man who faced him across the fire.

Half dead indeed. The breed now lay close hugging the fire, eyes closed, not the slightest hint of vapor issuing from the puffed lips to indicate that he still breathed. It was not until Broderick had pulled away the man's outer clothing and pressed his ear close to the other's breast, that he detected the fluttering heart beats.

Evidently, the hot food had proved too

much of a stimulant. But the man was not dead. The only thing to be done was to keep him warm and let him sleep. The rest and warmth would do it—if anything would—put new life into the wasted body. It would be fatal to attempt to move him. Camp must be made for the night.

Once more Broderick's humanitarian impulses eclipsed all else. With a snowshoe he scooped a deep, oblong depression in the snow, collected much wood, built up a roaring fire and wrapped the sleeping man in one of his own blankets. His tasks completed, Broderick was tired out. The smoldering fire leaped dizzily about before his twitching eyes. His heart throbbed wildly.

The hunger pains came again, redoubled in intensity—shooting, knife-like pains that bent his frail body up like a rusty wire. Sleep was impossible. All night long he crouched before the fire. At times, in dream fraught half delirium he dozed off. But always he awoke, instinct urging him to feed the fire.

Joe slept quietly now, breathing deeply. In his saner moments Broderick wondered vaguely why it was that this man, this thief—for he was a thief, nothing better—should live, while he and Andy should die. But in his semi-stupor no thoughts of retribution entered in. It was to be, that was all. He was calmly resigned. Fate. Yes, that was it. It was fate. Finally, toward morning, he slept, huddled close to the dwindling fire.

He awoke choking in response to a hot liquid that was being forced between his teeth. It was Joe, the breed, who held the steaming mug.

It was broad daylight. The fire was burning brightly. There was a pleasant odor that struck painfully to the very pit of his long empty stomach. Coffee. But no—there was no coffee. Broderick opened his eyes. Bacon, a dozen generous slices sizzling in a pan over the fire. Dreams again.

He closed his eyes and sighed dismally. Another mouthful of the steaming nectar brought him wide awake. Joe, quite a different man from the night before, grinned down at him.

"Eet ees good stuff, no, *m'sieu'?*"

"Coffee? Bacon—"

"*Oui, m'sieu'*. Come—she ees ready."

Broderick ate. It was not until the second pan of bacon and several cups of coffee had been disposed of that he paused to question the source of supply.

"My cache, *m'sieu'*. In de fall I make heem by Chalk Butte not half a mile from here. For two week I try to find heem. I am almos' gone geese, yesterday; wen you in' me I know noddin'. To-day I am strong. *Voilà!* I am awake dees morn' by de cold. You are asleep. An' so—I build up de fire—an' go on to de cache an'—"

"How about some vegetables, tomatoes—Andy is—"

"*Oui, m'sieu'*—plentee. Wen you are strong we will make anodder treep—Ect ees de scurvy, no?"

"Andy—"

"*Oui, M'sieu' Andy*. Too bad. But—we feex heem for sure. Joe, hee's got what ect ees—de beeg bunch—plentee. *Voilà!* Ect ees so."

Broderick tried to speak—but could not. This man, a breed at that, weeks from civilization, was offering freely of his scanty

supply of food. This was—this was the unwritten law of the North. Perhaps after all—everything was all right. Perhaps he had been wrong. Had judged hastily—

The rejuvenated Joe was fumbling with the roll of mangy appearing furs which he had clung to so desperately the night before. Several scraggly marteen skins fell away revealing—a dozen beautiful skins—sea otter-skins. Broderick gasped. A fortune in that bundle of furs. The breed divided them clumsily into two piles. The one he set before Broderick.

"Yours, *m'sieu'*. As I make de promise—so—I keep heem."

Broderick stared unbelievably. But realization finally came to him. And with this realization a great happiness. Not altogether due to the value of the furs before him, not because there was food—vegetables for Andy—as because Joe, the breed, had kept his word, had paid his debt, had lived up to the traditions of the Northland. Perhaps after all there was a justice—a great unwritten law—a—

"I am ver happee. An' you my iren'. But Andee he ees seek, no? Come, we mus' go."

### THE END

## THE BLUEBIRD

O H bird! You are a miracle  
At twilight in the spring,  
You have a bit of captured sky  
Emblazoned on your wing,  
A rosy cloud is yours for breast,  
A star—for song to sing.

The crouching dusk beholds you pass  
Enraptured by the sight,  
The silence listens, tremulous,  
To notes that twinkle light,  
While dreams of men are poised, O bird,  
For ecstasy of flight.

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To vision, near or far,  
Than blue sky winging to earth's nest  
And singing of a star.

Edith Livingston Smith.  
10 A

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# The Haunted House

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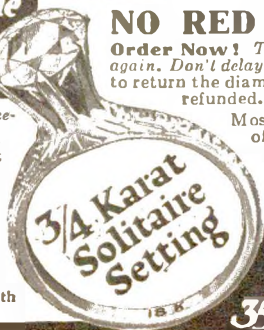
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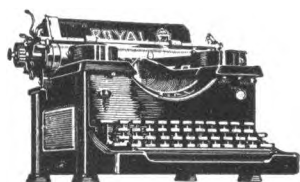
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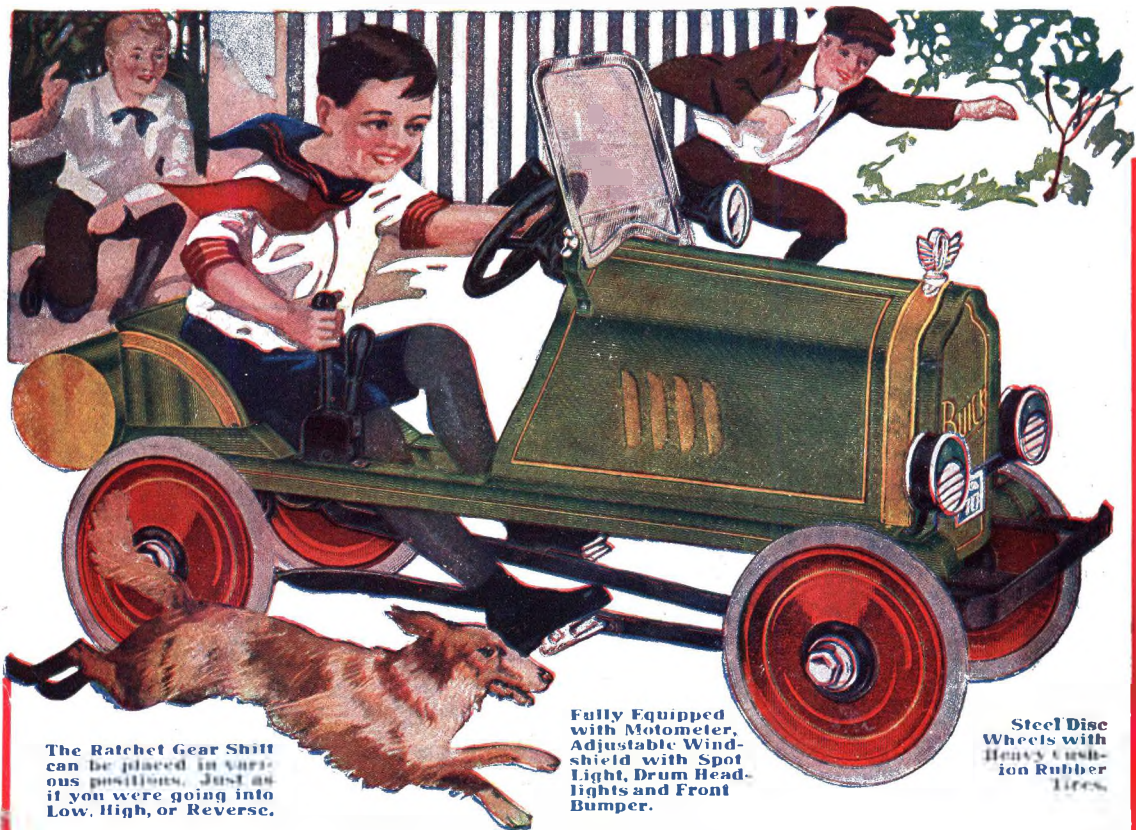
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