

SATURDAY

THE

MARCH 22

CAVALIER

ISSUED WEEKLY



PRICE
10
CENTS

ALBERT
MENCKE

The
Wild Woman
by Fred Jackson

Digitized by Google
Complete in This Issue!

Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ELGIN WATCHES ON CREDIT



Thin Model 12-Size 17-Jewel

This Month, we want to send you this fine **\$30.00 Elgin Watch**, a very thin model, 12-Size, 17-Jewel—the Classiest Gent's Watch made today and yet one that has long been the **Standard Watch of the World**, complete with Double Strata Gold Filled Case, **fully Guaranteed for Twenty-Five Years, on**



FREE TRIAL \$19⁷⁵ || \$2⁵⁰ A MONTH

P. S. HARRIS,
Pres. Harris-Goar Co.

This is the watch that will appeal to you instantly—and if you yourself don't say it is the biggest Elgin Watch bargain you ever saw, send it back at our expense. If you wish to keep it the way is easy. Pay us only \$2.50 and the rest in similar amounts each month. **No interest—no security**—just common honesty among men. We want you to see for yourself that this fine 17-Jewel Elgin is better than other watches costing twice or three times as much. **Send for our Big Free Catalog**

WRITE TODAY for particulars and we will send you our new **FREE WATCH AND DIAMOND BOOK**, also our book called "Facts vs. Fume" or all about the watch business both at home and abroad. Write today.

HARRIS-GOAR CO., Dept. 793, Kansas City, Mo.



The House That Sells More Elgin Watches Than Any Other Firm in the World.

\$—BOYS!—\$

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF A BIG WEEKLY MAGAZINE

WE want an energetic, industrious boy in every community to represent **THE CAVALIER**.

The work that we shall require of this boy is clean, interesting and honorable. It will give any boy an insight into the science of salesmanship, and will bring him into communication with the most representative homes of the city—because he is really distributing good literature and is representing one of the biggest publishing houses in the world.

Write to us—a postcard will do—and ask us to send you our proposition. To start you *right*, we will send you 50 cents worth of magazines to distribute among your friends.

After you get rid of your first consignment of magazines the rest will be easy—you will be started on a money-making business of your own.

Write *at once*, so that you will be sure of being appointed the "Cavalier Boy" of your town.



Free

Every boy answering this advertisement will receive the red button with the green star of THE CAVALIER LEGION.

Address: The Cavalier, Desk C

175 Fifth Avenue

New York

THE CAVALIER

Vol. XXVI

CONTENTS FOR MARCH 22

No. 4

FOUR SERIAL STORIES

- The Shadow Menace. Part I Willard E. Hawkins 610 X
How the fates, hand in hand with destiny, played a great drama.
- The Fighting Fool. Part II Dane Coolidge 635 X
Of one who rushed in where angels feared to tread.
- The Purchase. Part III E. J. Rath 659 X
A strong story of straight love and crooked politics.
- Miss "X." Part IV Watkin Beal 678 X
Who became entangled in a web of circumstance.

ONE NOVELETTE

- The Wild Woman Fred Jackson 577 X

TEN SHORT STORIES

- The Late Senator Smith Mollie Martin 702 X
- Casting Bread Upon Waters Frank Condon 710 ✓
- Yellow Moon King Kelley 716 ✓
- The Brave and the Fair Redfield Ingalls 724 ✓
- Doubting Thomas Sophy F. Gould and Purnell Pratt 729 ✓
- The Inquest Elliot Balestier 735 ✓
- One Tin Ear John Barton Oxford 746 ✓
- The Woman's Picture Gordon Ray Young 751 ✓
- Boy Vagabond Bessie Emmett 756 X
- The Elopement Marie B. Schrader 762 ✓

POETRY

- Ashes o' Love Faith Baldwin 658 | The Spoilers Martha Haskell Clark 677
- Love's Flight K. D. Daugherty 741

- Heart to Heart Talks The Editor 742

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

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President.

ROBERT H. TITHEBAUGH, Secretary.

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer.

Single Copies, 10c.

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

By the Year, \$4.00

Entered as second-class matter, August 24, 1903, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

What a Leading Critical Authority Thinks of the All-Fiction Magazine and the Place It Occupies in Contemporary Literature.

The New York Times

Review of Books



Literary Section

The New York Times

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 2, 1915

THE MAGAZINES

A Critique of Tendencies in Some February Periodicals

By Prof. ALBERT FREDERICK WILSON.

[Editor's Note—Albert Frederick Wilson, who is to write a monthly critique of selected magazines, is in charge of the Magazine Writing and Making Department of Journalism at New York University. Mr. Wilson has had a wide experience as a magazine editor, and as a critic of periodical literature.]

The wonder of magazine publishing is not that there are so many magazines, but that they are so well written and so well made. Not a little of my time this month has been given over to a review of the all-story magazines, such as Adventure, The Argosy, The Cavalier, The Popular Magazine, The All Story, &c. We hear a good deal these days about the "rot" that gets into this class of publication, but I wonder how many of these self-appointed critics have ever taken the time to read through periodicals of this stamp? Here we find the same careful craftsmanship that marks the work in the more pretentious literary monthlies. Most of the stories are pre-table examples of the short-story art of to-day. The characterization is well done, the note of reality is sustained, and they allow a sense of action which amounts almost to genius. I think originally I was led to a reading of these magazines through curiosity. I noted how many representative business men and professional men bought them at the newsstands. Obviously readers of this type were not attracted by trash. Day after day I stood near one of the big railroad newsstands and watched pile after pile of these all-story entertainers melt down to the counter level while the better-known monthlies stood neglected. I bought an armful, and since that day I have been an admirer and a reader of the all-story periodicals.

The misjudgment of the all-story magazine has come in part through a misunderstanding of its purpose. It is purely and simply a professional entertainer. Its table of contents aims to make its offering as varied and as diverting as a vaudeville performance. Adventure, romance, mystery are the time demands. If the editor recognises any mission at all, it is the herculean job of knocking down the walls of the three-room apartment to let in the love, romance, and action from the world's rim—not a bad mission as missions go. The writers make no pretense of literary finish, but personally I should rather look among these makers of fiction for promising literary workers than I would in some higher places with which I am acquainted.

No analysis of present-day literary tendencies could be more authoritative than that of a man skilled in the profession of Journalism, and teaching that profession in a leading educational institution.

These three magazines constitute what is known among advertisers as *The Argosy Combination* and they represent an advertising service unique in the publishing world. They have a guaranteed circulation of 605,000 at \$450 per page.

The qualities of a magazine are often arrived at hastily through a superficial examination of the cover and table of contents. Have you ever read one of these all-fiction publications from cover to cover in a serious attempt to account for this enormous popularity?

A healthy desire for *entertainment* in a magazine is limited neither by "class" nor station in life. These publications can show "quality" of circulation as readily as magazines of higher price or more artistic dress.

The author of a swinging romance in one of these magazines to-day may create the "best seller" of America to-morrow. Fate plays no favorites in literature.

THE CAVALIER

MARCH 22, 1913

Vol. XXVI

No. 4

THE WILD WOMAN

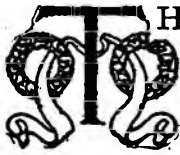
A NOVELETTE

BY FRED JACKSON

Author of "The Masked Bride," "Lizette," "A Stitch in Time," "The Serpent," etc.

CHAPTER I.

The Man Who Found Her

HE rickety old bus swung up the driveway to the Duncan place, halted with a flourish before the wide Colonial doors, and Mr. Trask descended.

He superintended the removal of his bags from the bus to the veranda, paid off the ancient busman generously, adding, by way of good nature, a final reminder of certain apple-stealing sallies of bygone days, and, mounting the steps, rang the bell.

A man servant answered his summons promptly—a new man servant, of course. Even Peggy couldn't keep man servants three years. So there was no necessity for bribing. He simply asked for Mrs. Duncan and refused to give his name, and was therefore left to wait in the hall.

There was a log fire in the open grate there, for the air was cold outdoors in spite of the promise of spring, and he drew near it and pulled

off his gloves and warmed his fingers as he waited.

It was very like Peggy herself—that hall—bright and sunshiny and cozy and comfortable—every inch of it—and those very same adjectives described Peggy as well, unless she had changed. He denied the possibility with a scowl—a scowl that gave way to a smile an instant later as he heard her heels clicking cheerfully over the hardwood stairs in descent.

And when presently she stood in the doorway, a huge, purring, gray cat under one arm, her eyes wide and inquisitive, a smile hovering very close, he knew that he had not misjudged her, and that she had not changed in the least. So he bowed very politely.

"How do you do, Mrs. Duncan?" said he.

She cried out his name ecstatically, "Teddy!" and dropped the cat, which alighted safely on its feet, and rushed into his arms. "You tremendous surprise!" she added, hugging him delightedly. "I never was so glad in all my life!"

"Fabricator! Flatterer!" said he. "Control yourself. Demonstrations are vulgar."

She laughed, catching him by both arms and drawing back to regard him critically through half-closed eyes.

"You've changed," she said. "You are heaps older, and things have happened to you!"

"Naturally," said he. "Life were hardly worth while otherwise."

"Not always happy things," said Peggy Duncan wisely, her blue eyes kind. They were like his—those eyes—except in expression. Her whole face, in fact, was like his, and yet astonishingly different. For she was contented, at peace, all happiness, eagerness, enthusiasm—and he was weary-eyed and his mouth drooped at the corners. He looked tired out.

"Three years," he answered, shrugging.

"Sit down," said Peggy, "there where I can see you," and she picked up the offended pussy and stroked its soft back placatingly. "Tea presently. Toileting before tea not permissible. Company is too valuable. Where is the luggage?"

"I've two bags. I left them on the veranda. I'm staying only a few days."

"A few days?" On the way to the bell she turned and regarded him. "Do you actually suppose I mean to let you go so soon, after you've been away to—Heaven knows where—for three years? Do you think Ned would listen to it, or Gipsy?"

"Gipsy?" he repeated; "my little wild woman. How is she, Peggy?"

"Not little, for one thing," said Peggy, smiling. "Almost entirely grown up, you'll find."

"Grown up? Gipsy? You're not serious?"

"She's sixteen, as nearly as we can figure, you know. Her birthday is the first of June."

"That's right," said Trask slowly. "The day I got her. Sixteen! It doesn't seem possible."

"Tea, please," said Peggy, addressing the man servant, who had come in quietly: "and have my brother's things sent up to the gray suite."

The servant bowed and departed, and Peggy came back to the fire and seated herself in an armchair much too big for her and petted the cat.

"The same old Peggy," said he, regarding her quizzically. "You never seem to change, thank Heaven! And Ned?"

"Ned's fine, and busy with obesity exercisers mostly."

"Hurrah for Ned! And the governor? I stopped at his office and learned he'd gone South."

"The governor grows always younger and gruffer and snappier."

"And Gipsy? Tell me about Gipsy. You always evaded my questions in letters."

"You'd better wait and see for yourself."

"Is she becoming civilized?"

"To some slight extent," smiled Peggy whimsically.

"Pretty?"

"Not exactly. In no sense pretty. But she is not without charm—attraction. I won't tell you another thing, Teddy Trask."

He stood with his back to the fire, scowling terribly.

"You must. I don't want to be startled or shocked or disappointed or surprised. It would be so unkind to her. You see, I don't know what to expect. The last time I saw her she was—let me see—about twelve, distressingly thin, with huge black, stormy, sullen eyes, and a mop of black hair burned brown by the sun, and tan skin. She looked like a little bronze demon in skirts, and she was playing some wild game or other with a troupe of boys. I believe you assured me that she was learning to cook and sew at intervals, but I did not see any of that. When she wasn't running loose she seemed to be brooding in some corner with a book, and her favorite reading posture was lying full length on her

stomach on a rug, her head on her hands."

Peggy sighed and slowly nodded.

"I remember," she said softly. "That was when you ran down to say good-by just before you sailed."

"Yes. And before that—before that—oh, yes, was the time she ran away, and I found her in the woods, living in a tree on the nuts the squirrels hid."

"That was the last time she ran away," said Peggy. "Whatever you said to her then cured her of that distressing habit, Teddy. A sort of revolution occurred in her that time. She hadn't spoken a word until then—hadn't smiled or wept or made a sound. Ned and I had her examined. We thought she was deaf and dumb, and the poor Hungarian governess spent hours trying to teach her English."

He smiled.

"And all the time it was simple stubbornness and sulks. She was absorbing everything, even if she pretended not to pay any heed. She spoke quite intelligently to you in the woods."

"She did," said he, laughing.

"It's funny now," admitted Peggy, "but that outrageous child is responsible for my gray hairs, I tell you, Teddy Trask."

"Where are they, please?"

"My goodness! Do you suppose I let them stay in?"

"Oh!"

He bent over the carved ivory menagerie on the mantel-shelf and examined the figures carefully.

"I've often thought how inconsiderate it was of me to force that child upon you, Peg," he said slowly at last. "It was taking advantage of your good nature and your blessed voluminous heart!"

"Teddy Trask," she cried, "don't you dare say another word like that—ever—ever! Do you hear? You know I was simply hungry for a baby when you brought Gipsy to me. You know I was. Kinks had just gone, and I

wasn't to have another, and you let me bring Gipsy up."

"A baby!" he cried, shaking his head at her. "Yes, but good Heavens, a dirty, sullen, little savage of nine or so—a wild Hungarian gipsy child—who started in by stealing the silverware and defending herself against washing with a fruit-knife!"

Peggy smiled wryly.

"She occupied my mind, just the same, more completely than an ordinary pink-and-white baby might have, Teddy."

"Oh, I'm not questioning that!" said he. "I dare say she's kept you busy, has worried you, bothered you, deviled you. But when I've a home of my own—"

Peggy looked up.

"Well?"

"I'll take her off your hands again."

"Perhaps she'll have a home of her own by that time. She's sixteen, Teddy."

He shrugged.

"I thought I was doing a splendid thing when I adopted her. I was twenty-two, and the mother died, beseeching me to look after her 'baby.' And I thought I was doing a fine, chivalrous, quixotic thing. I'd so much money, and she'd nothing and no one. You were a trump, Peggy, to stand by me. I shall never forget it, with the governor raging, bless him, and the newspapers shooting off fireworks! I was a young ass, Peggy!"

Peggy was listening, with a faint smile in her eyes and on her lips.

"I loved you for it all, Teddy; and when you've seen Gipsy you'll not be sorry."

He considered her.

"Has she turned out well?"

"You shall see presently. She'll be in to tea."

"Sometimes," he said slowly, "I've shuddered at the risk; I've marveled at your bigness, Peggy, taking in that nameless, dirty, uncivilized savage, not knowing what might be in her blood. A Hungarian gipsy child—one of a

wild, fierce, lawless, roving band! But you did not see them as I did in the steerage, with rings in their ears and knives in their belts—long-haired, barefooted, strung with coins and gay with colored rags."

"I saw Gipsy in her original apparel," said Peggy. "I can imagine."

"And you try to make me believe you've made a model young lady of her?"

"I shall not tell you anything," said Peggy. "You must have patience. Thank goodness! Here she is now! Judge for yourself."

A sudden tramping of feet sounded upon the veranda, and the front door opened. A young woman and three men and two dogs trooped in upon them in a wild state of good humor, the young men throwing aside their coats and crying for tea; the dogs charging the gray cat that scampered to Peggy for protection; the young woman advancing—a graceful shadow-shape against the light, her features for the moment indistinguishable—her voice rising above the clatter.

"We're starved!" she called. "Isn't tea ready, Peggy?"

It was the most curious voice Trask had ever heard—a singing voice, low and sweet, with a restless, quavering, almost tremulous, note in it—as though it were struggling to rise and soar.

Coming from those unseen lips, it thrilled him curiously; and then the next instant the flames leaped up as a log burned through, and he saw her distinctly in the flash of light, and saw at the same time by the sudden rigidity of her that she had recognized him.

She was neither tall nor short, neither stout nor thin—just lithe, just rounded—and he fancied she had no excess flesh anywhere. Her hair was no longer burned brown. It was soft and glossy, blue-black, braided decorously, and wound round her head.

Her skin was like old ivory—a sort of warm white—with a faint brownish tinge, a golden glow over it; and

deep red was in her cheeks, and her lips were carmine; and her eyes were marvelous—enormous—like live coals, with thick-curved, shadowy lashes, and fine arched brows. A round cap of corduroy edged with fur was on her head. It was tan in color, and she wore a suit of the same stuff and a tie of cherry-red silk.

"Well," he asked quietly, "do you know me?"

"Yes," she said.

"Aren't you going to say 'How do you do?'"

She drew off her gauntlet and gave him her hand, gravely her dark eyes still fixed upon him. The young fellows who came in with her were gathered about Peggy, teasing for tea and plenty of biscuits, and the dogs already held the position of vantage on the hearth-rug.

"Still sparing of words," he said, with a mournful shake of his head. "You might say that you are glad to see me again."

"I am glad," said she. "You must know that I am glad."

And then Peggy presented the three young men, and sent one of them to ring for tea. And Gipsy knelt down upon the corner of the hearth and held out her fingers toward the blaze. Her profile, lighted by the glow from the grate, was quite perfect.

Trask, watching her, was quite dazzled, and looked in vain for signs of the thin, ragged, dirty, sullen child he had known. Peggy, observing his astonishment, caught his eye and laughed frankly and glowed with pride. She had been waiting for a long time for just that expression, and here it was at last. Her heart warmed to them, and she turned to the tea-things that presently arrived with a little sigh of content.

Trask moved closer to Gipsy as the young fellows charged the tea-table, and shook his head at her in pretended consolation.

"Are you so very cold?" he asked.

"Chilled through," she answered,

looking up at him and flushing faintly. "I abhor winter. The cold gets into my blood and turns my heart to lead, and makes my limbs heavy and causes me to shake. And I've been hours in the woods, looking for spring."

"Did you find her?"

"No—only a trace or two. She's been in the neighborhood. There were a few pale little blossoms where her feet had touched the earth. And a robin was there—one of her heralds."

The young man who was named Perry turned up at that instant to ply her with tea and cakes and biscuits, which offerings she received carelessly as her just due, but graciously enough, adding to her nod of thanks:

"Bring some for Mr. Trask, too, Don; and don't forget the dogs."

"Right!" said Perry cheerfully.

"It's a long time you've been away," she said then, raising her eyes as she bit into her biscuit.

Her teeth were strong and even and white, and her hands were exquisitely molded. How could she have developed so wonderfully? he asked himself. And—

"Too long," he said.

"Did you have to stay, then?"

"I didn't know I wanted to come back until I'd got here."

"Oh!" said she, and she sipped her tea thoughtfully, her eyes resting upon him over the rim of the cup. "I see. You require to be deprived of things before you value them?"

"Perhaps," he admitted.

Perry brought tea, and he rendered thanks appropriately and turned his wondering eyes back to her.

"How astonishingly you have grown up!" he said.

The color deepened in her cheeks; her eyes met his almost shyly.

"Are you content with me?" she asked in a low voice.

"Content?" he repeated. "I—"

"It is for you I have striven to grow well," she answered simply. "It is to you I owe everything I am—everything I shall ever be."

He crimsoned.

"Nonsense! To Peggy, you mean."

But there had crept into his heart at her words a new and very welcome glow that his own denial did not quite expel.

"Peggy," said the girl gravely, "is the warm earth in which I grew. But you planted me."

"Who put such absurdities into your head?" he asked in some embarrassment. "Surely Peggy hasn't encouraged—"

"I remember how you took me from the ship and brought me here. And I remember the things you said to me in the woods. I shall never forget. Often I go back there by the big tree to think of it again."

He looked at her curiously, met and held her shy, eager glance. There was something humble, almost subservient, in her attitude toward him. And she seemed to insinuate that she owed him some sort of allegiance.

He remembered, too, that this arrangement had amused him considerably some years before; but he had been in his early twenties then, and she had been somewhere near eleven. Now she was grown up, almost marriageable; and the guardian arrangement, though infinitely more attractive than it had ever been, seemed hardly feasible.

She was catching up to him. Girls grow fast when they grow up, and so at sixteen she was not far behind him, though he was twenty-nine. He had not looked this far ahead when he had picked up the dirty little gipsy girl in the steerage of the Corsica. And Peggy had never allowed him to feel responsibility. He strove instinctively to paddle for safer waters.

"You can't measure my momentary sympathy and kindness against Peggy's years of loving care and find your debt to me greater," he cried gently. "I adopted you—yes—on impulse, but Peggy has borne the responsibility of rearing you."

"I am grateful to Peggy, too, of

course," said Gipsy softly. "Very grateful. To her, too, I owe a debt unpayable; but she would never have taken me in except for you. You braved your father's disapproval and the newspaper notoriety just because a ragged, ugly, bad-tempered, dirty gipsy waif was left in your care by a wretched, dying immigrant woman. It was a good thing, I think, for a man to do."

He flushed.

"It was an instinctive bit of generosity on the part of a careless youth who knew he had more money than he needed himself."

She raised her eyes slowly, and in them suddenly dawned the stormy look of the ragged, sulky child he had known.

"You don't approve of me," she said. "You are not content. You are wanting to deny me!"

"To deny you?"

"To disclaim me—to leave me forever with Peggy."

He looked astonished.

"Aren't you happy here?" he asked.

A curious brooding look flashed into her eyes, her brows dropped low.

"A dog is never happy save with its master," she said.

Trask opened his eyes, the blood creeping steadily upward toward his hair.

"But young ladies do not have masters," he said.

The girl smiled suddenly in rare amusement. Dimples peeped, either side of her red mouth; her white teeth flashed.

"But I am not a young lady," said she. "Nature did not make young ladies. She made women, and women are very like dogs."

She almost whispered it, with a tremendous air of confidence. And, stooping, she caught the slender-pointed head of the collie that pressed close to her and rubbed her cheek against his silky fur. Her lips curled in a faint smile; her long, curved lashes swept her cheek. Trask stood speechless,

gazing down at her. Peggy had said she was not pretty. Yes, it was true. She was not. But there was something more powerful in her—about her. Prettiness conveys something of smallness, inanimateness, shallowness. There was nothing small or inane or shallow about her.

A glance sufficed to discover strength and perfect health behind her grace and ease of movement—behind her ruddy cheeks and glowing eyes. And there was power in her eyes, too, and in the molding of her brow and chin, and in the tilt of her head. Yet she was not a big woman physically; she was dainty, slim. His troubled eyes lingered upon her.

"Women and dogs," she was murmuring softly—"both are uncertain until they are mastered; both are without a sense of honor; both move by instinct and affection; both are loyal unto death when once they are conquered."

"Who taught you this?" he asked curiously.

"The wind in the woods and the clouds in the skies, and books, and my own eyes, and the thoughts that come unbidden from the women who have come before me, who have contributed to the blood that flows through me—the great chain of my mothers, stretching back to the beginning of things. All thoughts are really messages from these unknown ancestors, are they not?"

He was startled.

"Have you made these theories yourself?"

"If they are true, my mothers have helped me. But I have had no mortal teachers. When I lie in the dark and close my eyes, or when I sit quite still and watch the stars, things come to me."

He frowned.

"Peggy should have found some girl companions for you."

"Women are useless to women. Because they are without honor and principle, you know, unless their emo-

tions are concerned. They know one another, and so of what use is friendship when it is pretense? It is only common understanding that bands them together. See? As the dogs compete for my attention, women must compete for the eyes of man. Only between Peggy and me can there be regard and friendliness, because she has won her mate, and he is to me as the roof which shelters me."

"You are not an admirer of your sex," said he, smiling.

"Nature fashions according to her needs," she answered moodily.

He considered her. She was seated well forward in the big chair, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, her eyes on the fire, and the ruddy glow played over her. Almost unknowingly he felt himself conjuring up the green woods about her as a background, and substituting a bonfire for the blazing logs, and replacing her corduroys with the brilliant hues of the gipsy dress. In spite of her attire and surroundings, the spirit of her race hovered about her.

"You are very wise, I am afraid," he said slowly. "You are not sixteen. You are many thousands of years old."

"Yes," she answered simply. "Does my wisdom displease you?"

"No. Wisdom is good."

"Not all wisdom, but such as I have. I have paid small heed to text-books. I would not be as a prisoner in a cell, who learns only the conditions existing in his prison-place. I have sought the wisdom of the world outside."

She fixed her eyes upon him. "Are you content?" she asked. "So far as you have seen, are you content?"

"Yes," Trask answered thoughtfully.

She breathed a deep sigh of relief, and turned with a faint frown as Perry approached.

"I'll take your cup, Gip, if you're through," he said. The frown faded, and she smiled, delivering the empty china as the queen might confer a ribbon. And Trask saw that if she

played slave to him, she played empress to these boys who were her playmates.

"Thanks," said Gipsy sweetly.

"More?"

"No, thanks."

As Perry vanished again she relaxed, her hands clasped about her knees, and raised wistful eyes to Trask's face.

"Why are you sad?" she asked in a low voice.

"Sad? I'm not sad. I feel happier than I've felt in ages."

"But the lines of care, the wrinkles of age, are on your face, and your eyes are tired."

"I think I am tired," he said. "I've been pursuing amusement and adventure round the world since—since I went away—and I never caught up with them. The monotony of things wearies me—"

A slow smile dawned in her eyes.

"Monotony is not tiring," she said. "It is your feverish dread of it, your feverish search for excitement, that wearies. Civilization is making you mad. Nature so destroys the race when it abandons the natural, physical existence. Come into the woods with me and find peace."

"Will you teach me?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes."

She rose, the firelight shining upon her rapt face and eager eyes.

Peggy's voice, ringing across to them, broke the spell.

"It's time you went to dress, Gip," she called. "I thought that *tête-à-tête* would never end."

The life seemed to die out of Gipsy's face; she turned listlessly toward the shadows, from whence the voice had come.

"Yes," she said again, but with a different inflection; and, with a glance back at Trask, moved slowly away from him toward the stairs, stopped to drop a word to the boys, who still surrounded Peggy, and began to ascend, her hand resting on the balustrade. Trask watched her intently

until she rounded the turn and disappeared. But she did not look back.

CHAPTER II.

The Man Who Tamed Her.

"WELL?" asked Peggy eagerly.

"Well?" repeated Trask.

"What do you think of her?"

The door had just closed on the last of Gipsy's suite, and Peggy and her brother were left alone again by the hall fire.

"It isn't the same girl at all," he said firmly. "That is never the little tigress I brought you. It's a changing."

"You are pleased, then?" she said softly, with satisfaction.

"You know very well she is an astounding person," he answered calmly. "In fact, I hardly make her out. She's bewildering."

Peggy agreed.

"And she is more than sixteen," he added.

"I sometimes think so, too. Sometimes I think she is less. I should like to know exactly."

"What difference?"

"I should like to know all about her. I am sure she comes of fine stock. Some day we may be able to find out. I had a portrait made of her, you know, when she first came."

"She bears herself like an empress," he acknowledged.

"Perhaps there is royal blood in her. She may have been stolen by the gipsies of whom you got her. Stranger things have happened."

"No. The woman who bequeathed her to me was wild enough over her to be her mother, really. Don't romance."

Peggy looked disappointed.

"Does she resemble the woman at all?"

"N-no. But she may look like her father, whoever he was. And don't forget that if you dig you're as likely to turn up something unpleasant as

something desirable. There are skeletons buried as well as treasure."

Peggy shook her head wisely.

"Wild gipsy children don't grow up like that," she said, "even in desirable surroundings."

"Well," said he, "we'll probably never know any more about her, so there's no use surmising. What does the village think of her?"

"The men are in love with her already; the girls meekly follow her, and criticize her unkindly when she is not about; animals and old people adore her; mothers of marriageable sons distrust and fear her."

"Marriage?" he gasped. "Surely that child isn't thinking of marriage already?"

"Two men have already proposed to her. Girls are marrying earlier than they used to. Besides, she has matured early, or else she is older than we think. At any rate, I am not so sure marriage would be a bad idea. There's rather too much of the savage in her yet. She's inclined to be lawless. The difficulty is that none of the men who have wanted her, so far, have been able to master her. She requires the controlling hand."

And Peggy rose and began to move about restlessly.

"She's the sort of woman men lose their heads over," she went on slowly. "Even the governor's a victim."

"Father?"

She nodded, smiling.

"Didn't I write you? He came on when I was ill two years ago. Naturally he had to meet her. She would not leave my bedside, except to go to the woods and bring back all sorts of herbs and things for compresses. And I must admit that some of them were wonderfully effective, in spite of the doctor's amusement."

He opened his eyes wide.

"At any rate," went on Peggy, "it was inevitable that she and father should meet. They've been endless chums ever since."

"Father and Gipsy? And after the

things he's said! After the way he's held out against her!"

She laughed at his astonishment.

"It was father sent her to boarding-school. He insisted that she have the necessary training so that he could introduce her into society. He chose one of those fashionable finishing schools, and she went to please him. But she was expelled the first term."

"Expelled?" He was dismayed.

"For leaving the dormitory without permission. The only exercise they get is accomplished in the gymnasium, except for a sedate walk every day, the girls going two by two in charge of the instructors. Naturally, Gipsy couldn't endure it. She got to slipping off whenever the spirit moved her. And once she met the chief instructor. Then she was expelled. He wanted to send her somewhere else, or get a social governess for her, but she talked him out of it. So he comes down once a week to bring her candy and things and chaff her about her beaux."

"The governor?"

"The governor," answered Peggy. "I believe if he were twenty years younger he'd enter the lists himself. He's wrapped up in her—and Ned's as bad. They both do their best to spoil her."

"Ned?" cried Trask. "She seems to have conquered universally."

Peggy moved slowly back toward him.

"Do you remember the night you brought her?" said she. "Do you remember how lonely and neglected and agonizingly unhappy she looked, and how we were all running about, trying to amuse her and please her and make friends for her? She's kept us at it ever since—all of us, every one she comes in contact with."

"Clever girl," said Trask.

"That's the strangest part of it," said Peggy. "She doesn't even know the power she wields. Mercy! Is that the time?" She regarded the big clock in the corner, astonished. "Now I've wasted another half-hour, and I'm

aching to hear all about your journeyings."

"There's nothing to tell," he answered, shrugging. "I just went from place to place, and was everlastingly bored."

"No love-affairs?" asked Peggy curiously. "You still haven't found her?"

"Who?"

"The right one."

She turned on the first step to look at him.

"Oh," said he slowly, "there *was* one—there *is* one, in fact. Maybe she's not the right one. I don't know; I couldn't decide. We got on beautifully together. She's coming over next month."

"If you couldn't decide," said Peggy—"if there was the question of a doubt in your mind, she isn't the right one. Who is she?"

"The Hon. Margery Brookes."

Peggy frowned thoughtfully.

"You're not engaged?"

"No—not formally. There's a sort of understanding, to be confirmed or broken next month."

"Think it over, Teddy," said she. "It's better to stay single than to make a mistake. Marriage can be the happiest or the unhappiest institution in the world, according to conditions."

"But one gets so beastly lonely."

"The extreme of loneliness is to be with some one who is not congenial, and to be unable to get away or to seek some one else."

"But we are congenial."

"It is easier to be congenial when you are leading lives apart than when you are leading the same life. Weigh the matter, Teddy."

"I will, naturally," said Trask.

"And contrast, compare," said Peggy, and then she went on slowly up the stairs.

Trask waited for Ned, and there the two of them sat, talking and smoking in peaceful content until Gipsy descended, startling in a gown of scarlet stuff,

edged with black fur and rich with gold embroidery.

She had black maline and a gold bandeau in the thick braids of her hair, and the toilet, unusual as it was for a girl of her age, set off her beauty to perfection. Warm-blooded, she had developed early, and she looked more than twenty in a trained gown, with her shoulders bare, and long black-pearl earrings in her ears.

"I'm dreadfully disappointed," she said sulkily as she approached. "I came down early so that I could have a little while alone with you, and you haven't begun to dress yet."

Trask smiled; Duncan laughed. He was a pleasant-faced, short, stocky man, approaching the waistlineless age.

"Her string of beaus is not complete," said he. "Even her guardian must fall victim."

She ignored the gibe, shrugged, her eyes luminous.

"Shall we absolve him from dressing to-night? Or wager that he can't manage in ten minutes?"

"Give me ten minutes," urged Trask.

"Will you wager your dessert?"

"Yes."

"I can always eat two portions," said she. "Go, then."

He scaled the stairs, followed more slowly by Ned, merrily bantering, and Gipsy was left alone. She wandered toward the music-room, seated herself before the piano, and began to improvise. She had lost track of the time when his voice sounded behind her.

"How beautifully you play," he said. "What was it?"

She looked up, slightly startled.

"Nothing. I don't know. I was following a tune in my head. Is your ten minutes up?"

"Long ago. I've been standing here more than that, listening. Anyway, I don't care for dessert."

She turned.

"Then why did you wager for that?"

"I didn't. I hurried, so that we could talk."

She smiled contentedly.

"Yes," said she, "let us talk. But not to hide ourselves. Let us talk to reveal ourselves, each to the other; and let us waste no time on things which do not count."

"What things do not count?" he asked.

"What others do or think or say. Only what you and I do must concern us."

"Very well," said he; "it is agreed. Now what shall we talk about first?"

"If there is nothing in your mind to say, say nothing. Do not invent trivialities to fill the silence. That is for the mad, civilized ones. If we understand each other silence has no terrors for us."

Her fingers returned to the keys—wandered absently into a strange, weird, dreamy melody.

"Do you play by note?" he asked.

"I can; or I can play unwritten music that drifts through my head. But I prefer the violin, and above that my voice."

"Sing to me."

She turned her eyes upon him, and began softly to sing. The words were unintelligible; the music was strange and wild and sweet and easily understood. It was a love-song that she sang. Love was in her eyes and in the curves of her lips, in the timbre and tone of her voice, in its hushed tenderness, in its vibrant insistence. He sat motionless, awed; and at the end caught his breath with difficulty—and had nothing to say.

"You understood?" she asked in a low voice.

"Not the words. What language was it?"

"None, I think. But you understood. I saw it in your face. You followed in spite of my mutterings."

He stared.

"You weren't singing words?"

"No. I was making sounds—singing sounds. But I made the music

speak to you." The warm blood suffused her cheeks, her eyes were glowing. "I knew you would understand. When you are bored, come to me. I shall make you see pictures. When you are tired, I can rest you. When your heart aches, I can make you weep."

Her fingers still wandered on over the keys, weaving strange harmonies.

"You are wonderful," he said. "Who taught you all this?"

She shrugged, and played on without answering. And he was silent, falling under the spell of her music. He heard the wind in the trees, and the rush of water over rounded stones, and the songs of birds, and the marching of many feet, and the howling of wolves. He saw the sunlit fields, the green cleared spaces where the sunlight creeps between thousands of green leaves.

"Do you follow?" she asked in a low voice.

He nodded.

"Here is the gipsy band," she cried—"my people singing as they make camp."

And through the strange air she wove wild gipsy music—intoxicating in its lilt and swing. As it swept on to the close the clapping of hands sounded from the doorway, and Ned called: "Bravo, Gip!" enthusiastically.

"What was it?" inquired Peggy breathlessly.

Gipsy rose slowly to her feet, a faint frown in her eyes.

"Nothing," she said. "A jumble of chords I put together as I went on."

"Yours?" cried Peggy. "Why, it was wonderful! I never heard you do anything of that sort before."

"No," said Gipsy. "I have never done it before save for my own ears."

"There's a fortune waiting for you," said Ned, "whenever you want to claim it."

"I don't care about fortunes," said she quietly, the frown still in her eyes.

And then the butler announced din-

ner. Trask was at a loss to account for her sudden ill-humor, but the others paid no heed to it, and in spite of her silence a lively banter was kept going by the other three. But Trask's eyes returned to her downcast face again and again, in defiance of Peggy's warning head-shake; and immediately afterward he followed her up the stairs and caught her on the landing. There was a broad seat there, piled with cushions, and overhead there were draperies, and a lamp burned dimly.

"What is it?" he asked quietly, detaining her.

"What?" She turned a blank, questioning face toward him.

"Why are you acting like this? You are for all the world like the little girl I brought here years ago. Surely you do not sulk?"

"Yes," she answered, frowning. "I do. Often. When things annoy me."

"But what was there to annoy you?"

She turned abruptly to face him.

"What?" she repeated. "You heard them. They listened!"

Her eyes, wide and very black, held his.

"They listened?" he repeated, astonished. "But—of course. Why not? It was marvelous music."

She gasped.

"Yes, but not for them. It was not for them," she cried. "They knew it was not. I had never made it for them. I made it for you—only for you—and they eavesdropped!"

Tears hung upon her dark lashes.

"It is unfair to eavesdrop. Peggy herself taught me. In the laws of man it is as wrong as taking what is not one's own. Even if what is being said is interesting, or if it is important for one to know, one must not eavesdrop. And I was playing for your ears alone. I was telling the story for you—making the pictures for you. And they—listened!"

Trask regarded her in some distress.

"Come here and sit beside me," he

said. Very slowly she obeyed, crossed the landing, sank down by his side on the broad seat, among the satin cushions. Her brows were still drawn down rebelliously.

"To most people," said he quietly, "music is pleasing sound—not a means of expression. To you music is a medium for the expression of ideas—thoughts—pictures. Is it not?"

She nodded.

"But to Peggy and Ned it is simply a combination of charming sounds. If they vaguely realize that it may have some deeper significance they are utterly unable to interpret it."

"I know," she said, "it is like speaking to a baby. He cannot understand; but the sound of a voice contents him."

"Exactly. So you should not mind their listening any more than you would mind a baby's."

"But they have intelligence. Now and then some phrase might convey to them—something."

Trask smiled.

"Peggy and Ned listened," he said, "because they hadn't a suspicion in the world that you'd mind. Peggy used to play years ago." Gipsy nodded and shuddered. He smiled. "Well, she had never the least objection to any one's hearing. She played as a parrot talks—memorizing, repeating, with no intention of conveying anything. Many people are 'musical' in just that way. It did not occur to Ned and Peggy that you might have other views on the subject."

She studied him thoughtfully.

"So you see they are quite innocent of any desire to offend you or to eavesdrop. And so you must forgive them."

She drew a long breath.

"The next time you desire me to play," she said, "we will go into the woods, with my violin!"

"You won't play again before any one else?"

"No. You would not have me talk a foreign language before people who cannot understand?"

"By all means, if the sounds amused them."

"But I have no desire to amuse them. And I might make them understand."

"And in the woods," she said mysteriously, "I shall sing to you—not as I sang to-night. I only whispered then. In the woods I shall sing out—I shall set my voice free—even more free than in the singing-master's studio."

He looked at her slim, little figure and smiled.

"Not too loud," said he, "or the people for miles about will come running to see."

"Not where we shall go," she said confidently. "We shall go miles away from anywhere. And there will be no people there. I don't like people. They interrupt and interfere and set false values on things, and worship the wrong gods. We shall find a place where the sea is very deep all about us—and where there are rocks so that no ships can pass—and we will live on fruit and berries and nuts and the fruits of the earth—and we will build a house out of logs—and we will bathe in the sea and dry ourselves in the sun. We will have couches of green leaves and fresh flowers, with nothing over us but the stars. And I will sing to you and play to you. And no one else shall hear."

Her eyes were shining eagerly—a strange impatience in them.

"It sounds alluring," said Trask gravely.

"Will you come?"

She was breathing swiftly, unevenly, through parted lips.

"Would the glamour last? Would the joy of it all endure? Or would we tire and sulk and long to be free?"

She sighed.

"You are afraid," she said.

"I tire so easily," he admitted. "It is not my fault. I wouldn't, if I could be otherwise. So you see, I am considering your happiness as well as mine."

"I should keep you content," she said. "You have yet to know me."

"And I am so much older than you and so much less enthusiastic."

"Time is an imaginary thing," she said—"man-made."

He considered her thoughtfully, flushing.

"Would you be willing to risk this island thing with me?" he asked.

"Yes," she said simply.

"Why?"

"Because my instinct directs me."

"It may be a wrong instinct—a will-o'-the-wisp guiding you into danger," he cautioned.

"Instincts cannot be wrong. Nature endows us with them. Only the false impulses man himself creates are wrong ones."

"But perhaps there may be other men who arouse this same instinct of trust in you."

"Possibly. Nature must guard our happiness. In safeguarding it she assures the continuance of the race. But if you and I were on this island the possibility of others need not matter. And they would always be second choice."

"If there only were such an island," said he, sighing, "and if I could be quite sure of myself and of you."

"Perhaps," she said, "in time you may be induced to risk it. So we might as well discover the island anyway. Come down to the library and we'll find a map."

"If you will promise not to consider it encouragement," said Trask, smiling.

They descended the stairs in high good humor, to be captured by Peggy at the foot and haled off for auction bridge. A number of people had come in from near-by places, and tables had been set up in the card-rooms. And that was the last opportunity they had to talk together that night. For Gipsy begged off, and Trask was compelled to play, and the last he saw of her she was cooking something or other in a chafing-dish in the hall, surrounded by

nine attentive, well-looking, adoring youths, all younger than he.

CHAPTER III.

The Man Who Loved Her.

SOME bits of gravel, rattling against his window, awoke him the next morning long before he was ready to awake. A horrified glance at the clock informed him that it was a quarter to seven, and when he had (upon the insistence of more gravel) crossed the room, wrapped in his lounge-robe, and had thrust a tousled and inquiring head from the window, Gipsy greeted him from the driveway below—a smiling, cheerful, trimly habited Gipsy, as fresh as though fatigue and the necessity for sleep were unknown to her.

"Good morning," said she, with a nod of her head. "Do you ride?"

"Horseback?"

"To be sure!"

He nodded slowly.

"Hurry, then," said she. "I'll get the mounts while you dress, but don't dawdle." And away she sped, followed by the dogs, her habit flapping, the white cockade in her three-cornered hat bobbing wildly. Trask yawned, watched her out of sight through approving eyes, and busily set about toileting.

And a half hour later or less they were galloping down the broad driveway, away from the sleeping house of Duncan.

"It's a pity you think you would tire of my company," said Gipsy sadly. "This is such a splendid opportunity to run away. No one will be up for hours except Ned, and he hasn't time to think of anything but trains in the morning. We'd get a splendid start."

"But your nine young men would be after us by noon."

"What nine young men?"

"The nine who were about you last night."

"Were there nine?"

"There were. And if the rocks

about our island were as deadly as you planned they'd all flounder there and perish, and their ghosts would haunt us, and we'd not have a nice time at all."

"And they're very nice boys," said Gipsy gravely. "Perhaps we'd better put off our trip for a day or two until I can break the news to them and persuade them to give me up."

"You'll never be able to persuade them," said he.

"Perhaps they are as fearful of risking me as you are."

"I didn't say I was fearful of risking you!"

"You said you'd find me so monotonous you'd hate the sight of me in no time."

"I didn't say that!" he cried indignantly. "As a matter of fact, I'm almost certain I'd not get enough of your company, no matter how long we'd be together. But I can recall similar convictions. Well, maybe not such strong ones, but—"

"Oh," said she, stopping short to stare at him. "So you've been looking about you?"

"All my life," said he.

"Even after I turned up?"

"I wanted to be sure," he assured her gravely, "and you mightn't have fancied me, you know, and I'd no idea you were going to grow up so fast. And a man likes to acquire a certain proficiency in love-making, for fear the fellow who does make love to every girl he meets will walk off with the object of his affections."

"Oh," said she, apparently mollified. And they rode on. And after an instant's silence she said solemnly, "I wish I were a thought-reader!"

"Why?" he asked wonderingly.

"I need never be jealous then, without cause."

"Jealous?"

She flushed.

"Are you jealous?"

"Every one is when he cares for any one else. I want every thing the man I love has to give. No other

woman may have so much as a thought that belongs to me."

"That's selfish," he said.

"No. I expect to give in return as much as I demand. I could not be contented to give or receive less than all."

They went on for an instant in silence.

"What are you thinking?" she demanded presently.

He looked up, startled.

"I was thinking what a capacity for suffering you have, and what a capacity for joy. And that it all lies in the hands of some worthless brute of a man."

She regarded him sidewise, from under lowered lashes.

"I would rather love a man who would tire of me, and hurt me, than marry a man who would adore me, and be good to me, but whom I could not love."

He turned to look at her thoughtfully as she rode beside him. The dark color was high in her cheeks; little curling tendrils of dark hair blew free beneath her black hat. Her eyes were shining, her head was thrown up high.

"Well?" she asked.

"I was wondering what sort of life you will have. You seem to be a bark designed to weather stormy seas."

She frowned slightly and her eyes grew shadowy—mysterious.

"I used to read my fortune," she said. "But Peggy made me stop. She says you would not approve."

"How do you read it?" he asked, smiling.

"Many ways—with cards—from the palm—or the crystal."

"Who taught you?"

She shrugged. It was a convenient answer when she did not know any other.

"I seem to have known always," she said. "When we go back may I try?"

He hesitated.

"If Peggy is opposed—"

"She is afraid. Surely it were

wiser to know, don't you think? I am brave enough to know. Please."

Her dark eyes were appealing.

"Tell it from your palm, then, before we go back. And we'll keep it a secret from Peggy."

"But the palm tells only the traits," she protested. "I want to forecast the future, and one must have the cards or crystal for that. The crystal is best. The cards are vaguer. One must interpret them—but the crystal—in it one can see clearly." Her eyes were afire with eagerness. "That is why Peggy is afraid. I saw in it her illness two years ago."

"Oh," said he dubiously. "Perhaps we'd better have the cards, then."

She seemed only half content, but instantly pulled up and turned her horse.

"Let us go back, then, before she is up," said Gipsy. "I'll run you a race!"

He accepted the challenge promptly, and off they sped at breakneck gait, galloping against the wind.

Ned had gone when they arrived at the house and dismounted and rang the stable bell, so they had the breakfast-room to themselves. And while Trask ordered, Gipsy ran up-stairs to change her habit for an old-gold morning gown, decorated with jade, and to get a pack of cards.

He made her wait until breakfast was over, in spite of her impatience, and then they adjourned to the hallway, and squatting on the floor before the fire she shuffled the cards and cut them and divided them, and laid them out in a circle about her, and her eyes were wide and serious as she studied them.

"My wish-card is surrounded by obstacles," she said in a half-frightened voice. "And there are many journeys before me before I can reach my heart's desire. And a woman menaces me—a tall, fair woman. And I must cross water. And a strange man will befriend me in need." She looked up thoughtfully. "It's a dark

man—and you are rather dark—but hardly strange."

He was watching her in some amusement, she was so terribly serious.

"There's a letter," she said. "That seems to be the cause of all the trouble. It's a letter from far away."

"Talking about letters," said Trask, "when does the mail come?"

She looked up vaguely.

"It's probably in now—on the table over there," and as he strolled across toward the table she bent over the cards again. He looked up with a little narrowing of the eyes as he selected one with his own name on the front and a foreign postmark, and then smiled at his own absurdity as he ripped open the flap. But as he read a little flush crept up in his cheeks and he frowned.

A long silence fell between them, then, broken only by the crackling of the logs in the grate. Gipsy still studied the cards, her lips moving wordlessly, a frown in her eyes. Trask reread his letter, crushed it in one hand, and stood watching her. Then very slowly he moved back to her side.

"What else have you discovered?" he asked.

She raised wide, anxious eyes.

"Something is threatening," she said. "Dark clouds. It's all very vague and hard to understand; but there's a letter in it, and a fair woman, and crossing the waters, and a great deal of money, and new friends, and material success, but unhappiness, and mountains of obstacles."

"Anything about me?" he asked.

"N-nothing that I can see, unless you are the dark man who befriends me in need. But he is a stranger, and you are not a stranger to me."

"Am I not?" he asked idly.

"Certainly not. I—I feel nearer to you than to any one else in the world."

She looked at the cards again thoughtfully.

"There isn't a letter for me, is there?" she asked.

"No. Do the cards say the letter will be for you?"

"N-no. But I don't see—" She gathered them all together impatiently.

"Please let me read the crystal," she begged.

"What you learn may only make you unhappy. Better leave things as they are. If we were intended to know the future, we'd not have to look into crystals. Nature would have arranged it as she arranges for us to know the past."

"But she has given me the power to foresee."

He was frowning down at her.

"I'm not sure it's wise to exercise that power, though."

"Please. It will make the cards quite clear. Please."

"Very well," he said slowly.

She regained her feet in a flash, was across the room unlocking the cabinet in the corner. From the top drawer she drew the crystal, a globe of shining glass mounted upon an ebony frame. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement, her eyes burned.

"Do you want more light?" he asked interestedly.

"No."

She sank down upon a low stool by the fire, took the crystal upon her lap, and fixed her eyes upon it steadily. Her head drooped slightly forward, her breathing grew quieter—more regular—and her figure became tense, almost rigid. The silence in the hallway was absolute. And in the glow of the open fire sat this strange, slender girl, her eyes fixed as though in fascination on the shining globe in her hands. A shiver crept up Trask's spine. Her stillness frightened him a little. And so a long moment or two went by.

"Gipsy!" he called uncertainly.

She paid no heed—sat staring, motionless, seeming not to breathe, her eyes fixed and glittering, her face pale.

"Gipsy!" he called; "*Gipsy!*" In swift uneasiness he caught her arm and shook her gently. She did not stir—seemed not to hear.

"Gipsy!" he cried hoarsely, and snatched the crystal from her hands, raised it, sent it crashing into the open grate. It fell among the blazing logs, and the flames closed over it. She uttered a low, drawn, agonized cry and leaped to her feet, shuddering, her hands over her eyes.

"What is it?" he asked in a whisper. "Gipsy!" And caught her by the shoulders—tried to look into her face. She was still trembling, shaken.

"Noth-ing!" she gasped. "You startled me. You— The suddenness hurt my eyes. It is nothing."

"Let me see," he urged more gently. His terror seemed to pass with the sound of her voice.

"Wait! I am blinded from staring. In an instant it will be gone. It is always so." He drew her closer, and she buried her face against him, sobbed once or twice, and was still. And for some inexplicable reason he began to tremble. She seemed no longer a child as she crouched there, almost in his arms.

There was a strange, sweet fragrance about her—the fresh fragrance of the woods. And she was slim and slight and helpless looking and curiously beautiful. He mastered his voice and spoke, hard driven, fighting against the impulse that had seized him to crush her close in his embrace.

"Gipsy," he cried restlessly, "I am frightened about you. I shouldn't have given in to you. I should have known Peggy would be wiser than I."

"No, no," she cried softly; "it is nothing! The blindness has passed. See?" And she raised her face, but it was deathly pale and her eyes were big and dark with fear.

"You are not telling me the truth!" he cried, terrified.

"Yes! The pain is gone. It is what I have seen that troubles me now."

He was still holding her by the shoulders, peering keenly into her face.

"What you have seen?" he repeated slowly.

She nodded.

"What?"

She drew a long, difficult breath.

"The fair woman," she said—"the tall fair one, riding with you in the lane. You two were lost, or the others were, and her horse went lame and threw her. And you lifted her." She was clenching her hands, and there were tears in her eyes.

"It isn't possible!" he cried. "Some one has told you. Peggy?"

"Does Peggy know that you have made love to this woman?" asked Gipsy slowly. There had come a sudden dreadful coldness in her face and voice.

"Gipsy," he cried gently, "you aren't suffering on that account?" He was studying her face anxiously.

"Does Peggy know?" she asked.

"I told her yesterday that—that there is a sort of understanding."

"An understanding?" she breathed.

"That was before I came back—before I had seen you. I mean, I thought of marrying her. And I told her. And it was understood that—that she was to follow me in a month, and we were to have that long to think it over and decide. There was no engagement then."

"Then?" she asked lifelessly.

"This morning," he went on gravely, "while you were busy with the cards, I found a letter from her, saying that she finds she does care, and that she is crossing at once."

She wrenched herself free from him, drew back, ghastly white; but quiet, strangely quiet.

"Have you forgotten," she asked slowly, "something you said to me in the woods, years and years ago, when I ran away and you found me?"

He was watching her anxiously.

"Something I said?" he repeated dully.

"That if I would be a good girl—if I should obey Peggy and grow well—I should be your woman?"

"Gipsy!" he cried. "Yes, of course I remember. You had some strange

tribal notion—some— Good Heavens, you remembered that promise all these years? You—Gipsy? You took it seriously?"

"You did not mean it seriously?" she said.

"Seriously? You were a child! Why, Gipsy, I—I never thought of it again. I took the first means to assure myself of your safety and obedience."

She uttered a long-drawn sigh.

"I see," she whispered; "it was a promise to a child. It meant nothing. You never thought of it again, and I have never ceased to think of it. I—everything that I have done has been for you. Every thought has circled about you. Every dream I have ever had has been builded about you."

"Gipsy!" he whispered wonderingly, drawing nearer.

"I had no sense of humor. Gipsies haven't, as a rule. And I had seen children younger than I sold for wives. So I believed you, and it was a jest. But, Peggy—Peggy, let me believe you. Was it a jest with her, too?"

"Peggy?" he asked curiously.

She shrugged.

"It doesn't matter," she said. And she stood still and white, her eyes upon the fire. Her lips moved wordlessly.

"My mountain of difficulties," was what she said.

"Gipsy!" he whispered

She moved slowly toward the stairs without heeding him, her eyes still wearing that far-away look.

"Gipsy!" he called again, appealing. But she did not turn. He watched her until she vanished around the turn in the stairs. Then he advanced upon the bell and rang it vigorously. Of the servant who answered he asked for his sister, and was directed to her little boudoir. He burst in upon Peggy there a few minutes later, breathing hard.

"Peggy," he cried, "for Heaven's sake, go and find Gipsy! A horrible thing has happened!"

Peggy turned pale.

"What?" she asked fearfully.

He stood over her, his arms folded.

"I let her read the crystal. I'd no idea what effect it has on her. And she saw things."

Peggy nodded slowly, her eyes narrowing.

"Did you tell her what I told you about Madge Brookes?"

"No," said Peggy.

"She says she seemed to see the whole thing in the glass. I can't believe such rot, Peg; but she described things?"

Peggy nodded. "I—knew," she said.

"She's done that sort of thing before?"

"Once or twice. I stopped it."

He was striding about restlessly.

"Years ago—that time she was lost," he said, "and I found her in the woods—I tried to bribe her to come back here and stay. I offered her the most brilliant bribes—everything I could think of that a normal child would crave. I offered her beautiful clothes and dolls and a pony and new earrings."

"Yes," said Peggy, flushing.

"It seems her knowledge of gift-giving placed a singular construction on it. She assumed that I was intending to make her my wife—when she was grown, of course. She called it 'my woman.' I presume her knowledge of gipsy institutions misled her. I perceived that the idea appealed to her, and I naturally took advantage. I told her that if she would go back and obey you, and grow up into a strong, clean, beautiful young lady, she should be 'my woman.' For a moment or two the episode amused me. I'd forgotten it long ago, but she never did. Peggy—she has grown up believing that I meant that promise."

"Yes," said Peggy, "I know—I—I am partly to blame for that."

"You?" he cried, astonished.

"Yes. The only way I could persuade her to do things was to say you approved or you preferred or you desired it. She was never easy to man-

age, except in that way. And I took advantage. And as she developed I—I thought it quite possible—"

She stopped short, and their eyes met.

He resumed his restless pacing.

"But she's learned about Margery," he said slowly, "and it's knocked her out—killed her faith in me. I—I let her see that I had made the promise to her only in jest. How in God's name could I imagine a child like that would have remembered—would have trusted me—taken me seriously?"

Peggy rose.

"I'll go to her. It may be straightened out yet."

He flushed uncomfortably.

"And to add zest to the situation," he said, "I'd a note from Margery. She has decided to accept me and is sailing at once."

Peggy halted in the doorway.

"But you are not in love with her!"

He hesitated.

"As nearly as I can tell," he said slowly, "I'm beginning to be very much in love with Gipsy."

She sighed in quick relief.

"Then everything will come out all right. Wait here until I send for you."

She went out and closed the door behind her, and Trask waited. The pink and blue daintiness of the room annoyed him. A clock on Peggy's desk ticked monotonously.

He went to the window and stood looking out and suddenly he remembered Gipsy's island, and his heart began to beat more quickly. The opening of the door behind him attracted his attention. He turned to face Peggy again.

"She won't answer me," said Peggy. "And she's locked the door so I can't get in. We shall just have to wait until her first anger melts. A sort of iciness seems to form when things displease her and there is nothing to do but wait for the thaw."

"She'll not hurt herself?" he cried anxiously.

"No. Chloe's with her."

"Who is Chloe?"

"An old Southern negress. She was a laundress until Gipsy fancied her for maid. Have patience. Things are certain to come out all right now."

"I've a horrible sort of feeling that they mightn't," said Trask gloomily.

Luncheon passed with no signs of Gipsy. Mammy Chloe took the luncheon tray from Peggy at the door and begged her not to come in—and again at dinner time. Poor Peggy was distressed and Trask was beginning to worry, but they decided to let her alone, at least for that night.

In the morning, when they knocked upon the door, there was no answer, but a turn of the knob disclosed the interior of the rooms at a glance. The bed had not been occupied, and Gipsy was gone. She had left behind her only a note for the governor:

DEAR DADDY:

After all, you are not to be my real daddy. Teddy was only jesting and he doesn't love me, but some one else—a fair, tall girl, across the water somewhere. Please don't try to find me. Even if you should, I couldn't come back—not now, at least. And I shall try to hide from you. But some day I will come back to you again—I promise. Until then, I hope she will love you and be as good a daughter—no, not as good, but nearly as good a daughter—to you as your devoted Gipsy would have been.

And that was all. There was not a word about Peggy or Trask.

CHAPTER IV.

The Wanderer.

TRASK senior cut short his Southern trip and headed in hot haste for Peggy's, utterly unmanned by the news of Gipsy's disappearance. And on the way he communicated with his favored private detective association and set them on Gipsy's trail.

But they sought her in vain, for not Trask senior nor Peggy nor Trask himself could give them clues. They

could not imagine where she would go in this great emergency, save into the woods. And the woods are wide.

So day followed day, and Trask and his father and Peggy wandered about the house with the desolate feeling that death had been among them. And the dogs were restless and seemed to miss her, too. All the young men, who dropped in, were told she had been called away unexpectedly and that no one knew how long she would stay.

Eventually the governor fled the scene, to carry his wrath and sarcasm to New York, where his favored detective association might benefit, and Trask wrote a long letter to Madge Brookes. He had cabled in answer to her letter, bidding her await a letter from him. The letter, when it was written, was as clear and concise and as honest as he could make it.

He wrote:

DEAR MADGE:

When I was in England, when we arrived at an understanding that you were to let me know in a month, I was not free to make any such arrangement. This is a painful thing I am compelled to write you, but better a little pain now than endless pain later on. There was a girl before I ever met you, Madge—a girl I had put out of my mind—and I love her. That is the simple truth, Madge. Please try to understand and forgive me in time. It wouldn't be fair or right or even wise for us to go on—you and I—when this other one will always be first in my heart. A man's wife should be first, and if he marry under any other condition he is taking a cowardly advantage—an unfair advantage, Madge—for he is demanding more that he can ever give.

Madge, when I suggested our marrying, I did not know how much this other one meant to me. I have learned now. But there is that much in my favor that I did not know when I spoke to you. I did not love you with a story-book love. I told you that, but I thought we could be good pals and that we'd get on. And we might have, Madge, if this other one had not been. But, Madge, I've learned I am capable of the other sort of love—the story-book kind—and so I can't ask you to take what belongs to somebody else.

So long as I thought my heart empty—belonging to nobody—I felt free to ask you to take it for yours. But now that I know it has a tenant, Madge—a living, breathing tenant—it is no longer mine to give.

So perhaps we'd better just forget, Madge, and perhaps you can bring yourself to forgive me in time, and to believe that I've tried to do the wisest thing for us all.

Remorsefully,
TRASK.

It was a difficult letter to write and he felt a criminal as he sealed it and sent it off, but time and anxiety over Gipsy gradually helped him forget, and the realization that Madge Brookes had loved him no more than he had loved her eased his mind. After all, he was doing her a favor. For some one was certain to come sooner or later—some one who would love her as the man who marries a woman must love her.

Meanwhile, spring gave way to summer, and Trask, walking the woods with her dogs, tried to feel near her. He fancied her roaming, too, wandering on under green trees and dreaming of him, even as he dreamed of her. He fancied her sleeping on the warm earth, the breeze cooling her cheek and rippling her hair, the stars watching over her. And he thanked God that she had taken Mammy Chloe.

And he lived in hope, believing that promise to his father that some time she would come back. For she had never broken her word. So every time the door bell or telephone rang he started up, staring, trembling, waiting. Every time there was a letter for him he scanned the writing with eager eyes, his heart galloping. But always in vain.

Peggy tried to comfort him, assuring him over and over that Gipsy was well able to take care of herself; that she was strong and wise, and that it was better for her to have some knowledge of the world and of men that she might know her own heart. The love she had given him was only a girl's light fancy, perhaps, she suggested.

But this Trask hotly denied, and eventually unable to endure more of that suspense and aimless waiting, began a search on his own account. He tried to trace Mammy Chloe, but she had neither kith nor kin with whom she kept in touch, and so that proved futile.

Then he reasoned that Gipsy might make use of her musical ability in order to earn a living, but Gipsy had already gone to Paris, and so he found no trace of her.

Then—well, it was easier to search than to do nothing, so he wandered about from one end of the earth to the other, first frequenting the cities and crowded places, and staring into the faces of the women he passed; eventually going off alone to Egypt and India to shoot, to ride, to do anything that would keep his mind off her.

And abruptly he would hurry back to Peggy's, certain of finding some word from her. But always there was none, and he would start out again, disturbed by the thought that she might be ill, in want, in danger, or in trouble of some sort.

It was three years, however, before he found trace of her. Then it was a beautiful art-photo that met his eyes in an illustrated paper:

"Mlle. Gipsy Wilde, pupil of DeReszke, who will make her début in 'Carmen' next week."

It was a French paper. He was in London at the time, but he started at once for Paris, struck by the resemblance of the photograph to Gipsy, and the similarity of names, and on the night of her opening performance he sat transfixed as Paris fell at her feet.

When it was over, and he had watched her drive away, hidden from her eyes by the shadows of the neighboring buildings, he walked the streets all night. He could not seek her out now. If she had been struggling—in need—it would have been possible. But she had set herself above him. It was for her to come back to him now.

So he watched her from afar, fol-

lowing her on her wanderings through the different capitals, never missing a performance, but hiding always from her sight. And sometimes he sent her roses with no card attached. But she received so many roses. She never knew.

But to go back to Gipsy. She sat in a day coach of the Pittsburgh Special, Mammy Chloe beside her. The rest of the less-important members of the Arden Comic Opera Troupe were somewhere behind her, entirely ignored. Some of the principals had sleeping accommodations, but the management did not provide them, and Gipsy's cash possessions had been depleted to such an extent during the week that she had remained in New York looking for work; that she had speedily recognized the necessity of hoarding the remainder against the proverbial "rainy day." And when two must live on a weekly salary of eighteen dollars there is rarely enough left for luxuries. And sleeping accommodations were luxuries when one could stretch out in one's comfortable furs and sleep in the day coach for no additional payment.

Gipsy had determined at the start that she could not give mammy up. The old colored woman was devoted to her and she served, if not as a protector, at least as an anchor of a sort—as a ballast. Naturally there was no part in the repertoire of light operas that she could play, but occasionally she managed to do a bit of washing for some one or to lend a hand here and there, and earn a few extra dollars.

Gipsy's washing she did as a matter of course, the hotels supplying (unwittingly) soap and warm water and power to heat the electric iron, or gas to heat the old-fashioned sort, for there was not always electricity. The hotels were not of the best, as the towns were mostly one-night stands.

Arden's Comic Opera Troupe was an organization of about third rate. There were three fairly well-known

but rather oldish singers among them, and a number of chorus people from first-class winter shows, who were glad to obtain any sort of employment over the hot weather. But there was no one, save the little thin, mild-eyed musical director, whom Gipsy permitted herself to know.

It was he who had argued in favor of engaging her, in spite of her admission that she had no experience. Her voice had caused him to open his eyes to their widest extent. And because he had a dreadful racking cough, and because he was mild and gentle and uncomplaining, she had made friends with him.

It was necessary to speak with some one occasionally—some one, that is, besides mammy, and he very evidently had come of gentle stock. He did not storm and curse as all the others did. And he took off his hat when he addressed her, and he rose to bring her a chair, or to wait until she was seated. The other men in the troupe seemed ignorant of the most elemental courtesies. And the women were of a type she had never before met.

She watched them through eyes half closed and glittering, and they held aloof from her and observed her with some signs of fear. The presence of mammy set her apart from them. That was partly the reason. And her personality was likewise responsible. The inclination to joke over her amateurishness did not survive the first rehearsal; and there was never any disposition to steal or hide her make-up things.

In a word, she was permitted to go her own way undisturbed, and, although this was precisely her desire, she could not help feeling lonely and friendless and neglected. Pavin, the little director, tried his best to cheer her up, and so, as the weeks went by, throwing them constantly into each other's company, they became very good friends.

He would play to her from the score of the opera he was writing at odd mo-

ments, or she would sing "Faust" or "Trovatore" or "Carmen," according to her ideas, and they would tell each other what was to happen when they should achieve fame and fortune, and for the moment her aching longing for Trask would be forgotten.

She had changed her name. It appeared on the program as "Gipsy Wilde"—among the chorus people—so how was he to trace her, one of the least among an inferior company of singers? But she was learning her technique—learning quickly, too, the art of make-up, how to gage and place her voice, how to stand and sit and walk, how to enunciate.

The inconveniences she suffered were little enough payment for what she learned. All things must have a beginning, and she knew that she was on the first rung of the ladder. And she was trying to make ambition satisfy her in place of the dream that he had shattered. It is an old, old trick.

This particular night, two months after her departure from Peggy's, Gipsy leaned against Mammy Chloe's shoulder in the day coach of the Pittsburgh Special and tried to sleep. But her head ached and the shaking of the car irritated it, and she was depressed with the realization that no one depended upon her or cared for her—that she lacked a *raison d'être*.

She fell to wondering what would have befallen if she had obeyed her first impulse and had killed herself. She wondered if he would still have married the fair woman. She wondered if there was a heaven and a hell, really—where tired souls go.

And in the midst of her semidozing Pavin took the seat opposite, his apathetic face lighted with an unusual excitement.

"Are you awake?" he asked. "May I change seats with Mammy Chloe? I've something important to tell you."

She sat up with a smile and nodded, and he and the old negress changed places. There were none of the com-

pany behind them, but he lowered his voice to avoid possible eavesdropping.

"How much money have you saved from your salary?" he asked.

"Saved?" repeated Gipsy. "Nothing! I had managed to put by a few dollars, but the last few weeks they haven't given me the full eighteen and I'd a hard enough time to pull through as it was."

"I'm afraid the rest of us are in the same situation," said Pavin gravely, "and Olmstead is not on the train."

"Olmstead?" she repeated wonderingly. "What of that?"

"When a company hasn't been paying salaries, a third-rate company especially, and the manager quits the troupe without notice, there's usually a reason," he answered significantly. "I'm afraid he's taken the receipts tonight and decamped."

She opened her eyes and sat up straight, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Are you sure he's not with us? He was in this car when it started."

"He got off at the first stop. I saw him myself. And Catrelli went with him. It looks very much as though we are going to find ourselves presently in Pittsburgh stranded."

They looked at each other gravely.

"Do the others know?"

"Not yet. I didn't tell any one. No use to spoil their night's rest, and the nearer we get to New York the easier it will be to get the rest of the way. I wouldn't have told you, either, but an idea occurred to me. With Catrelli out, we've no prima donna."

She frowned wonderingly.

"No."

"But we're probably billed in Pittsburgh, and if we could give a show there and divide the proceeds we could all get to New York. And you are the only one in the show with enough voice to step into Catrelli's place."

Gipsy sat up.

"Would I dare it?" she cried nervously.

"In 'Carmen' I think you might. You are built for the rôle. And it's

more like you in temperament than anything else. I think, perhaps, in 'Carmen' you could 'make good.' Your lack of training would not be so apparent. I've been thinking it over carefully. That is the only way out I can see, unless we make our plight public and have a benefit vaudeville or something. And I doubt if any of us are vaudevillians. And the other playhouses are closed."

"The company wouldn't permit me to step in, I'm afraid," said Gipsy. "I should love the opportunity, but they'd never be willing to support me."

"When they find out Olmstead has gotten out from under they'll be glad to avail themselves of any opportunity to get back to New York."

She caught her breath, a faint flush creeping up into her white face.

"I shall love it!" she cried. "I shall love it! Pavin! It will be my chance!" He smiled.

"Your chance to make enough to get back to New York and start out again. I'm afraid very few people in Pittsburgh will know you are substituting for Catrelli. And the ones who will know will not matter a great deal. Pittsburgh isn't a big theatrical center where other managers are likely to hear you."

She pouted.

"You are hatefully pessimistic!" she cried.

"I don't want you to be dreadfully disappointed. Of a hundred understudies who get a chance to play a big rôle and get it over, perhaps less than five succeed in convincing the managers that it has happened. The ninety-five continue understudying."

"But the managers must see me as 'Carmen,'" she breathed, "and they must like me. I have learned some of the tricks of the trade—haven't I?"

"Some of them," assented Pavin mildly.

"And I've a splendid voice and I'm pretty and I've magnetism. You admitted it."

He nodded.

"Oh, but I am afraid they will never consent—these others of the company." She looked dismayed at that possibility.

"Wait," he cautioned, confidently.

She was staring into nothingness with wide, reflective eyes.

"I shall have my own gowns," she said—"not Catrelli's."

"Catrelli's will probably not be discoverable," he remarked dryly.

"Chloe and I can disguise evening gowns—my own evening gowns. It is simple. Snip—snip! Off comes the train and part of the skirt. Buz-buz-buz—there is a hem, and the thing is done. My costumes surpass Catrelli's."

But she was suddenly silent, remembering that Trask's money had paid for them, as for everything she had eaten and worn since she was nine. There was a heaviness over her heart.

"You are grieving for the disguised gowns!" cried Pavin whimsically.

"No; for the happy girl who used to wear them, and the life they were intended for. Poor gowns, they must share my adventures. And they are such frail, flimsy things."

"No more unfit than you for such a life!" he cried bitterly.

"I?" repeated Gipsy loftily, as though she had not heard. "I am young, strong as a sapling, sound—"

"What made you go in for this sort of thing?" he asked curiously.

"Necessity. Only necessity forces women to forego homes and babies, and seek careers—is it not?"

A faint flush crept up, tinting his pale cheeks.

"It's an ill wind," he said.

She opened dark, inquiring eyes at him.

"The necessity that has beaten you down into such shady places," he said, "has given me a bit of sunlight."

"Pavin!" she cried reproachfully.

"Until you came," he went on gravely, "life tasted of ashes. I was the child at the window, watching the others fed within. It has always been that way with me. It had been, at least,

until you came. Then—I feel as if even God must envy me your comradeship."

"Pavin!" she cried tearfully.

"Don't misunderstand," he said. "I'm asking nothing. I want you to know, that's all."

"I've nothing left to give," said Gipsy wistfully.

He looked into her eyes, his own glowing with an agony of sympathy.

"You, too?" he asked simply. "God makes us suffer—we, who are His prophets."

"We—His prophets?" she asked.

"We, who convey His lessons in song, in marble, with the pen or brush or voice or spoken word. For only by suffering can we understand suffering; only by loving can we understand love. We must be lyres upon which every emotional wind can strike a note."

She looked into his eyes, afire with his elation. They burned in his white face, bluish circles beneath them, his cheeks sunken, his thick brown hair emphasizing his pallor. And wandering from his face, her eyes rested upon his suit, beginning to show signs of long wear upon the heavy boots that he kept bright himself, and upon his scrupulously neat linen.

"How old are you, Pavin?" she asked.

"Twenty-five."

"Was there no more comfortable life-work you could choose?"

He smiled. "I hadn't even a chance of success at anything else. And I would rather starve with my music than give it up."

"But the life is killing you."

"I've had six years of it," he said. "Yes, it's a race between fame and death. Or between opportunity and death, for opportunity would mean fame. I know my music is good, but I have been unable to convince any one else but you."

Her eyes lighted.

"When I have sung 'Carmen,' she cried brightly, "and have made a world-wide success in a night I shall

make them accept my verdict. I shall sing 'Ester.'"

He smiled wistfully.

"You will sing 'Carmen,'" he sighed, "and you will sing it well to a half-empty house, and the next day we will all go back to New York, and you will find another place in another chorus, and if the newspapers write up the show at all they will say 'Catrelli sang the leading rôle acceptably.'"

"No, no!" she cried. "It must be announced that I shall sing—not Catrelli. And I shall myself visit the newspapers and implore them to come. If no opportunity befalls, I shall make opportunity."

He considered her with meditative eyes.

"That," he said, "is not a half-bad idea."

On the stage of the Duquesne Garden at half past ten on the following morning, the Arden Comic Opera Troupe learned of the desertion of Olmstead and Catrelli.

To the seasoned members of the company the discovery caused no astonishment. They knew the receipts had been disastrous for several weeks, and Catrelli's money was financing them, and Catrelli was in wretched voice, and Pittsburgh was noted for bad weather and cold audiences.

To add to the general gloom of the occasion, a low-lying, yellowish, damp fog covered the city, so that the street-lamps and the store-lamps were lighted. And the Duquesne Garden, once a car-barn, and in the winter a skating-rink, was very big, and its artificial palms and draped seats made it seem very, very unfriendly.

To give a performance there that night as scheduled, without the slight support of Catrelli, seemed a hopeless undertaking; but not to give it was out of the question. There was not a hundred dollars in the company, and there would be board-bills to meet, and there must be transportation money.

They could not remain indefinitely

in that fog-ridden, damp and dirty town. For so long as they remained the seeking of further work was impossible. No theatrical productions are sent out from Pittsburgh.

So, after a half-hour's pointless discussion, in the course of which no ideas had been expressed, Pavin's suggestion that they give "Carmen" with Gipsy in the title rôle was welcomed almost cordially. There was even a little applause. Professional jealousy is not so powerful as hunger and the fear of stranding, so for once the restless striving for the spotlight was forgotten.

A collection was taken to pay for newspaper announcements of the change of bill and the change in the cast, and a rehearsal was called at once. But nobody sang. Nobody was willing to jeopardize the night's performance by using the voice, but the "business" was carefully gone over, and the scenery was strung and the costumes decided upon.

In the wings, as the work went forward on the stage, Mammy Chloe cut and sewed upon Gipsy's costumes. The scarlet and gold gown was sacrificed—and a plain yellow—and a hat yielded up its roses, and mantillas and other necessary properties were "faked" with the magic of needle and shears.

Then, while the others rested and went forth in search of lunch-rooms, somewhere about two o'clock, Gipsy arrayed herself carefully and sought the newspaper offices. Pavin had given her the addresses of three and directions to find them, but the first dramatic critic was out of town, and the second was not expected to return that day. Only the third was in and would see "Miss Gipsy Wilde."

He was a thin, keen-eyed, bemustached fellow of uncertain age, a man dreaded even in the East for his vitriolic pen; but men are human, after all, and the strongest has his weaknesses. Durgan, wheeling about in his chair as the door opened, and looking up rather belligerently over his black-rimmed

glasses, remained motionless, staring at the apparition in the doorway.

She wore a small black and white hat that was astonishingly "smart," and a black and white suit that was, if anything, "smarter." And she had long drop earrings in her ears. And her eyes were very wide and very, very dark, and a little inquiring, a little fearful, a little uncertain. And her lips were red, and her face was white, and she had a single, very dark-red rose, with the attendant greens, fastened in her belt.

"Mr. Durgan?" she asked gravely.

Mr. Durgan rose—although it was never his custom. It was apt to urge people to linger in his sanctum; physically to urge them, perhaps, and he did not like them to linger. So he never rose. But he was not in the habit of receiving Gipsy Wildes every beastly foggy day.

"Yes," said Durgan. "Won't you sit down?"

She thanked him and sat down, studying his face eagerly, and he was moved to decide that she was much younger even than he had first thought her.

"You don't look so cross," said Gipsy, thinking aloud.

"Thank you," answered Durgan smiling. She flushed.

"Oh," she cried wistfully, "I hadn't meant to say that! Now I am afraid I've begun wrong."

"Then we shall pretend you haven't begun at all yet, and you can take a fresh start," said he. A rather timid smile dawned in her eyes.

"That will be better," she said, "because I very much want to enlist your sympathies." And then she drew a very long breath, and began as she had planned.

"Were you ever hungry, Mr. Durgan?" she asked.

"Regularly three times a day," said he promptly.

She looked reproachful.

"I mean when you'd no prospect of meals; when an unpaid board-bill

stared you in the face and stalked at your heels at the same time. And when you were miles away from any chance of making money?"

He breathed a little regretful sigh for another lost illusion, and slipped his hand in his pocket.

"Possibly," he said. "Are you in this uncomfortable predicament?"

She flushed.

"Yes," she said quietly; "but if you are intending to offer me assistance—financial assistance—don't. That isn't what I'm driving at at all."

"Oh," said he, and waited.

"You see, I'm not the only one in this uncomfortable predicament," said Gipsy. "There are many, many others."

"Yes," said he, with visions of charitable subscriptions. "Am I to take tickets?"

She had to smile.

"I'm going to give you tickets," she said, beginning to fumble in her pocket. "I'm trying to enlist your sympathy in the Arden Comic Opera Troupe. We're stranded. Catrelli and the manager ran away from us last night, and we're stranded."

Mr. Durgan raised his bushy eyebrows alarmingly.

"You belong to the Arden Troupe?" he asked incredulously, and his eyes ran over her.

"Until to-day; I was in the chorus," she answered. "But Catrelli's desertion leaves a gap at the head of the company, so to-night I'm going to be 'Carmen.'" A light flashed into her eyes as she made the announcement and her head went up.

"Well, well!" cried Mr. Durgan.

"I can really sing it well," she went on gravely. "And we've got to give a show. We're billed and we're 'broke.' It's our only chance of getting out of town."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Durgan.

"Incidentally," said Gipsy, "it is a forlorn chance, unless people come. Can't you make them?"

"I?" gasped Mr. Durgan.

"Please," said Gipsy. "Write up a beautiful announcement. Say something nice about us. We do give a good show, and we need the money desperately, and the people who come on account of your writeup won't need their dollars."

"But my dear child," cried Durgan, "our afternoon papers have gone to press. I'd gladly have given you a notice, but our next edition comes out in the morning—unless we'd print an extra, and I hardly think we could do that."

Gipsy's face fell.

"The morning," she sighed dismally. "That will do us no good. Unless—unless we can stay another day. Would you come to see the performance to-night, and give us a splendid review? If you would, we might persuade the management to let us stay."

He smiled grimly.

"You seem to have a lot of confidence in my reviews; or have you made the rounds with this same plea?"

"I haven't been able to see any one but you," said Gipsy. And she sighed mournfully. "Please come. I really can sing. And, aside from our present difficulties, this opportunity is mine—my first one—to show what I can do. And your notice, if it's favorable, might lift me out of the chorus for all time. My fate is in your hands. Please, please come."

He laughed.

"How old are you, Miss Wilde?" he asked.

"Past sixteen."

"Nonsense!"

"As nearly as I can recall," said she seriously. He laughed again.

"It must be lack of talent that has kept you in the chorus," he said. "I've an idea you would make opportunities. I'm beginning to suspect you've poisoned Catrelli or induced her to retire."

"You aren't!" cried Gipsy, "and I've been in the chorus only two months. I had to learn the technique, you know."

"You can't sing," said he positively. "It isn't believable that you can sing, too."

"Shall I show you?" asked Gipsy.

"No," he cried hastily. "The benighted beings out there are likely to think I'm being rude to you. I'll come to-night to hear you. I'll restrain my impatience until then."

"I shall never, never forget it!" cried Gipsy. "And you'll give us a good notice?"

"Yes, I suppose so, providing you don't stay on here indefinitely. My interest in the town recommends your speedy removal."

"Why?" asked Gipsy, wide-eyed.

"Because," said he, "you are the sort of person who always gets what she wants, and I confess the possibilities terrify me. I've no idea what you may want next."

"I hope you are right," said Gipsy. "Oh, I hope you are right!"

He was startled at the light that flashed into her eyes at his words.

"Good-by," she said, "and thank you."

"Good-by," said Mr. Durgan.

And he sat looking at the door reflectively for a long while after it had closed behind her.

CHAPTER V.

Success.

THE house that night was so poor the local manager declared it would pay him to refund the money and turn off the lights and dismiss his hands. But Gipsy discussed the matter with him. She pointed out to him that the weather was bad and that the big newspaper announcements could not appear until the morning and that Durgan was to be in front. And she offered him all of the receipts, instead of the share that was rightfully his, if he would only let the show go on and give them another chance on Tuesday. Naturally, he agreed.

Gipsy sang "Carmen"—sang with

all her heart and soul—throwing herself into the part, never letting her eyes travel past Pavin's flushed face to that great empty, cheerless auditorium. And the company, catching something of her desperate enthusiasm, worked hard, too, and the meager few in front who had braved the rain to see the show, forgot the bad weather and the smallness of their number, and were carried away.

Durgan, away in the rear, on the aisle (so that he could the more easily escape), sat transfixed, literally, his eyes never leaving her while she was on the stage. He had seen every great "Carmen" of his time, and it seemed to him that he had never seen the play before. He had heard the music so often that it well-nigh offended his ears, but he had never heard it as Gipsy sang it.

For the first time in his life he felt himself in sympathy, in harmony, with the cigarette-girl. He felt her passion, her mischievousness, her frivolity, her jealousy, her wild, violent, overwhelming love. And her voice left him trembling. At the end of the first act he changed his seat to the third row, never minding that the only vacant chair there was not on the aisle; and he sent back a card to her:

You must have supper with me afterward—you and whoever else you care to bring.
DURGAN.

He did not include a comment. There was nothing then that he could think of to say. And when the usher brought back a single half-sheet of note-paper with simply "Yes" scrawled on it, he became conscious of a growing excitement.

Gipsy had forwarded his note, without additions, to Pavin, and he had written on it, "By all means. I will go with you." He had never met Durgan, and he did not know just what sort of man he was, and Pavin was not inclined to permit Gipsy to pay for favorable notices.

But when, eventually, he was pre-

sented to the critic at the stage door, his fears seemed absurd and groundless. Durgan was incoherent in his praise. He raved. He declared that "Carmen" should run a month at the Garden, that he would drive the people there. He conducted them to the nearest supper place, mapping out a plan of campaign as he went.

He swore that she should study abroad—that he would find some one to send her—and Gipsy, exhausted but happy, her eyes shining, listened and nodded, and glanced sidewise at Pavin. But Pavin's joy was mostly pretense. With a sensation of weariness and desperation he saw the breach between him and Gipsy widening. The whole wide world is a balance-scale, after all, and for each joy there is a grief—for every one who ascends, another falls.

Gipsy woke at noon, with a bit of color back in her cheeks for the first time in a month. And Mammy Chloe brought her breakfast to her in bed, and spread out the *News*, with Durgan's write-up folded uppermost.

His head-line was:

A NEW COMET APPEARS.

Chorus Girl with the Arden Troupe Sings "Carmen" at an Instant's Notice, When Catrelli, the Prima Donna, Deserts, and Wins Instant Recognition.

Voice Marvelous, and Beauty Startling.

She read every line with flaming cheeks. He had more than kept his promise. There was more than a column—all in praise of her—comparing her critically with every great "Carmen" he had seen. And from the pen of Durgan, who seldom praised, the notice meant a great deal.

Gipsy breakfasted on ambrosia and nectar, and she trod on air an hour later when Pavin came and made her go out with him and walk. And to her bewilderment, a sunshiny city met

her astonished eyes. The rain had dried while she slept, and the sky was blue and the sun shone.

"It is an omen, Pavin!" she cried happily. And Pavin forced a smile and ignored his heavy heart and mentally cursed himself for a selfish beast. And he tried to tell himself that she had always been as far above him as the moon.

That night the huge auditorium was filled more than half-way back—filled with enthusiastic, applauding people, who recalled her again and again, and the local manager rubbed his hands together with satisfaction, watching the other critics. And afterward he went "behind" to interview the company and persuade them to stay on for the two weeks Olmstead had booked at the Garden, and there was a long and serious debate.

In the end it was agreed that the engagement should be filled, and the local manager agreed to bill the town again; and Gipsy's salary was raised from eighteen dollars to sixty. That was ten more than the leading man got, and the surplus—if there was any—was to be divided equally among the company.

Durgan, meanwhile, who had been waiting at the stage door again, brought her an invitation. It was from a bedridden old lady, he said—Mrs. Henry Severence. She was unable to go to the theater, but she was fond of music, and many great singers had been persuaded to go to her and sing. And she had read Durgan's criticism and wanted to hear Gipsy Wilde.

He did not say that he had taken her his criticism to read and had added thereto much verbal commendation, and so Gipsy never suspected that. Nor could she suspect the great schemes he hid under such an innocent-seeming bait.

So on Wednesday afternoon, Gipsy, in an afternoon frock of yellow chiffon, and a black plumed hat, and a black parasol, entered the carriage

which Mrs. Severence sent, and with Pavin drove to the big stone palace, on a hill overlooking the park.

It was a very imposing dwelling, with an iron gateway and big stone posts, and many shining windows, and about it was a big, green lawn, shaded by many trees and dotted with marble figures. A footman in dull red livery admitted them, and a maid in a black and white uniform ushered them up the wide stairs to where Mrs. Severence lay.

Her skin was like the shriveled petals of a white rose beginning to fade; and she had snow-white hair and blue eyes—innocent, appealing blue eyes, and very, very brave blue eyes, too—and a mouth that seemed made for smiling. And she reclined on a sort of couch-chair, with cushions of royal purple behind her, in a soft, shimmering gown of royal purple stuff. And she glittered with diamonds and amethysts. The room, which was a sort of combination drawing-room, library, and music-room, was done in many shades of purple, and there were huge bowls of white and purple lilacs about.

"Gipsy Wilde," she said, holding out her hand, "you are very good to come to me." And then, as Gipsy advanced and took her hand, she added: "I've been in a fever of curiosity and impatience about you, but the realization doesn't disappoint me." And then she turned and gave Pavin her hand, too, and smiled.

"The mountain has come to Mohammed," she said. "And Mohammed would so gladly have gone to the mountain."

"But that would have deprived the mountain of a pleasure," said Gipsy gravely. "There was a time, not so very long ago, when I disliked to sing, except to some one I loved, for singing, to me, is like speaking, only a much more intimate medium of expression, and I would not use it except for those I loved."

She sat down on the edge of the

bed couch and Mrs. Severence caught her hand and held it and listened eagerly.

"But there came a night," said Gipsy, "when I suffered, and in my suffering it seemed to me that many others were suffering under the same stars that were over me. I did not know them. 'Perhaps,' I thought, 'some are hiding aching hearts under a smile, as I hide mine.' And I was seized with a desire to sing to them—to sing somfort and cheer and the rightness of things. I was seized with a desire to give them messages. Some of those who hear me, I know, will never understand, but the pleasing sounds will delight them. And I shall have done well."

There were tears gathering in Mrs. Severence's eyes. Pavin was moving about restlessly.

"I have made you sad!" cried Gipsy wonderingly.

"No," said the old lady, "you have made me very, very glad."

Gipsy smiled.

"So I went out into the world," she said, "and seized the first opportunity to sing that I could get. But I could not make my voice heard until the night before last, and then I lay awake a long time, wondering if any of that great audience understood; and wishing that I could sing softly to each in turn, watching as I sang."

Mrs. Severence caught her breath, and her blue eyes lighted.

"As you will sing to me?" she said eagerly.

"As I will sing to you."

She put the soft, wrinkled, heavily ringed hand from her gently, and crossed to the piano. And as Pavin started forward she shook her head at him and sat down herself, facing the little, white old lady. Pavin stared. He had never heard her play. And when she began he dropped weakly into the nearest chair, straining his ears, recognizing her mastery of the keys.

It was nothing that he had ever

heard before—a soft, crooning melody with a plaintive note in it—and presently, when she began softly to sing, the words were unfamiliar. She used the singing-words that she had used for Trask, and let her fingers find the tune—whatever tune they willed. And I think it was of Trask she thought, dimly, though her eyes were fixed upon little, white Mrs. Severence. But she no longer thought of him, with the selfishness, the heedlessness of the world, that she had shown when she had sung to him.

The trees in her song now rejoiced in the sunshine of summer and whispered together of coming fruit. The wind sang carelessly, aimlessly, of his travels. And the little brooks sang of the land they kept green. And the leaves murmured of the shade they supplied. And the wind sang of his travels and his freedom. And the grass told of the splendid food it made for the animals to graze on. And the rain told of the dust it laid, and the dry earth it refreshed, and the flowers and the plants and the rivers it nourished. And the wind whirled away in disgust, and a sleeping child, whose brow he cooled in his wild flight, smiled sweetly in her sleep.

As she stopped, Pavin and Mrs. Severence remained motionless, breathless. And then she drifted into "Samson and Delilah," and went on from that to "Bohème," and then to "Madame Butterfly," and then to "Louise," and finished with "Carmen."

They were all things she set the continent afire with afterward, but she never sang them more appealingly than in that strange purple room, to the silent, wet-eyed old lady on the couch. And when she had finished Mrs. Severence held out her hands wistfully, and, when Gipsy approached, drew her down and kissed her forehead.

"The half was not told me," she said uncertainly. And then, after a long, long silence, she added: "You

will go abroad and begin again there. You will let me send you. I, who can do nothing, who can be of no use to any one in myself, can help you. You will not refuse me? You will not deny me?"

Gipsy looked deep into the faded blue eyes.

"No," she answered simply.

CHAPTER VI.

Captured.

SO Gipsy went to Paris. But she waited to fulfil the agreement with the local manager of the Gardens. Perhaps, however, the fact that she was billed all over town had something to do with that. There was always the possibility that he might suspect, in spite of her change of name, that he might be in front.

But the world is a little place, as Pavin said, and Pittsburgh is only a minute part of it, and Gipsy's sudden fame reached no further than the Pittsburgh newspapers. If there was a note in one or two of the theatrical publications—Who reads theatrical publications? Certainly not Theodore Seymour Trask.

So Gipsy gave up her last hope and set out for Paris with Pavin and Mammy Chloe. Mrs. Severence had heard Pavin's music, and had offered to send him abroad, too, to study and to look out for Gipsy, and, principally on her account, he had accepted. But the trip across put new life into him, and aroused his dying ambition, and two braver, more determined seekers after fame and fortune never descended upon Paris.

They took "studios" near together, and Mammy Chloe cooked and cleaned for both, and they studied hard and took frequent holidays, and wrote long letters home to Durgan and Mrs. Severence. And Gipsy's voice developed wonderfully. Paris was not so inclined to grow enthusiastic as Pittsburgh had been.

In fact, Gipsy afterward swore that it was her face first attracted attention there, for she had a wretched cold at her first interview with her instructors. But the quality and strength and sweetness of her voice were really undeniable, so Paris eventually became convinced of her ability. The Paris that is represented by singing-instructors, I mean, of course—

The other Paris—the big mob, music-worshiping Paris—fell at her first onslaught. De Reszke it was who obtained for her the privilege of singing first in public. She made her appearance as *Carmen*—three years after her usurpation of the rôle in Pittsburgh—and Paris promptly lost its head. She became famous in a night, for in Paris such things are possible.

Painters began to plead for the privilege of winning immortality by reproducing her long black eyes and curving, scarlet mouth; her proudly tilted head; her black, black hair and perfect back. Her photographs decorated the shops. She sang "Bohème" and "Butterfly," "Samson and Delilah" and "Louise," and eventually a new opera by a new composer, "Ester," by Pavin. And she won for it instant approval.

In the years of preparation she had worked over languages as well as over her voice, and her season in Paris was followed by another in Rome and Berlin. Then came St. Petersburg and Paris. By the time she was twenty-two she had paid her debt to Mrs. Severence, and was ready for London. Contracts in America had already been offered her, but she had not yet signed. However, when London, too, fell before her, she was ready to cross the seas.

At the beginning of her career her one overmastering desire had been to win out in America. It was for that she had worked. The other countries did not matter. She wanted to be acknowledged in Trask's native land by Trask's own people. Only then could he realize what he had lost.

But this childish notion had faded as she grew. And it was borne in upon her that a love stimulated by her achievements was not the sort of love she desired. There had been many men at her feet. There had been men of rank and title and wealth—men of every sort—but she had desired none of them.

Even for Pavin and Durgan, though she would gladly have loved either, she could feel nothing. It was as though Trask had taken her heart from her for all time; as though he had, in making her love him, deprived her of the power of ever loving again. And she told herself that she hated him for it; that she would not have him, now, even if she could.

So she thought she returned reluctantly until the great ship that bore her sighted land, and then she was filled with a great tremulous restlessness—a great uncertainty—

She made sure that Peggy or the governor, at least, would meet her at the dock. She had not communicated with them since the night she left Peggy's house, but she knew that they must recognize her pictures—must find something familiar in her name—"Gipsy Wilde." There were not so very many women called "Gipsy." That had been Trask's name for her, so she had kept it, though she had dropped the other.

But Trask nor the governor nor Peggy—none of them was at the wharf. There were only newspapermen and a representative of the management, and she hurried with mammy to her hotel, assuring herself that there would be letters there, but there were not.

As she had never been homesick abroad, Gipsy was homesick in New York. Pavin had not crossed with her, as he had originally planned, and Durgan wrote humorously that he was down with grippe, and of all the people who left cards none were of the old life, so there were none that she wanted to see.

But the night of her first appearance at the Metropolitan she had never felt more eager to sing—to win. It was "Carmen" again, and the house was crowded. The advance notices had done that, but she knew how hard she must strive to hold them. And miles away, Mrs. Severence knew, too, sitting alone in her purple room, waiting for news.

Upon her first entrance there was a great round of applause, and she smiled. She knew it was given good-naturedly, because she was a stranger among them, and because they had heard great things of her; but she knew, too, that they expected her to earn it. She advanced nearer the footlights, the action of the play proceeded. And presently she began to sing.

The house grew silent—as silent as the houses in Paris, in Rome, in London when she was singing. Instinctively, psychically, somehow, she felt that she was winning. Her tininess was not counting against her, as it had not counted abroad, in spite of the fears of her teachers. Her eyes drifted from the leader's baton, wandered over the house, and seemingly drawn by his eyes, found Trask. He was standing in the rear of the box, leaning forward a bit, so that his face was out of the shadows, and a tall, fair woman was seated just below him, by the rail.

Gipsy grew rigid. Exerting all her will, she tore her eyes away, tried to concentrate on what she was singing. She forgot what had passed and what was yet to be done. The great mass of heads seemed to rise at her threateningly out of the great black pit beyond the footlights.

Her voice died away, and with an agonized look she turned again toward the box. All the rage and jealousy in her seemed to rise. Her hands clenched convulsively. She stood an instant, motionless, and fainted.

The audience, remaining silent until she fell, broke into applause here and there, and a wave of sympathetic

whispering spread. And then the curtain fell, shielding the men who had run to her aid.

They carried her to her dressing-room and laid her upon the trunk—a great pile of costumes beneath her. Mammy, kneeling at her head, and the stage-manager, clearing them away with small gentleness, dragged Trask forward.

"Take them away," he said. His voice was low-pitched, dominant, and the stage-manager drove them off—a hushed, demoralized throng. Then he closed the door and took her from mammy's arms, his face as white as Gipsy's.

"Gipsy!" he called in a whisper.

She opened her eyes and looked up at him. For an instant she smiled radiantly, half raised herself, apparently forgetting, and then horror dawned in her great eyes and sickening fear and that old, icy rage.

"Gipsy!" he whispered appealingly.

She made no answer, but she stiffened in his arms, suddenly tried to tear herself free. He released her, and she straightened, stood trembling, her eyes on him.

"I am better now; thank you," she said. "I have never been taken so before. And I wanted to do so well!"

A sob crept into her voice. She threw back her head, her eyes shining with tears. "You will pardon me," she said; "I must go back and sing. I must sing."

Her heart was fluttering at the sight of him; a weakness that was well-nigh overmastering crept over her. The longing for him—for his arms, for his lips, denied these many years—left her shaking.

"Gipsy!" he cried. "Is this all you have to say to me? Have you never forgiven?"

Her fists clenched, she smiled.

"Forgiven?" she repeated. "Oh, but—what have I to forgive? No, no. There is nothing. Later we shall talk. Eh? You and I and your wife—"

She sank into her chair before her dressing-table, no longer able to stand, and turned her face from him, busied herself with her grease-paint. Her make-up had faded during her illness. Painstakingly she began to redden lips and cheeks.

"Gipsy!" he cried. "Surely you haven't thought— Gipsy! You must know that I never married; that I couldn't marry after you went away. That I realized I— There could never be any one for me but you. I— Now, it's rather late. I hadn't meant to speak, but I've been holding it back so long. I've been wanting you so long."

She turned, rose, catching her breath, her hands clenched.

"What is it you say?" she breathed.

He was silent.

Her hands went out to clutch his shoulders violently.

"Say it!" she cried. "Say it!" Her voice broke.

"That I love you?"

They stared into each other's eyes.

"But you did not follow? You did not seek me out?"

"I tried," he said. "After you won success I couldn't. It would have been like reminding you. It would have been like claiming— No, I meant never to seek you out. You promised to come back. I meant to wait. What is it?"

She flung herself against him in a

torrent of tears. Her arms encircled his neck, clung to him.

"Gipsy!" he cried unbelievably.

"Kiss me," she cried. "Kiss me! Kiss me! And hold me with all your strength. Kill me! But never stop loving me! Never! There's nothing else I want!"

The stage-manager threw open the door and stood there, staring in. And at the sight that met his astonished eyes he grew quite red.

"Adeez is ready to go on," he said, "if Mlle. Wilde is indisposed."

"Adeez?" cried she. "Never. I will sing. I, Gipsy Wilde, for the last time, as I have never sung for Paris or London or Berlin."

And she turned to Trask, her eyes aglow.

"Go back to your box," she said; "for I shall sing to you!"

And as the curtain rose again and she stepped upon the stage, the applause broke out like thunder. But her eyes were for the one box, where Trask stood in the shadow of the curtain, watching her and listening.

She had tested the love of the multitudes that men call fame, and was casting it from her, as a child casts a bauble that has ceased to amuse, was casting it away for the love of one man.

For, after all, wild or tamed, a woman is a woman!

(The end.)

FOR YOUR THREE BEST FRIENDS

HERE IS AN IDEA

Send me the names and addresses of three of your friends who you think will be interested in the stories in *THE CAVALIER*, and I will send them sample copies direct from this office. You might, if you wish, to prepare them for the coming of the magazine, write to them as well, and say that sample copies of *THE CAVALIER* are being sent them at your request.

This is just a suggestion. If it is too much trouble, don't do it, but I will appreciate it if you do, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have let your friends in on a good thing.

EDITOR, THE CAVALIER, Flatiron Building, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York

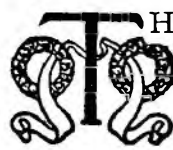
THE SHADOW MENACE

A SERIAL IN V PARTS—PART I

BY WILLARD E. HAWKINS

CHAPTER I.

Rossiter Meets His Match.

HE first thought which passed through the mind of Edwin Rossiter, as he emerged into clouded consciousness, was that he had never gazed upon an uglier face than the one which bent over him.

After a moment's contemplation he dozed off. When he opened his eyes again the face was still there.

It was ugly, with a singular combination of disfiguring details. The heavy, square head was bald and wrinkled, supported by a muscular neck and a huge body. The features were pockmarked, and still further mutilated by a scar, which commenced astride the bridge of the nose and spread across the right cheek. The small eyes glittered from beneath pale and hairless, but overhanging brows. The ears were delicately shaped; but, instead of redeeming the head, they seemed to accentuate its repulsiveness.

The color of such a countenance should have been florid. This one was a deathlike white.

Yet the expression of the face, for all its sinister details, was friendly, even solicitous.

Rossiter suddenly lifted himself and peered bewildered around the bare, disheveled living-room. With the deftness of a trained nurse the man of ugly visage forced him gently back on the rough pillow.

"Drink this," he commanded, in a thick, muffled voice. The hot mixture

cleared the young man's head and revived him.

"Ah," said his attendant with satisfaction. "Coming around. Begin to remember—eh?"

"I remember," said Rossiter, passing a hand over his forehead, "a girl. Yes, there was a girl. What else?"

"A girl?" repeated the thick voice.

"I caught a fleeting glimpse of her frightened face through the carriage window. It all comes back to me now. Her horses were held up by a jam, and a heavy truck-team was bearing down on her. The team pulled up sharply and I seized the hind wheels of her carriage just as the heavy wagon tongue shot up toward the window."

"Ah!" exclaimed the other, with an appreciative glance at the strong frame outlined beneath the blanket.

"I jerked the carriage aside far enough to escape the impact, and she smiled on me. I shall never forget that smile!"

"Then what?"

Rossiter abruptly turned his face away from the questioner.

"And then—and then—she opened her purse to give me a reward. The humiliation of it!"

"But you have been offered tips before—and accepted them."

"Yes. To be brutally candid, I have lived on such pickings; but I still have the rudiments of self-respect."

He paused, then demanded suspiciously:

"How do you know what I have done before? Who are you?"

"My name will not enlighten you. However, we are going to be very good friends, I trust, and you may call me Vaniman Jahl," pronouncing it with the soft Spanish J.

"How do I happen to be your guest, Mr. Jahl, instead of—"

"Instead of occupying the watery grave you intended for yourself? Well, chiefly because I did not agree that the thing you were throwing away was as worthless as you seemed to think."

"My life? Well, you made a sad mistake. To be impolitely truthful, I can't say I thank you for your trouble in rescuing me. It only puts me to the necessity of trying again."

"I considered you worth saving," repeated Jahl.

"You don't know the circumstances."

"Perhaps I do. Let me tell you a few things. You are a graduate of Annapolis and a former naval officer."

"Yet she offered me money!" murmured Rossiter.

"You were deprived of your commission, however, by a disgraceful episode about six years ago."

The young man nodded and finished the narrative.

"My father disowned me, my friends cast me out, and the world in general has had no further use for Edwin Rossiter. Quite so. Can you give me a cigarette?"

Vaniman Jahl searched through the litter on his table and found a box of cork tips with which he satisfied the request. Rossiter flung his feet over the edge of the couch and sat erect; but, overcome by dizziness, he was glad enough to fall back on the pillow.

"It's the same old chestnut," he observed. "Any one who takes the trouble to inquire knows the story of my fall."

The ugly face of Jahl assumed a cunning expression. "The complete story?" he inquired significantly.

"Complete enough to brand me as the most degenerate scamp unhung.

My father cast me loose with a thousand dollars, and told me never to let him see my face again. The money went in three months—dissipated away, of course. I tried to get honest work—lost out every time because my employers discovered who I was. Tried my hand at some things that weren't so honest, and the police soon put the finishing touches to my career. I'm a desperado, an enemy of society, a thing only allowed to live by the exercise of extreme sufferance. The only trouble is—"

He paused and gratefully inhaled the cigarette fumes.

"The only trouble is, I'm not fitted for this kind of a life. I haven't the instincts of a burglar, and it seems that I can't make a living in any other line."

"Was that why you threw yourself off of the bridge?"

"Probably."

"No," said Jahl, with decision. "It was not. If you had never seen the face of the girl in the carriage you would not have thought of committing suicide. Why?"

"Why, indeed?" rejoined Rossiter.

"Because you are ambitious—because you are not willing to have companions, or to live, or to find your mate in any other grade of society than the one to which you belong—the best. You have known this subconsciously ever since your disgrace; but the face of the girl in the carriage crystallized the whole situation in your mind."

The satirical expression faded from the young man's face. "Yes. You have hit the bull's-eye," he admitted bitterly. "I have sunk as low as it is possible for a man to sink; but there is something in here"—he arose again to a sitting posture and tapped his chest—"something that won't die and allow me the satisfaction of not giving a damn."

"You are ambitious," reiterated Jahl.

"And what if I am? It only serves to aggravate my degradation."

"Listen. You can satisfy your ambitions."

Rossiter stared. Then his features relaxed and he reached for another cigarette.

With a couple of quick strides Jahl crossed the room and drew from behind a dingy oil-stove a heap of limp and dripping garments. The action brought his powerful physique into prominence, and he was, without doubt, a magnificent animal.

"Your grave-clothes," he remarked, dropping the sopping rags to the floor. "Not what the man was accustomed to whom they called Dandy de Rossiter at college."

"Right you are. Which leads me to remark that I suppose I am indebted to you for the fact that my nakedness is now clothed in dry garments." Surveying himself: "A very decent fit. A trifle large around the body and somewhat baggy; but beggars, you know—"

Like his host, he was clad in a soft woolen shirt and trousers of coarse material, shapeless except for the general outlines imparted to the costume by his big, athletic figure.

"I see you are beginning to feel like yourself once more," said the older man, drawing up a stocky chair and seating himself beside the cot. "Perhaps now is the time to explain why I saw fit to meddle with your affairs, save your life, and reveal myself to you."

"I am deeply curious."

"In the first place, your disgrace and discharge from the naval service was the biggest piece of injustice ever enacted."

"My friend, you are several years too late with that announcement."

"But not too late with the proof."

"What do you mean?"

"Your close friend through college was Fred McNeil. Circumstances threw you together in the service, and at the time of our unpleasantness with Spain you found yourselves holding commissions on the same vessel. One

day McNeil was arrested on grave charges. Copies of authentic secret documents were intercepted on their way from him to the enemy. If they had reached their destination they might have had the effect of prolonging the war many months."

Rossiter was listening with expressionless features.

"As his closest friend, you were permitted to see McNeil. You found him in a pitiable state of mind. He showed you a letter from his home in which it appeared that his mother was on her deathbed. You knew and loved this woman. Being motherless yourself, she had almost occupied that position to you in your younger days, and you could well picture the results that would follow upon her son's disgrace at this time."

"It would have hastened her death," observed the listener.

"To make a long story short, you confessed to sending the despatches, gave a circumstantial account of the manner by which you had managed to shift the blame by making it appear that the traitorous papers came from him, and you were dishonorably discharged."

"All of which," observed Rossiter, "you do not in the least believe. As you know, McNeil reached his mother's side in time to make her dying moments peaceful. He left the service soon after, and died two years later. I felt that this released me from my self-imposed silence and tried to regain my honor by baring the facts you have just related."

His face grew bitter. "I was a fool to open my mouth. Nobody believed me, and it only made the subject fresher in the minds of some who might have forgotten."

"I believe you," asserted Jahl. "In my opinion you were a fool—but you were not a traitor. I have proofs."

"There are none. The only man who could have cleared my name is dead."

"Nevertheless, I have them. How

did I come by them? I wanted them, my young friend, and with me to want is to have. So shall it be with you."

Despite the extravagance of the other's assertions, Rossiter was unaccountably thrilled by the confidence with which they were uttered. He gazed more curiously at the man and began to find him an enigma which baffled casual reading. Ugly, repulsive at moments, as he was, Jahl's every movement was accompanied by an intangible evidence of power. His claims of extraordinary ability and knowledge somehow did not appear absurd or boastful.

"Prove it," demanded the guest, with a thrill in his voice. "You can guess what I want—respect of my peers, entrance into good society, honest money enough to maintain my position, and—"

He hesitated, but Jahl completed the sentence—"The girl."

Rossiter stared at him a moment, then turned away. "Oh, well," he replied hopelessly. The yawning gulf between himself and his desires was again opened to his vision by the reminder.

"For many weeks," said Vaniman Jahl, stepping to the oil-stove and setting about a few simple preparations for a meal, "I have been keeping an eye on you, investigating your past, planning your possible future. I am an old man—older than I look," he added, with apparent irrelevance.

"My life has been spent in learning. If I had youth I would soon surpass them all."

He seemed to be ruminating. Suddenly he commenced speaking again more briskly.

"Did it ever occur to you that it takes two lifetimes to make a man successful? There is nothing more true. What would I now be if I had possessed my hard-won knowledge and mastery of human nature at your age? Leader, captain of finance, anything I wished."

He commenced frying some sau-

sages in a sooty skillet. "Well, that dream may be over, but I can still live and enjoy success, not in my own carcass, but in another—yours! What do you say, Edwin?"

He used the name for the first time, and his intonation was almost paternal.

"Say?" replied his auditor, who had been staring with astonishment through the strange harangue. "I don't know what to say, except that either you or I must be a couple of degrees off in the upper story."

"And doesn't it thrill you when I say I can take you and make you what you choose to be? How much of your indifference is feigned when I look you in the eyes and say this?"

He approached slowly, with a succession of crouching steps, the frying-pan poised from one gorillalike arm. Despite himself, Rossiter could not meet those glittering pupils without a shiver of apprehension, and, having met them, he could not withdraw his eyes.

The leering visage approached still closer. By an almost superhuman effort of the will Rossiter flung himself erect and tore away his fascinated gaze.

With a chuckle, the other returned to his culinary labors.

"We'll get on famously," he asserted. "To-night you'll naturally stay here with me, as you haven't any money. I saw you give away your last handful of change to an old woman near the water-front. That was very thoughtful. Naturally, as your destination was the bottom of the river, you would have no further use for the currency of this world.

"Here is bread, and here is milk," he added, moving quickly from cupboard to table; "and here are sausages, which you may have, if you feel equal to them. In a few more weeks—perhaps days—we will be dining at the finest restaurant on Broadway, or, perhaps, your own butler will be serving us with terrapin. Not a bad prospect—eh?"

"I am very curious," replied Rossi-

ter, attacking the sausages as if he had not attempted suicide a few hours previous, and had not just arisen from a bed of unconsciousness—"I am very curious to know how you manage to take such pipe dreams seriously."

"Will you give me your oath to obey my wishes in every particular, do as I say, think as I say—in fact, let my word be the controlling force in your life?"

Rossiter paused, disconcerted.

"This is the only condition I make to fulfilling my promise of satisfying your ambitions. I will satisfy them and win you a position beyond your dreams. Only put yourself freely into my hands."

The young fellow took a deep swallow of milk. "Oh, well," he announced, "if the game grows distasteful, I still have the escape that I tried last night. Let me observe, though, that you have a big obstacle to overcome."

"You mean the naval incident? Ah, but I have the proofs of your innocence."

"I hate to exhibit so much incredulity, but I must see them before taking this thing seriously."

The other went to his trunk, ran through its contents hastily, and returned.

"Read that," he directed, slapping a yellowed sheet of paper on the table.

The sentences scrawled over the face of the document were almost illegible in places.

I, Frederick McNeil, being on my dying bed and desiring to make my peace with God, do hereby confess and declare that I am guilty of the treason for which Edwin Rossiter received the punishment, namely—

"It's true!" shouted the reader, proceeding no further, but rising and brandishing the paper. "How you obtained this, I don't know or care. It's Fred's handwriting, and it means my release from this life. You won't lose by this, let me tell you."

"Where are you going?" demanded

Jahl; for, shoeless and hatless, Rossiter had started for the door.

"To my father's. It's all right. You'll be rewarded for this."

"Don't attempt to leave this room. Stay where you are!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort. This changes the situation completely."

Jahl doubled up like a jack-knife, pouncing upon his guest with arms and feet together. Although the onslaught was unexpected, Rossiter recovered his balance and struggled against the fiend incarnate who grappled for his windpipe. He managed to fall on top of his assailant.

This was by no means Rossiter's first rough-and-tumble fight. This time, however, he found himself matched with an opponent worthy of his prowess, and, in addition, he was weak from his recent ordeal.

In a few moments Jahl had him pinioned to the floor, relentlessly bringing his weight to bear on the doubled fist in which the paper was clutched.

When he had secured the document he arose, and before Rossiter could follow had burned it to a cinder.

CHAPTER II.

They Make a Compact.

"YOU—fiend!" Rossiter exclaimed brokenly.

"Sit down," commanded Jahl, and his countenance was not good to look upon.

More because of faintness than of inclination to obey the order, Rossiter sank into the nearest chair. All the furniture in the room seemed to have been built on a pattern to withstand the owner's heavy onslaughts.

The expression of the latter lost its hardness as he observed the dejected attitude of his recent antagonist. His thin lips tightened, however, when Rossiter commenced speaking.

"I don't know what reason I have for complaint. Certainly I am no worse off than I was yesterday."

"Look at me," commanded Jahl, and when he had done so Rossiter again experienced the fascination which made it almost impossible for him to withdraw his eyes.

"The things for you to learn," said his rescuer and tormentor, "are many. The first that I intend to impress upon you is that I am a very extraordinary man. The second is that you are nothing more than a bungler, with no one to blame for your present position except yourself."

A sudden thrusting forward of the heavy jaw checked an impulsive movement on the part of the listener.

"You are all this, and more to the same effect," went on Jahl; "but I would never have taken the trouble to study you and save you from the foolish end you intended putting to your life, if I had not foreseen your possibilities. Where were you going with that piece of paper?"

Relieved of the silence-imposing glare, Rossiter replied: "To my—to my father, of course."

"Your father is dead."

The brutal suddenness of the announcement caused the young man to shrink.

"My father—dead! Unforgiving—thinking the worst of me to the last!"

Rossiter was stricken with grief surprising even to himself. His boyhood recurred vividly to mind—the days when his father had been more like a chum and a playmate than a parent. And then the old gentleman's pride in his son's college record and subsequent naval career—up to the time of the fatal climax. Yet even the memory of the parting scene could stir no bitterness in the son's mind now. He remembered that even at the time he had felt more sorry for his parent than bitter because his explanation fell on harsh and incredulous ears.

"You seem to know everything," he said dispassionately. "Can you tell me any details about his last moments? Did he speak of me?"

"He died searching for you."

"Here? In New York?"

"In the South Seas."

"But why? I have never been out of this city for three months at a stretch."

Briefly the story narrated by Vani-man Jahl was this:

Benjamin Rossiter, feeling the advance of years, had gradually experienced a softening of sentiment against his son. Then a communication reached him from a trading-captain, who had discovered a young man named Rossiter on one of the islands in the vicinity of Australia, where he was living as a sort of king among a small following of natives. Although the captain had no proof as to the islander's identity, old Rossiter fitted up a ship, placed the trading-captain in charge, and sailed for the South Seas, inspired with zeal to find his boy and forgive him.

Nothing was heard of the expedition for several months. Less than two weeks ago the ship sailed into the harbor of New York, minus three of the crew and the man who had financed the expedition. The captain was grief-stricken and remorseful. They had anchored near an uninhabited island, and the old gentleman, by his own request, had been rowed ashore. He had strayed away from the rest of the party and failed to return when the signal was given. A search was organized, which finally resulted in the discovery of his mangled body at the foot of a dangerous cliff.

"So my father had forgiven me, after all," mused Rossiter. "He forgave me, believing the worst."

"I more than suspect he did not entirely believe the worst. The terms of his will would indicate as much."

"His will!"

"With a few trifling exceptions, he left all his property—five million dollars—to you, provided—"

"Provided what?"

The ugly face leered triumphantly.

"Provided that within three years you can clear your name of its disgrace."

"Ah!" Rossiter sank back crushed. "And you have destroyed my one hope of ever accomplishing this."

"And can just as easily do so again."

Although the words were completely enigmatic, the manner accompanying them aroused hope in the man to whom they were addressed.

"If I could make that, I could make another. Let me show you."

Smiling diabolically, the speaker went to his cupboard and produced a few sheets of paper, pen and ink, and several letters. A light was commencing to dawn on Rossiter.

"Do you mean that the confession was forged?" he exclaimed with a gasp.

"And why not? It is very easy. Watch."

Staring fascinated at the pale, tentaclelike fingers, so out of keeping with Jahl's square and massive build, Rossiter saw appear the first few words of the destroyed document. The writer progressed slowly with the sentences, glancing frequently at the letters spread out before him as models.

"I can finish this later," he observed after a few moments. "The only thing necessary was to obtain some letters in his handwriting. That was easy, once I had located the girl to whom he had been engaged, and bribed her maid. When I have written it satisfactorily the aging of the paper is a mere chemical process."

"And so McNeil never made a confession!"

"That fact matters little to us. We are not the brainless nincompoops who stand waiting for destiny to throw things our way. It is my method, and it will be yours when you have progressed further under my teachings, to be my own destiny."

"But you can't do anything with that piece of paper. It will never answer the purpose."

"Why not?"

"Because— Well, for one thing, I won't be party to such a fraud.

"It is deception in a good cause—the cause of truth and justice."

"Anyhow, don't expect that because the document fooled me it will deceive a set of lawyers and experts and a jury."

"It will deceive them."

Rossiter reflected.

"Hell!" he exclaimed at last; "what do I care? Do as you like, and make what you please of me."

A smile of the most extreme pleasure suffused the other's villainous countenance. He patted his protégé on the shoulder.

"That's spirit. That's the way to talk. Now we can settle down to business. You'll find that my only thought is for your best interests, in spite of all. Now, I think you had better try to sleep. We have a hard day before us to-morrow. Do you realize that you were unconscious for the biggest part of twenty-four hours?"

With a mental reservation that he would take things into his own hands in the morning, Rossiter threw himself upon the cot, and his well-rounded chest was soon rising and falling with the regular respiration of deep slumber.

Jahl, notwithstanding his great bulk, flitted silently about the room. When he had gathered several papers and documents together, he divided them into two piles, one of which he burned on the oil-stove.

The other he folded into an inside pocket, and silently left the room, carefully locking the door from without.

CHAPTER III.

Food for Thought.

AN odor of frying steak was the first thing that pierced Rossiter's slumber. He awoke to find himself very hungry.

The noise of traffic in the streets had settled down to a steady hum, indicating that the morning was well under way.

Jahl turned from his steak to find his guest sitting up, regarding him with blinking eyes. Rossiter's face was covered by a three-days' beard, his hair was tousled, and his costume was nothing but a pair of baggy trousers and a rumpled shirt, open at the neck; yet, even so, he made a rather fetching and picturesque vagabond.

"So! About time you were awake."

"I've broken all records for sleep in the last two days," was the laughing response.

"Natural," observed Jahl, deftly turning the contents of the skillet into a plate. "You hadn't slept for three nights previously—that's one reason why you threw yourself off the bridge. And then I think you struck your head under water; that would account for your remaining unconscious so long. There's the basin."

When Rossiter had ducked his head in cold water and rubbed himself dry with a coarse towel, he declared that he felt fit as a lark, and the manner in which he made away with the steak left no doubt of his healthy appetite.

"You will want to see the morning papers, I presume," said Jahl.

"Not particularly. I've dropped out of the world so completely that not even the police news interests me any more."

"Look these over while I clear up the breakfast mess." Jahl laid a couple of newspapers on the table.

Almost the first head-lines to attract the young man's eye converted his careless glance into a stare of amazement.

ROSSITER NAME CLEARED OF ODIUM

**Frederick McNeill Brands Himself as Traitor.
Confession Bared After Four Years.**

Missing Son Is Heir to Millions.

The article was continued on an inside page, where appeared photographic reproductions of the confession and portraits of Rossiter, his dead father, and Fred McNeill.

It appeared from a perusal that, although Edwin Rossiter had completely dropped out of sight, he was suspected to be somewhere in New York.

"So I've become a lost heir," remarked the subject of the article. He was a trifle nettled to find that his resolve to take matters in his own hands had been forestalled. "I wonder how they got hold of this so quickly?"

"I took great care that they should."

"When?"

"Last night. There are many reasons why publicity at this point will prove invaluable to our plans."

"I'm not sure that I relish it. Somehow, it cheapens my name."

"Nonsense. You flaunt your pride of name too early. It is necessary to reinstate you firmly in the minds of all. Who can doubt in the face of this?"

"I don't know. Perhaps you are right. Who is the executor of the will?"

"James Quincy."

"Naturally—my father's lawyer and trusted friend. You will have a hard time pulling the wool over his eyes. Will there be a very strong contest?"

"Not that I anticipate. The facts about your father's death are firmly established, and the evidence I will bring to bear can hardly fail to convince him of the genuineness of the—"

"Of the forged confession?"

"Yes."

"What is the program for to-day?"

"You must go out with me, get a shave, a bath, a manicure, and everything else needful to look the part of a gentleman. You must buy the best-fitting suit of ready-made clothes in town, and appear in it at the office of James Quincy."

"I don't like this—"

"Let up on this everlasting objecting. I have figured the plan out very carefully," said Jahl, his ugly forehead wrinkling with an impatient frown.

"But look here—"

A timid knock interrupted the sentence.

Jahl went to the door, and opened it to the extent of a crack.

"Mr. McInnis," exclaimed a hoarse and high-pitched voice, "I got to come! I could not keep away. Two policemen—"

"Come in!" snarled Jahl.

The specimen of humanity that entered aroused in Rossiter a sense of pity and disgust. He was tall and heavy set, but his muscular tissues had degenerated into fat. His unkempt clothes were worn, and he walked with a drooping, shambling gait. The stolid face was covered with a thick, black beard.

The visitor stood twirling his hat diffidently, and was apparently in great terror.

"I got to come," he repeated. "Two policemen—"

Without the slightest warning, Jahl, who had been glaring at him ferociously, swung his arm, and with open palm struck the speaker a stinging blow on the side of the face. As the man cowered away the blow was repeated.

"What did you call me?" Jahl demanded.

"I—I— Mr. Mc—"

The arm was raised threateningly.

"Mr. Yowl!" shrieked the victim in correction.

The arm was dropped, but its owner's voice remained still menacing. "Do you know what will happen to you, Julius, if you breathe that name on the witness-stand?"

"I sure remember, Mr. — Mr. Yowl!"

The blood was pouring from the poor fellow's nose from the force of the blow, and he was a pitiable sight. Rossiter had been too completely taken by surprise to interfere before the incident was over. He strode quickly to a heap of clothes in the corner and snatched up a bandanna handkerchief, which he immersed in the basin.

"Take this," he commanded. "Don't get blood all over your sleeve."

The helpless creature seemed grateful for the assistance.

Jahl looked on contemptuously. "Come, now. Out with your business. What brought you here?"

"The 'policemens—they—they—I saw—"

"Nonsense, Julius! You are a hopeless case. Every time a bluecoat glances your way you think he is on your trail. You had no business coming here to-day. If you don't obey my instructions better hereafter—"

"I will, Mr. McInnis. I—"

Jahl darted forward again, but his upraised arm was intercepted by a quick movement of Rossiter's.

"None of that while I'm here," the latter commanded sharply. "I won't stand by and permit such inhuman treatment."

Without a demur Jahl turned away and opened the door.

"You get," he commanded the unhappy Julius, "and be quick. Wait a moment. If this gentleman is pointed out to you again, you haven't seen him—understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Mc—"

"What?"

"Yowl!"

The departing feet could be heard shuffling down the hall as the door was fastened. Turning, Jahl observed:

"You were very foolish to interfere. The only way to teach Julius anything is to knock it into his head."

"I fail to see what his calling you McInnis mattered. It is no concern of mine what other names you may have gone by."

"No, but it may be the concern of some people very important to our plans. If I allow the little things to pass without punishment I won't be able to depend on him in the big ones—your coming affair, for instance."

"Mine!"

"He is the person I have decided upon for a witness."

"Great Scott! And you would put my fortunes in the hands of a half-witted creature like that! Supposing there should be a contest and cross-examination. He couldn't stand up five

seconds to the story you'd drill into him."

"He'll stand up for what I tell him to," declared Jahl between set teeth.

"You are crazy! He couldn't. How can you make him?"

"I have a hold on him. What it is you needn't bother to inquire, but it is like a clutch of iron."

Rossiter remained silent, but he was growing to like the business less and less. He was becoming involved with a class of people who fairly nauseated him, and he saw no chance of breaking away, except by renouncing all hope for the inheritance; for Jahl held the key to the situation. Even worse, his claim appeared to be substantiated by such a slender tissue of fraud that he did not see how it stood any possibility of winning out.

Apparently divining his thoughts, Jahl remarked reassuringly: "There, don't get discouraged. If you knew me better you would understand that I leave nothing to chance—that the scheme I have in mind is worked out to the last detail. I leave nothing to chance," he repeated.

Late that morning a young man, clean shaven, perfectly groomed, immaculately attired, and filling his suit with a perfection of physique such as is rarely observed, strolled down Broadway and turned off with evident reluctance at one of the intersecting thoroughfares.

It would have been difficult to recognize the Edwin Rossiter of the night before. He found it difficult to recognize himself, and for that reason had elected to reach his destination *via* Broadway, just for the satisfaction of passing other well-dressed men and meeting their glances on an "I'm-as-good-as-you-are" basis.

"Yes, this must be the building," he mused, looking at an address. "Now, to enter the portals of my new life. Maybe," he added as a grim afterthought.

He pushed through the revolving-

doors with a haste which he tried in vain to calm. As he did so a girl ran directly against him.

"I beg your pardon!" she exclaimed, lowering the handkerchief, which, pressed to her eyes, had prevented her from seeing him.

"Certainly. It is I who should—"

But Rossiter never finished that sentence. He was staring after the trim figure which disappeared through the revolving-doors. His glance at her face had been only a brief one, but there could be no mistake.

She was the girl of the ravishing smile.

His stupefaction lasted only a moment. Bursting after her, he reached the sidewalk in time to see her climb hastily into a closed carriage, which immediately moved off rapidly up the street.

After the carriage had been out of sight several seconds the young man realized that he was exciting curiosity by his attitude.

"She was crying—or had been," he mused, slowly reentering the building. "Wonder what could have been the reason? Last time she was cheerful, except for the momentary fright."

The rush of events during the past few hours had driven thoughts of the girl from his mind, but since he had seen her again he felt that nothing ever could make him quite forget.

It was not her eyes, and yet they were large and expressive—tear-filled this time. It was not her soft, rosebud mouth, or her fresh young skin, or her daintily perfect figure. All these details were distinct to his mental vision, yet Rossiter felt that there was something more—something which affected him profoundly.

With a mental vow to learn something definite about her identity, should a third meeting be vouchsafed him, he entered the office of James Quincy, attorney and counselor at law.

The mysterious Vaniman Jahl, who appeared to have foreseen everything, and to have had every detail of the

affair ready weeks in advance, was responsible for the fact that Rossiter had a card to send in.

James Quincy rushed out in person to usher his visitor into the private office.

"How do you do, my dear sir? Come in—come right in. Well, well! We wake up in the morning to hear wonderful things about you, and by noon you drop into our office."

"Nothing strange about it," replied the visitor. "Only two nights ago I fell in with the man who has the proof of my innocence in his possession, and I came here as soon as I got wind of how matters stood."

"Ah, then you have seen the confession!" exclaimed the lawyer. "The newspapers succeeded in springing an absolute surprise on me. I was even inclined to doubt the authenticity of the article."

"Exactly what does this confession mean to me?"

"If it is genuine and reliably supported, as I sincerely hope will prove to be the case, it means that you will come into the property I am holding in trust for your departed father, amounting to approximately five million dollars. I can give you a detailed statement if you desire."

Although he felt that it was unwise, Rossiter could not forbear asking a question that was weighing heavily on his mind.

"Is there—is there likely to be a contest?"

"To be frank, I believe so. I had supposed this fellow McNeil to be absolutely without a near relative in the world. So far, I was correct; but it appears that he had some fairly influential—ah!—friends, who seem determined to prove that the confession is unauthentic—perhaps a forgery."

His hearer drew in a sudden, quick breath, and the lawyer glanced at him sharply.

"Is there any possibility of that sort?" he demanded with searching directness.

"As I live, the confession is God's truth, every word of it; but—"

"Don't worry," said James Quincy with relief. "In that case we'll come out all right; we're bound to. The only other question to come up will be that of your father's demise."

"Is there any doubt on that score?"

"Edwin, I only half believe your father is dead."

"What! It can't be— Why do you— For Heaven's sake, Mr. Quincy, don't arouse my hopes if you haven't anything to back them!"

There was subdued excitement in the other's tone. "The evidence seems conclusive. I failed totally to shake the testimony of Captain Mars and others who described your father's tragic end; and yet there is a voice—a fine perception—within me which fails to be convinced."

"Have you any grounds—"

"None whatever. I merely feel that there is something wrong. Either he is not dead, or there has been foul play connected with his death."

"I am glad you told me this," said Rossiter with intense feeling. "Depend upon it, I will leave no stone unturned to uncover the mystery."

CHAPTER IV.

The Probate Trial.

ON his return Rossiter discovered that Jahl had effected a change in his appearance which was almost equal to his own. The working man's garb had been cast away in favor of a neat, black business suit of quiet design. There was not even a fancy waistcoat to give the flashy appearance one would involuntarily have looked for in a man of this type. The improved attire could not altogether redeem the ugly, hairless head; but it gave the man more the appearance of a successful financier than the gorilla he had resembled previously.

He listened attentively to the account of the interview.

"I am glad the executor is friendly," he remarked, "as there will evidently be a contest. However, I was prepared for this, and you need have no apprehensions."

Rossiter had a great many apprehensions, but he did not voice them.

"How about the suspicion of foul play in connection with my father?"

"As to that I do not know," was the indifferent reply. "I obtained my information from the accounts of the inquest. The evidence seemed absolutely conclusive."

"And you say you expected that this confession would be doubted?"

"I knew Fred McNeil had the confidence of some influential, though not wealthy, people."

Rossiter no longer felt qualms over the strict morality of obtaining his inheritance by a ruse. The fact that his father might be in urgent need of assistance cast all other considerations in the shade and aroused his impatience to obtain the money, in order that he could be in a position to use it for clearing up every doubt.

He devoted part of the few days before the settlement of the will to hunting up the records of the investigation into his father's death. As Jahl had said, the evidence seemed conclusive. The captain's story had been substantiated by six members of the crew. None of them had witnessed the fatal plunge, but they had all recognized the clothes and other effects of the mangled body.

Rossiter succeeded in locating Captain Mars of the trading vessel Oceana. He found him in front of a pretty little cottage—a small, bronzed seaman—one of the class who think a great deal and say little.

"So," the captain mused, puffing at a short, black pipe, "you are Rossiter's son? Yes, I will be willing to tell you the circumstances connected with his death."

"I have read some accounts, but there are several points I wish to clear up. What is your explanation of

how my father came to fall off the cliff?"

"I was not present, so cannot do more than guess."

"How did he happen to wander off alone?"

"The men who took him ashore were busy with the boat."

"Was there an opportunity for foul play?"

"How do you mean?"

"Wouldn't it have been possible for some enemy to have followed him and pushed him over the cliff?"

"None of my crew. I was able to account for every member for the time between the hour when he was last seen alive and when he was found dead."

"Did all the men who found him testify at the inquest?"

"All except two. Those two became mutinous and attacked me on the way home. I was obliged to shoot them in self-defense."

Somehow this statement aroused the suspicion of the questioner, perhaps because it sounded so cold-blooded.

"Why did they attack you?"

"They were very ugly characters, both of them. Shortly before we reached the island they had a quarrel with a messmate and killed him."

"Ah, then, perhaps they also committed this other crime."

"I do not think so, Mr. Rossiter. I investigated their movements, as well as those of all the others who went ashore."

The young man left Captain Mars, acknowledging to himself that there did not appear to be a loophole for error. It was impossible that collusion could exist between all who testified. His father was dead beyond all question of a doubt, and yet—possibly because of the seed the lawyer had sowed in his mind—Rossiter experienced a vague, intangible suspicion of something not aboveboard. He felt that there was a question the answer to which would settle the doubt; but he could not quite formulate it.

Jahl insisted that the attorney who was to defend Rossiter's interests at the probate trial should be of his own selection. The prospective heir was not at all satisfied with the appearance of the man chosen. Morrison Dodge, counselor at law, was quite evidently of the shyster class; but Jahl declared that the lawyer would handle the case, under his direction, better than the most accomplished legal adviser. As it turned out, his part was negligible at most.

The McNeil interests were arrayed on the opposite side of the room. They consisted of two heavily veiled ladies and their attorney.

"Who are those people?" whispered Rossiter to Jahl, as they sat waiting for proceedings to begin.

"A Mrs. Chapin and her niece, Miss Virginia Underwood," was the answer. "The Underwood girl was engaged to McNeil."

"Too bad," murmured Rossiter. "This must be a severe ordeal for her. I almost regret—"

"What!" the other shot suddenly.

"Oh, well, I suppose one can't help occasionally treading on other people's toes."

When the stage of the proceedings was reached wherein was to be taken up the question of his own eligibility to the inheritance, Rossiter stiffened inwardly.

He observed that the two women on the other side of the room also displayed agitation.

Rossiter himself was first placed on the stand. He answered satisfactorily Dodge's questions as to his name, age, *et cetera*, and declared that the confession was composed of statements that he knew to be true. He disclaimed having had any knowledge, until within a few days previous, that such a document existed. Dodge turned him over to the McNeil lawyer for cross-examination.

"When did you first see this document?" demanded the latter, indicating the confession.

"On the seventeenth—the day I became acquainted with Mr. Jahl."

"Did you know that such a confession as this would entitle you to be your father's beneficiary?"

"Not until afterward."

"The account of the will and your father's death had been published in all the papers two weeks before. How did it come that you, of all people, knew nothing of it?"

Rossiter hesitated; then explained frankly that he did not know of his father's death, for the reason that for more than the last two weeks he had been on a "spree."

He saw the two women start with surprise, and surmised that they must have been trying to reconcile his present appearance with this evidence of his past life.

"Do you recognize the writing in this alleged confession?"

"I do." Which was very true. He recognized it as Jahl's work, although it looked very much like McNeil's.

"How did you find Mr. Jahl, the possessor of this paper?"

"I didn't. He found me."

"Do you object to relating the circumstances?"

"I do."

This raised a laugh, which the judge quelled.

"I shall be obliged to require that you relate them."

"Very well. I had thrown myself in the river, and Mr. Jahl pulled me out."

"What caused you to throw yourself in the river?"

"I— There was a girl—" He paused.

"Go on."

"I had become despondent over my condition and the hopelessness of ever regaining my rightful position in the world."

"You mentioned a girl. Who was she?"

"I don't know."

"What had she to do with your attempted suicide?"

"To tell the truth, I had happened to render her a slight service. She offered me a tip, and—well, that suddenly made me realize how low I had fallen."

The lawyer abandoned this line of questioning as unprofitable. After a few inquiries relative to the truth of the facts set forth in McNeil's confession, he excused the witness, who retired, overpowered with thankfulness that he had not been asked directly whether he believed the paper in question to be all it purported.

Vaniman Jahl next took the stand.

"Kindly describe the circumstances under which you signed this paper as a witness," said Dodge, after the preliminaries.

Rossiter could not but gasp at the circumstantial manner in which Jahl related the supposed events. Evidently here was a man who no more feared to perjure his soul than to eat his breakfast.

Jahl declared that he and Julius Lunkenheimer had been staying at a cheap lodging-house in Atlanta, Georgia, when, one day, a preacher knocked at the door and asked them to step across the hall and act as witnesses to a certain paper.

Complying, they found a man in the last stages of consumption propped up by pillows. They witnessed the document now in evidence and retired. Shortly afterward the preacher came out and told them something of the sick man's history.

According to the preacher, McNeil had tried to keep up the appearance of interest in life after causing another to suffer for his crime; but the matter had weighed on his mind until it brought on the disease from which he was dying. Rather than face the pity of his friends and his sweetheart, he had slipped away to die in obscurity. At the last he had called in the preacher and confessed his crime. The good man had prevailed upon him to make his peace with God by writing a full confession.

At this point the McNeil lawyer took up the cross-questioning.

"Please tell the court how you came into possession of the paper."

"From that time I helped take care of the patient. Two days later he put the confession into my hands and asked me to forward it, with other papers and a notice of his death, to the authorities."

"Yet you deliberately disobeyed his explicit wishes by withholding this writing?"

"No, sir. I placed the papers in an envelope, which I mailed as directed, and since then the matter had faded from my mind. A month ago I discovered this paper among some old documents of my own. I was horrified. I do not know how such a terrible omission could have occurred."

"Why did you not make the document public as soon as you discovered it?"

"I was overwhelmed with fear at the possible consequences of my carelessness. While I was trying to make up my mind what to do, fate threw the young man concerned under my protection, and I felt that I could no longer hesitate."

Rossiter marveled at the ease with which the artful dissimulator had met the examination. But he trembled and his heart sank when the name of Julius Lunkenheimer was called.

That, under a grilling fire of questions, this feeble-minded witness could hold to the story drilled into him by Jahl seemed next to impossible. The only hope Rossiter could foresee was that his own lawyer would be able to prove the man's damaging admissions the result of an impaired memory.

The witness gave his occupation as that of sweeping out and performing other menial duties about the institution known as the Red Eagle Saloon.

"Do you recognize this document?" inquired Dodge.

"Eh?"

"Have you ever seen this paper before?"

"Oh, sure, yes! I write my name on that paper, five—six year ago, down to Mrs. Carmicheal's."

"Is this your signature?"

"I do' know."

His eyes wandered toward the ferociously glaring Jahl, and he added hastily: "That my name, what I write."

"Tell the court the circumstances under which you wrote your name. What happened at the time?"

Julius was evidently in doubt as to whom or what the term court referred; but, under the hypnotic glare of the beady eyes which never left his face, he gave a rambling though fairly coherent account of the supposed affair. Rossiter was perspiring with anxiety, but Jahl had done his work well, and the story corresponded essentially with his own. Now for the cross-examination.

"Do you know this person?" demanded the opposing lawyer, indicating Jahl.

"Sure; I know him."

"How long have you been acquainted with him?"

"For always."

"Where did you first meet him?"

Dodge was on his feet in an instant. "I object! It is immaterial to this investigation what happened prior to the events with which we are concerned."

The court sustained the objection.

"Very well. Were you acquainted with him on the date mentioned in this confession?"

"I live with him," replied Julius simply.

"Where?"

"Just where I tell you before. Down to Mrs. Carmicheal's place."

"In this city?"

"No! I tell you, down at Mrs. Carmicheal's place in Atlanta."

"Who did you say first signed this paper?"

"The sick man. First he write. Then I write my name—no, the preacher he write it next; then they tell me write my name. Then Mr. McInnis he write."

"McInnis? You said nothing about the presence of any one by the name of McInnis."

Julius looked in confusion at Jahl, whose beady eyes were fairly boring holes through him. The perspiration stood out on the poor fellow's brow.

"No!" he shrieked. "I don't say nothing about any McInnis. I say Mr. Yowl, he write next."

"Do you mean that Jahl went by that alias during one period of your acquaintance?"

This called forth an objection from Lawyer Dodge, who seemed to have been instructed to fight to the last gasp any attempt to delve into his employer's past.

"Objection sustained," said the court.

Three handwriting experts were introduced as witnesses; but their testimony did not interest Rossiter. Jahl had told him the exact amounts promised to each for their perjury, and he shut his ears as much as possible to the evidence which, from his point of view, was merely an evidence of human depravity.

The record of the circumstances under which he had been dishonorably discharged from the service was introduced. Certainly all had pointed to McNeil as the real traitor, and the only thing that saved him was the fact that another assumed the blame.

The case was a clear one, and the judge could do no less than declare that the conditions of the will had been complied with. No doubt the evidence of Julius had contributed largely to the ease with which the decision was obtained. Aside from his one slip, the fellow had proved the star witness for the defense.

The man who a few days previous had given a poor woman the only coin he possessed in the world, and had then thrown himself in the river, left the probate court practically in possession of five million dollars.

Jahl, Mr. Dodge, and several others crowded up to shake his hand. Some-

what bewildered, the newly declared millionaire was responding as best he could to the congratulations, when James Quincy approached the group.

The executor took the young man's hand heartily and said in a low tone:

"Mr. Trimble asked me to say that his clients would like to have a word with you."

"Certainly." Rossiter excused himself.

The two women were waiting beside their carriage. One of them raised her veil, and revealed a middle-aged, haggard countenance.

"Mrs. Chapin," said the lawyer.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Rossiter," said she; then, turning: "My niece, Miss Underwood"; at which her companion also raised her veil.

The young man gasped, and murmured something in the way of acknowledgment.

Miss Underwood—the girl who had been engaged to the traitor and false friend, Fred McNeil; the girl who had made every effort to deprive Rossiter of his inheritance; the girl who had listened to his sordid confession of drunkenness and attempted suicide; the girl who now confronted him, coldly defiant—was none other than she who had been almost constantly in his thoughts ever since that fateful night when the expression of her eyes had driven him to hurl himself into the murky river depths!

She was the girl whose life he had almost dreamed of as indissolubly linked to his own by bonds of fate.

Inwardly shrinking from the cold hostility of her gaze, he wondered with dull curiosity why she had sent for him.

CHAPTER V.

The Incubus.

WHEN Miss Underwood addressed him her voice was cool and even.

"I only wish to say, Mr. Rossiter, that we have no personal feeling about

the matter which has just transpired. We were interested in Mr. McNeil, and desired to preserve his name from unmerited disgrace. Mr. Trimble tells us that he is satisfied there can be no mistake as to the truth of the confession. You will understand our position."

Rossiter colored painfully.

"If I had known— You can't imagine how sorry I am that this had to involve you."

She turned to enter the car.

"It would be unreasonable for us to hold you responsible," she replied coldly.

"Really, I am sorrier than I can express." A wild suggestion flashed through his mind. "If you could let me explain—"

"No explanations are necessary."

"But I want to compensate in some way. Let me call on you and see if there isn't something—"

"My aunt and I are preparing to leave New York for an extended journey. Under the circumstances we cannot receive any visitors."

Rossiter stared at the car in dejection. He had been snubbed, and deservedly, for he had transgressed every law of good taste, he told himself. The six years of social outlawry had left a stronger impress than his early breeding. He must set a guard upon himself.

Turning, he found James Quincy watching him reflectively.

"I am sorry to have caused Miss Underwood pain," he observed.

"It was unavoidable. I am sure she entertains no deep resentment. I told her before she entered into the case that the facts seemed reliably attested. However, she was more concerned about her aunt. You see, they have only a moderate income, and—"

"I noticed that Mrs. Chapin looked very ill."

"Nervous breakdown. The doctor prescribed an extended sea voyage, and they have not the means to fit up a private yacht."

"But Miss Underwood said—"

"So I heard. Perhaps they have found a way."

Rossiter was privately of the opinion that the girl merely used the first excuse that came to her mind for cutting short his presumptuous insistence. He kept this thought to himself.

When the elder Rossiter sailed on his fatal journey, some four months previous, he had left his palatial home in charge of the servants. The executor had not yet closed the mansion, so the heir took up his residence in the house from which he had been banished and instituted practically no change in the arrangements.

He found that his one-time associates were more than glad to receive him back on his old footing, or even better. He became a member of such clubs as he desired to, and if he had cared to reenter the navy he could have had his former commission. Yet, although he accepted the reinstatement, his attitude was not that of the man who had enjoyed a similar position six years previously.

He could not forget, and probably never would, how the people who now fawned on him had been ready to kick him when he was down.

In his new round of interests he had nearly forgotten the existence of Vaniman Jahl, whom, strange as it may appear, he had not met since the trial. It must be admitted that this caused him no regret, although he made a few desultory inquiries for the man.

Two weeks to a day elapsed before Vaniman Jahl declared himself. Rossiter was disagreeably surprised to find him in the breakfast-room when he came down in the morning.

"Ah, my young friend," exclaimed the self-invited guest, with a paternal air which irritated its object unreasonably, "you appear startled."

With the best grace he could command the host answered:

"Little wonder. You drop in and out of my life unexpectedly, like some Arabian Nights' jinnee."

Jahl's ugly countenance expressed a

certain degree of satisfaction at the simile. "No jinnee ever was responsible for a change equal to the one I effected in your life, eh? From a derelict's grave to affluence—quite a rise in the world, was it not?"

Rossiter felt a guilty twinge at recollection of his involuntary first thought on beholding the man, and he hastened to make amends.

"I am glad you came at last," he returned heartily. "I have been anxious for an opportunity to thank you and give some tangible evidence of my appreciation for the great service—"

"Tut, tut," was the rejoinder; "I know you are thankful, and pray don't mention the matter of reward as if I were some servant waiting for a tip."

"But I feel that I must do something."

"Of course you do. Grant me your confidence and friendship. They are all I want."

"I can surely do no less."

"Then that is settled. There are some matters of business which must be attended to at an early date. We may as well discuss them at our breakfast."

"Certainly. I was just on the point of inviting you to join me. Oh, Roberts, set another plate for Mr. Jahl."

The visitor smiled as he took his seat. "Don't stand on ceremony with me. Act just as though I were your father. In truth, I am old enough to be. Perhaps it would be wise," he added, "since in a manner I am to be your private secretary, for you to instruct the servants to carry out any orders I may feel called upon to give them. It will save us both considerable inconvenience."

Rossiter stared. This was going very much too far. Confound the fellow's presumption!

"I do not want to offend you, Mr. Jahl, for I appreciate what you have done for me; but this is altogether too raw. I am ready and anxious to reward you to any reasonable extent, but as for making you my secretary—"

"You are going to make me your secretary!"

The ugly, compelling look that Rossiter had learned to know in his first day's acquaintance with the man was fastened upon him with full intensity. No words could express the menace it contained.

The butler's reentrance broke the spell.

"What do you want?" demanded Rossiter in a low voice. "Will a hundred thousand dollars satisfy you?"

"My absurd young friend! Oh, Roberts, just leave the toast and coffee. We will ring when we want you."

The servant looked inquiringly at his master. Rossiter felt a great desire to countermand the order, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"I will give you two hundred thousand to be quits," he muttered as Roberts withdrew.

"Let us come to an understanding," Jahl observed, frowning. "You and I will get along together famously, I am sure; but you will first need to be set right concerning certain points."

"In the first place, the sooner you discover that I am no ordinary man, the better for you. I thought I had given you evidence sufficient to prove this to your satisfaction. In the second place, you are absolutely in my power."

"I refuse to believe it!"

"What! You, the man whose only hold on position and wealth is a forged confession and a half-dozen perjured witnesses?"

With a gasp, Rossiter realized that the full horror of his position was epitomized by Jahl's sneering threat.

"You committed the forgery!" he exclaimed. "You wouldn't dare imperil your own liberty by confessing."

The other laughed. "Do I appear like a man who will be so easily frightened? Don't you know that I could give the word that would set your house of cards tottering and myself disappear off the face of the earth, to all practical purposes, in time to avoid the crash? Don't you know it?"

And as Rossiter met the fiendish, glittering eyes, he did know it incontrovertibly.

"Now, do we understand each other?"

"I suppose so," was the grudging reply.

"Don't be so glum about it. Just give the servants the necessary instructions, and tell them to get the rooms corresponding to your own, in the west wing, ready for my occupancy."

"I don't see that it will be necessary for you to live here."

"The fact that I think it will is sufficient."

Jahl forced this home with a threatening glare, and added: "By the way, have you a check-book handy?"

Rossiter produced one from his pocket.

"There were obligations incurred at the trial which must be met. If you prefer, I will give an itemized statement. Three handwriting experts at—"

"No, no," interrupted Rossiter. "What is the total amount?"

"Say, one hundred and twenty thousand."

While the check was being drawn he added: "Of course, it will be necessary for me to keep up my end of appearances here. Perhaps you had better arrange a checking account in my name of about five hundred thousand dollars. The transfer of an equivalent in property will answer."

Although this was put in the form of a suggestion, Rossiter knew that it amounted to a command.

"Very well," he muttered, and took up the morning paper to avoid further conversation.

He did not read. His thoughts were in such a state of boiling tumult that it was impossible for him to focus them upon printed words.

He raged inwardly at his subjection to this leering personality across the table. Could it be possible that he was saddled for life with a modern old man of the sea? If so, the shorter that life, the better.

What had placed him in such a position of horror? First, a sacrifice which those who knew the facts were pleased to designate as noble; second, a desire to attain that which was his by right; and, third—ah! it was for this third that he was reaping his punishment.

If he had never agreed to connive with a plot which he felt to be detestable, he would never have found himself in the present humiliating situation of dependence on a man who was repugnant to him in every way.

Also, an inner voice reminded him, he would not have found himself comfortably eating a faultless breakfast in the luxury of his present quarters.

The situation was so many-sided that of one thing only could he be certain—that he hated his rescuer and benefactor with an intensity the like of which he had never experienced in his most intense of lives.

The object and cause of all this pent-up emotion was calmly buttering small pieces of toast and eating them with the restraint of a born aristocrat.

"What do you find of such absorbing interest in the want ad. columns of the newspaper?" he inquired sneeringly.

Rossiter had not been aware that he was looking at the want-ad. page. To cover the evidence of his perturbation he replied:

"It is a habit of mine. One often finds more amusing items in the personal column than on the first page."

"For instance?"

"Well, listen to this:

"Nice looking, loving widow, 35, alone, plenty of means, wishes to meet gentleman of means; object matrimony. Address Box C 791."

"Naive and touching," observed Jahl. "I will make a note of her box number. Read some more."

"Refined young lady, 28, wishes to exchange photographs with gentleman—"

"Doesn't interest me," interrupted Jahl. "I refuse to enter into beauty competitions. Proceed."

"Two ladies desire to obtain passage on trading-vessel or other craft bound on a long voyage. Will pay reasonable rate for satisfactory accommodations. Address V, Box 579."

"H-m," said Jahl. "Why should two ladies desire to ship for a long sea voyage?"

"Spirit of adventure, perhaps."

"Spirit of health, more likely," was Jahl's reply. "It has become a fad among a certain class of doctors to prescribe something of the sort for patients whom they feel certain they will lose anyway."

Rossiter had commenced folding up the paper. He suddenly paused, turned back to the advertisement, and reread it carefully.

He left the breakfast-room, frowning thoughtfully.

CHAPTER VI.

Kidnaped.

CAPTAIN MARS of the Oceana was busily sucking his pipe and apparently thinking of nothing in the world except the irregular sky-line of New York as it appeared through the mist from the starboard rail of his vessel. In reality he must have been acutely aware of his immediate surroundings, for, without turning, he spoke to the young fellow who approached him silently from behind.

"So you think she'll do, eh, Mr. Rossiter?"

"Nothing could suit me better."

"And the women's cabin, is that to your taste?"

"My taste? Yes. However, I'm not the final judge in that quarter."

"It pleases them down to the ground."

"Ah, then they were here this morning?"

"Both of them. And you'd have died laughing, Mr. Rossiter, if by chance you'd heard my attempts to explain having such luxury on board an ordinary trader."

"We certainly did convert the Oceana into a palatial little boat," was the satisfied reply.

"True; and it didn't look just right to the youngest one, either. She's sharp as needles; but I convinced her that it was a whim of mine to have everything fancy."

"You closed the deal?"

"Tight and shipshape. Their trunks are coming aboard to-morrow morning."

"Of course, you let them believe that you were the owner of the ship?"

"Never spoke your name at all. Forgot entirely to mention that, though I was the owner, you had leased the little vessel."

Rossiter departed, satisfied, to make final arrangements for the trip.

When he had first mentioned to Jahl his intention of fitting up a vessel to search for his father's grave in the South Seas the other had raised a torrent of objections. He found his protégé firmly attached to the purpose, however, and suddenly reversed his attitude.

He became so completely reconciled that he declared his intention of joining the expedition, and offered countless suggestions of the greatest practicability and value. It had been his idea to engage Captain Mars for a skipper, and, instead of buying a yacht, to refit the Oceana, which was one of the fastest steam crafts of its kind afloat.

The novelty of this idea appealed to Rossiter. When the work had been completed, he found himself in possession of what was from all outside appearances an ordinary weather-beaten merchantman, but which proved to be a model of convenience within.

Captain Mars had puffed thoughtfully on his pipe when the object of the expedition was explained to him.

"Yes; I can take you to the grave of your father, and I'll agree to do it," he replied. "Perhaps it is fate that you should go to seek him."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, young fellow, that wherever that bald-headed, fish-skinned Jahl goes, there'll be unholy things a doing."

Which vehement assertion explained no more than that Mars was not so particularly fond of Vaniman Jahl that you could notice it.

One other member included in the personnel of the ship's company was Julius Lunkenheimer. Jahl had overruled protests against his coming by the argument that he might get to "blabbing" and so start more trouble than could be easily handled on their return.

Rossiter suspected that Jahl's true reason was his desire to have an ally on whom he could absolutely depend in case of an emergency. He found himself speculating as to the nature of the hold which the man possessed upon the poor fellow.

Julius was fairly efficient as a cabin-sweeper and baggage-porter. When, shorn of his heavy beard and arrayed in a neat uniform, he carried the luggage of the two passengers aboard, it was evident that he created a favorable impression in their eyes.

"It is really too good to be true," observed the younger woman, as they steamed out of the harbor. "One can find almost anything by advertising."

Her companion was not so sanguine. "I think that when you said 'too good to be true,' you fully expressed the situation."

"Now, auntie, don't be a wet blanket. We're started, and it's too late to turn back. This morning I thought the cabins appeared too elaborate to be just natural; but Captain Mars explained matters in a way that was perfectly satisfactory. What on earth is the matter!"

"I—it is nothing. Merely one of my fancies, child," was the breathless answer. "I thought I saw that horrible-looking person who was in the court-room."

"Where, auntie?"

"In the pilot-house, talking to the

captain. He's gone now, if I did see any one."

No other incident occurred to mar their enjoyment that day, and both aunt and niece regarded what the former had seen in the pilot-house as an illusion.

In the evening they sat on deck until Mrs. Chapin complained of feeling chilly; then they went below. The niece only remained in the cabin long enough to make her charge comfortable; then she returned to enjoy a few more fascinating moments with the moon and waves.

As she emerged on deck, a man who had been smoking by the rail suddenly became galvanized into action. The glowing end of his cigar described a spiral in the air as it shot over into the water, and the figure glided quickly out of sight.

The man had been too large to be mistaken for Captain Mars, and the outlines of his costume were certainly not those of a deck-hand.

The girl did not speak to her aunt of the incident, and although she kept her eyes suspiciously alert, neither during the next day nor evening could she observe another trace of the disquieting fellow passenger.

It was with the very purpose in view of having no fellow passengers that they had made an effort to secure quarters on a vessel of this kind, as the aunt's nervous condition rendered her averse to meeting people. They had counted themselves fortunate in obtaining such splendid quarters at moderate expense, and on a ship where there were none to make demands for intercourse.

Their meals were served to them in their cabin, and they could have desired nothing more exclusive than their situation.

Whether this exclusive arrangement was proving altogether satisfactory to both may be doubted. At any rate, Captain Mars was frequently made a not unwilling partner to a *tête-à-tête*, and Virginia Underwood appeared to

derive some satisfaction from conversing with the simple Julius.

The latter had become her abject slave by the end of the second day.

"Julius," she remarked, looking at him searchingly, as he was slowly swabbing the deck, "have I ever seen you before?"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied.

"I have! Where?"

Julius suddenly discovered himself on forbidden ground. He closed his lips resolutely.

"Why don't you tell me?" she demanded.

"I must keep my mouth shut."

"Indeed. Who said you should?"

"I must keep my mouth shut," he repeated doggedly.

Her curiosity was aroused; but more than that, she felt that this reticence was of actual concern to her. She brought into play her most bewitching smile.

"Julius, I had begun to think you liked me. I must have been mistaken, or you would tell me this."

The intensity of his answer surprised her. "I would do anything for you, miss."

"Then why don't you tell me what I want to know?"

"If I tell you, I sure die. But if you say I must, I will."

He spoke with such deep conviction that, despite her incredulity, she was constrained to abandon the subject.

"I certainly don't wish to be the cause of any one's death. I think you must be mistaken. Tell me one thing, has some person on this ship commanded you to keep silent?"

He was no dissembler. The answer appeared on his tightly closed lips.

"Oh. Well, I am sorry for you, Julius. Perhaps you will tell me all about it some time."

"Maybe," he replied, and hurried off in response to a call.

The girl turned and gazed out to sea. When she next glanced around, her startled eyes fell on a young man faultlessly attired in yachting flannels.

He was standing beside the rail, regarding her with a smile.

"You!" she gasped. "Mr. Rossiter!"

"Good morning, Miss Underwood," he replied, lifting his cap. "There is the prospect of a very pleasant day—don't you think so?"

He turned away and began a smiling inspection of the horizon with his binoculars. This allowed her time to recover her self-possession and made their meeting seem almost a casual drifting together of semistrangers on shipboard.

Yet for some reason her color came and went, while her hands gripped the rail tightly.

"Mr. Rossiter!" Her voice came at last, full of suppressed fury.

He turned inquiringly, as if her presence had nearly escaped his memory.

"Will you tell me, were you on board when we started?"

"Not being fish or bird, I couldn't have arrived since."

"Mr. Mars distinctly informed us that there would be no other passengers."

"No other paying passengers, I believe he meant; which is true. I limited the number so that there should be only two."

"You!"

"I have leased the Oceana for this trip, you see."

"Then you deliberately lured my aunt and me on board under false pretenses."

"That is a serious charge, Miss Underwood. What false representations were made? Aren't the quarters and service fully up to your expectations? If not, I will see that—"

"You understand perfectly well what I mean. I can see it all now. Somehow, I knew that such sumptuous quarters weren't to be had for the amount we agreed to pay. I don't know what your object is; but you evidently had some reason for wishing to get us on board."

"Perhaps I had; but I assure you the reason was nothing concerning which you need feel apprehensive. I merely saw your advertisement, and as I happened to be going on a long cruise and there was plenty of room, I thought you might as well have the benefit of my yacht."

"But can't you realize that you are the one person with whom I least care to sail?"

He winced at this.

"I wish you would tell me frankly," he said—"is it through any fault of my own?"

She hesitated. "Perhaps not; but you surely understand that everything associated with you is very painful to me."

"Miss Underwood, I once cared for Fred McNeil and can appreciate your feelings toward him. Even more, I loved his mother, and I made a sacrifice which proved it, I believe."

"Now, when I had suffered six years for his weakness—suffered damnably, horribly—can you attach to me the least blame for desiring to clear myself when the opportunity offered? Remember, at the beginning of the action I had no knowledge that there still existed any one who would be injured by learning of his—unworthiness."

"Of course, I didn't matter," she remarked sarcastically.

"You did matter," he corrected. "When I discovered your identity, after the court proceedings, I will tell you honestly, my first impulse was to declare the whole thing a frame-up, and give you back your confidence in the man you—you had loved."

"Don't," she implored. "Can't you see you are hurting me?"

"I can realize that this is painful in the extreme. That is why I want to get it out of the way, once and forever. The reason I did not follow my first impulse was because I believed that in some other way I might be of more actual service to you. My chief object now is to assist you. If I can—

not do it directly, I will manage to do it indirectly."

"And that is why you have kidnapped us," she suddenly flared, "and are taking my aunt and me to no one knows what fate against our will!"

Rossiter raised his voice. "Captain Mars, there will be a change in my arrangements," when the latter appeared, his everlasting pipe under full steam. "We are going back to New York. How soon can you make the harbor?"

"In about two days—a little over."

"Full steam ahead, then."

The girl was regarding Rossiter disdainfully.

"Do you suppose I don't know a bluff when I see it?"

"You are mistaken if you think this is one."

It was already evident that the ship was changing her course. Still, Miss Underwood maintained her air of incredulity.

Her unwelcome host kept himself as much out of her way as possible for the rest of the day. Jahl made his appearance shortly after the interview. He wore an angry expression and tramped up and down the deck a great deal with his hands behind his back. He passed Virginia several times without appearing to notice her.

Mrs. Chapin did not leave her stateroom. She was apparently the only person on board who was suffering from sea-sickness.

Virginia spent a rather lonely afternoon. Finally she came upon Julius, who was methodically polishing the brass fixtures of the launch, from which the canvas shroud had been removed, and a longing for companionship caused her to linger.

"How carefully you are doing that," she observed, by way of an opening sentence.

"Yes'm." He flushed painfully.

"Do you like such work?"

The matter of liking or disliking what one was told to do lay outside of his ken.

"I do' know," he answered dully.

"Yesterday we were talking about where I had seen you before," she remarked. "I remember now; it was at the trial. Will you tell me whether it was Mr. Rossiter who ordered you to keep me in ignorance?"

Julius glanced around in apprehension.

"Was it Mr. Rossiter?" she insisted.

The answer was given in a low voice. "No, ma'am."

"Are you sure? Then it must have been Mr. Jahl."

His terror was so evident at the mention that she had no need to continue the subject.

"I believe I will sit here where I can talk to you. Would you mind bringing my steamer-chair around?"

He started with unexpected alacrity to obey the request, and almost ran against Vaniman Jahl, who had been approaching with an attitude of deep study.

"Where are you going?" demanded the latter. "Get back to your work."

"I—Miss—I only go for to get—"

"Don't argue with me. You were shining those brasses. Keep at them until I tell you to stop, and quit running around the deck, bumping into people."

"But I must—"

His expostulation was cut short by a stinging box on the ear.

"You had no right to do that!"

The girl's voice startled the bully. He turned sharply. Her eyes were blazing and her delicate hands were clenched tightly in anger and defiance.

"You are a beast!" she exclaimed. "I had sent Julius on an errand, and there was no necessity for you to strike him."

Jahl met her indignant attitude with a thrusting out of his heavy lower jaw.

"Oh! Then you are one of the interfering kind?"

"I will certainly interfere to the best of my ability in anything so brutal. If

this were New York I would have you arrested."

His menacing expression relaxed in a grin. "But this is not New York, and many things can happen on board a ship."

"I don't wish to discuss the matter with you. Merely keep your hands off of Julius in the future while I am around."

She would have turned, but the sudden ferocity of his countenance caused her to hesitate. She found herself gazing into the small, glittering eyes which had so fascinated Rossiter in his first experience with the man.

"You will soon learn," he said in a low, tense voice, "that the only one on this ship entitled to give orders is myself."

He advanced slowly, still holding her eyes with the hypnotic glare. She stood frightened and horrified, but seemed incapable of retreating or turning away.

The spell was broken by the sudden intervention of a tall figure in gray flannels.

She uttered a gasping sob of relief and sank back for support against the rail as Rossiter halted, looking angrily from one to the other.

"What's going on?" he demanded.

Virginia recovered herself. "This man struck Julius because I sent him from his work on an errand. I tried to interfere."

Rossiter turned to Jahl. "So you've been ill-treating Julius again? I warned you that this would have to stop, or we would part company. Also, you have been frightening Miss Underwood. Hereafter you will leave the women on my ship strictly alone. If I hear of your so much as speaking to them, I will settle matters with you very shortly."

Since the advent of the new factor in the incident Jahl had not uttered a word. His only answer to the angry command was a sardonic leer. Virginia hastened below.

She had been frightened, but her pre-

dominating sensation was anger. She spent the early part of the evening in her stateroom, and then went on deck, partly to cool herself and partly with a view to meeting Rossiter, for it occurred to her that she had failed to thank him for his intervention. Once having settled this debt, she could resume her attitude of disdain.

She recognized the voice of the man she sought on the forward deck. Just before making her presence known she also recognized the voice of Jahl. The two were speaking with an absence of caution which indicated greater feeling than discretion. The voice of the younger man was sullen and protesting, that of his companion tense and angry.

"I have decided that you shall remain in New York," the latter was saying."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then—" The voice was lowered, and Virginia could not catch the words. Involuntarily she moved closer.

"You are a fiend!" came the protesting answer.

"Nevertheless, you will do as I say. Either you continue this voyage with the passengers you now have—or you remain at home."

"But, why—"

"For very good reasons of my own. I was opposed to this wild-goose chase in the first place, but relented from my fondness for you, notwithstanding that I had important matters needing my attention in New York. Now, after I have adapted my plans to your whim, you want to change the situation entirely, and the limit of my patience has been reached."

"I have given my word to Miss Underwood. I must take her home."

"The more fool you. However, I have spoken my final word on the subject."

"It will be impossible for you to keep me from resuming the cruise. I have paid Captain Mars for the use of this ship, and he will take me out if I say so. I don't know that I care

particularly what you do in my absence."

"Do you think that Captain Mars would stir from shore against my orders?"

"Then he is a creature of yours, also?"

"He is mine, body and soul!"

Virginia shivered as she heard the menacing tone of this last sentence. Somehow, it left no room for doubt.

"Then"—and there was a break in Rossiter's voice—"I suppose I shall have to give up my expedition?"

"Which means that you insist on returning to New York?"

"I can do no less."

The eavesdropper withdrew into a shadow, and Vaniman Jahl passed by. When he had disappeared below she stepped forth and without hesitation walked toward the scene of the conversation.

The young man was seated on a coil of rope. The utter dejection in his attitude caused her to soften involuntarily toward him.

When she spoke her voice was almost sympathetic.

"Mr. Rossiter."

He jumped to his feet.

"Are we still headed for New York?"

"Direct for the Statue of Liberty," he answered.

"And you are doing this on my account?"

"Solely, Miss Underwood. I have made a big blunder of this thing from start to finish, as I have of my life. I can only do my best in reparation."

"Frankly," she observed, "I thought at first you were bluffing. A little later I found myself beginning to fear that you were not."

His eyes searched her face eagerly.

"Now that I am sure of it," she continued, "I am going to throw down my hand and confess that I do not want to go back."

"Miss Underwood!"

"Please don't misinterpret my motives," she added slowly. "I have my aunt to consider. If such a voyage as this is what she needs, my personal feeling should not prevent her from having it. Besides, I have no right to demand of you such a sacrifice."

"I would make any sacrifice for you," he replied, with a directness that caused her to be thankful for the darkness which hid the sudden rush of color to her face.

"But if you are coming with us, Miss Underwood, I—well, I want to arrange things so that you will experience the least annoyance possible. I realize how painful my presence must be, and I will agree to confine myself to my own cabin as much as possible. Then you won't have to see any more of me than is necessary. I'll leave orders so that at night you and your aunt will have a large section of the deck to yourselves."

Several moments elapsed, and she made no answer. He started to walk away.

"Good night, Miss Underwood."

"Oh, Mr. Rossiter, let me say a word before you go."

He stopped instantly.

"I don't wish you to feel that way about me. Somehow, I seem to have gone through a mental readjustment since this morning. I can't bear any ill will toward you. It is foolish and illogical for me to even try to do so. I am unable to think of you, despite your wealth, except as a lonely figure in the world. Does it offend you to hear me say this?"

"Not when you use that tone."

Again she had cause to be thankful for the darkness.

"I believe you need a friend, Mr. Rossiter," she exclaimed impulsively. "Do you?"

He grasped her extended hand as if it meant his one salvation in the world. He was too choked with emotion for verbal reply.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

THE FIGHTING FOOL*

A SERIAL IN V PARTS—PART II

BY DANE COOLIDGE

Author of "Hidden Water," "The Texican."

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

LUM MARTIN, a fighting man of the Southwest, who is suspected of having a touch of Indian blood in him, is chosen town marshal of the town of Hackamore, which for a long time has been used as a playground by a bunch of riotous gun-toting cowboys. Lum selects as his assistant for the perilous game of teaching the cowboys good manners, one Sycamore Brown, a mere youth, who is, however, all courage, all sinew, and dazzling skill with his own six-shooter. Sycamore Brown is the fighting fool, who wins his title at the outset by holding up a bunch of cowboys and taking their own weapons away from them. In the swift peace, however, which descends on Hackamore, Lum and Syc are left with nothing to do. They become associated with Jack Haines, who has already made a reputation for himself as a train robber. The three plan a successful train robbery, it being Sycamore who does all the most dangerous work and Lum who corners the cash. Not long after the robbery, suspicion of treachery creeps into the relations of the conspirators. Sam Slocum, a famous hunter of bad men, who is chief detective for the railroad company, investigates the crime. Syc gets a tip just in time that Lum is going to arrest Jack on his own accord, and also accuse Sycamore himself, thus securing their part of the loot. Sycamore makes a rush to Slocum, and is turning State's evidence just as Lum Martin and Jack Haines themselves appear before the justice. Slocum has been expecting them. He gives the signal and Lum and Jack are arrested.

CHAPTER VIII.

And a Steer.

THREE days after the great hold-up, and while the country was still seething with the excitement of the mad pursuit, Lum Martin yielded to the importunities of his partners in crime and let them come out to the house.

Not since they held up the train had they so much as seen their plunder, and up to date the men who had left the posse to pick up Mexican dollars had more to show for their trouble.

Jack Haines was getting surly over the repeated delays, and Sycamore couldn't sleep nights for dreaming of piles of gold. But not of gold alone, for most of the money was in paper—

sheaves and sheaves—he had seen it when he grabbed it out, but never had broken the packages.

Would they be ten-dollar bills, or hundreds? Somebody had even told him that there were thousand-dollar bills!

They slipped out to the adobe separately—in the heat of the day, when nobody was around—and Lum received them nervously, pacing up and down like a prisoner and going back to look out the door.

"Well, where's the swag?" demanded Haines as soon as he arrived.

"Sh-h-h!" hissed Martin, glancing about as if he expected the walls to give up armed men. "Don't talk so loud, for Gawd's sake! This town is alive with detectives!"

"Well, gimme my share of the boo-

* This story began in *The Cavalier* for March 15.

dle, then," rejoined Haines, "so I can have something to travel on in case I should have to skip."

"Lawzee, Jack," protested Lum, "don't you never think of driftin'; those detectives would follow you a million miles if you'd skip out of town. No, sir! The thing to do is to lay low and go about yore business; don't say a word; don't look like you knowed anythin'; and whatever else you do, *don't spend no money!* That's the way they ketch all these hold-ups—they ketch 'em when they spend their money."

"Well, what'd we git the money for?" inquired Haines, swelling up a little and swaggering. "I guess me and Syc has got something to say about this. Let's have a look at it, anyhow."

"Sure, Lum," chimed in Sycamore; "let's git it out and divide it, anyhow. I want to know how much we got."

"Well, by Gawd, boys," protested Martin, "still pacing to and fro, 'I hate to go anywheres near it. These fellers are likely to git something on us any minute, and if they do they'll rake this country with a fine-toothed comb until they find our cache. I know that old Sam Slocum, and I tell you he's a dangerous man to monkey with. Now, let's jest wait a while—don't be in sech a hurry—"

"No, I'm damned if I will!" broke in Jack Haines. "I've worked for that money, and I'm goin' to have it!"

"Let's see how much we got, Lum, anyhow!" urged Sycamore. "I was in such a hurry I never had no time to look at it!"

A sigh that was almost a wail broke from Martin as he gazed from one to the other.

"If you boys knowed half as much as I do about this detective business," he complained, "you wouldn't go nigh that cache for a year. Old Sam is workin' on them G Bar boys now—he's lookin' up their Texas records and findin' all sorts of things—and he don't suspect us, nohow."

"But the minute one of us goes to spendin' more than his salary—look

out! He'll have detectives on our track in a minute." He paced up and down again, sighing and shaking his head lugubriously.

"Now, listen to reason, boys," he said. "What do we need the money for now, anyway? We all got good salaries, and we're gettin' pickin's on the side. Jest let this boodle lay a while until Sam Slocum goes. Then we'll divvy up and slip out of the country and go off and live like kings."

"Well, let's look at it, anyhow!" insisted Sycamore eagerly. "We don't need to spend none, but let's see how much we got."

Jack Haines said nothing at this, but stood off to one side craftily watching the chief to see how he would answer his favorite. This tendency on the part of Lum to hold back their money looked very bad to him, especially as he had foreseen it from the start, and he was glad to see Sycamore awakening. So he stood silent, waiting for the reply upon which would hinge his future actions.

Perhaps Lum Martin discerned the secret in his pose—for he was quick to read the evil in men's hearts—for he checked the stern refusal which leaped to his lips, and turned to pace the floor.

"If I give you boys this money," he said at last, "you got to promise not to spend none."

"All right," responded Sycamore. "Where is it?"

But Haines said nothing.

Once more Lum Martin paced the floor.

"I hate to divide that money up," he said, talking half to himself; "it's jest three times as likely to git found."

"Well, let's look at it!" cried Sycamore impatiently. "I don't want to take it away; I just want to see how much we got."

"Yes," observed Haines quietly—"here, too!"

For the last time the arch-conspirator dropped his head in thought. The two of them were against him—he

must set them against each other, and then he could win back Sycamore. He glanced out the door again, closed it, and walked swiftly across the darkened room. They would quarrel if he threw out some money. For a moment he knelt in the corner behind some boxes, rose up hurriedly, and came back with a small canvas bag.

"Here!" he said, and with a dexterous flip he let fall a shower of gold upon the floor. Instantly the two men flung themselves upon their knees and scrambled for it, clutching at the fat tens and twenties first and raking the dust for the fives, while Lum Martin gazed down upon them with a saturnine smile.

He, too, had this lust for gold, but it did not lead him to clutch at it. He could look ahead and calculate.

"Now, put it all together," he continued as they stuffed it into their pockets, "and we'll have an even divide."

"Uh-r-r!" protested Haines, who had seized the major share of it. "I thought you was givin' us a money grab!"

"No such thing!" returned Sycamore. "He threw it for us to look at. Say, where's them bundles of bills, Lum? Them's the boys that interest me!"

"Well, I'm goin' to keep these, anyhow!" asserted Haines doggedly.

"You *are* not!" answered Sycamore. "This ain't no hoggin'-match: it's a straight whack-up. So jest shell out, Mr. Haines. I reckon I got something to say about this, too!"

"Oh, who are you, you big, swelled-up kid?" sneered Haines, reluctantly giving up the money. "You think you're hell, don't you, since you busted that car up with dynamite?"

"Well, that's more'n you c'd do," retorted Sycamore; and Lum Martin sat back and watched them quarrel. He had to give up something, anyhow, and while they were quarreling about the gold they were asking no questions about the rest.

So he let them wrangle until they were tired, and then he dealt out the money. Piling it up before him according to the denominations, he took a stack at a time and dealt the coins out like playing-cards—one, two, three—until each had an equal share.

"That's right, ain't it?" he inquired, counting his own back into the sack.

"Sure!" answered Sycamore carelessly, "and here's that seventy dollars you loaned me." He counted the gold off his stack and was putting the rest away when Haines spoke up.

"How about the fifty you owe me?" he suggested.

"You'll git it!" replied Sycamore shortly.

"All right," said Haines, holding out his hand.

"When I git good and ready!" finished up Sycamore.

"I'll git it now!" answered Haines hotly.

"You've got it, you dam' thief!" cried Sycamore, suddenly threatening him with an accusing finger. "I seen you slip them twenties into yore pants!"

"You lie!" snapped Haines, and as each man went for his gun, Lum Martin drew like lightning and covered them both.

"That'll do," he observed quietly. "Now you boys see how long you'd last if it wasn't for me here to run things. A gun-play, mebby, and somebody hurt—the folks come runnin', and find you full of twenties. Then we'd all go to the pen for life, and Sam Slocum would be happy.

"Now listen! If you boys don't quit yore foolin' and do what I say I'm goin' to blow on you and run you in for train robbin'! I never robbed no train!"

"Huh!" grunted Haines disdainfully.

"No, and Sam Slocum will believe me, too!"

"Not if he knowed you like I do!" responded Haines; but after a minute's

silence he thought better of his grouch. "What d'ye want us to do?" he asked.

"No more'n you'd do for yore-selves," answered Lum feelingly. "Be reasonable—that's all! Don't quarrel—don't flash yore money—don't make no breaks! And whatever else you do, boys, stand together! Because if one of us falls down, we're all down. We're down and done for, and they'll railroad us to the pen. I don't want you to fergit that."

He paused and looked at them a minute, and then his thoughts came back to the fight. "Now, Jack," he said, "if you've got any money held out. I want you to give it up!"

"Ain't got no money," replied Jack shortly.

"All right, then. Now, Syc. you pay him that fifty you owe him, and I want you boys to quit fightin'."

They quit, and Syc paid over the fifty dollars; but when they met again over in town they glanced at each other in surly silence and passed on by. Sycamore buried what remained to him of his money—it was less than three hundred dollars—by a fence-post in Round Valley's pasture, and tried his best to be good; but Jack Haines went on a strike.

Money had no value to him unless he could spend it, and, intoxicated by the clink of the big twenties, he embarked on a wild carousal which strewn the town with gold. Three days later the detectives dropped into town, as hoboes, as miners, as cowboys out for a time—and sooner or later they all edged in on the night watchman and insisted upon buying the drinks.

The secret was out, for every one of those gold pieces was of a certain mintage and stamped with a certain date. Gold coins are rare in Arizona, and the records of the express company and the Denver mint left no doubt as to the facts, but there is a big difference between facts and legal evidence, and no man could prove that Jack Haines had stolen his gold. There were other coins

of that same date and mintage in circulation, and a man is presumed to be innocent in this enlightened age until he can be proved good and guilty.

That is what the detectives were there for, to get the evidence on Haines, but from the time the first false friend arrived and tried to get him to talk, Jack Haines became suddenly and aggressively sober. He realized, when it was too late, that he had made a slip; and from that day to the end of the chapter he never gave out a hint. Strangers who accosted him met with sudden and stinging rebuffs, often with a curt warning to leave the town; and more than one of Slocum's men saw the inside of the local jail.

Lum Martin noted their advent and suspected the cause, and the "move-on" ordinance of Hackamore was enforced to the very letter.

It was fight now, a struggle between the detective forces of a great and powerful corporation and three grim officers of the law, and at a word from their chief the two deputies would do anything short of murder. All social relationships were cut off; even the local "kids," with whom Sycamore had been wont to exchange jests, were told to go their way, and it settled down to a question of endurance.

All eyes were upon him as he passed, the bantering, jovial welcome which every man had given him was forgotten, and he walked by without a word. But when he met a G Bar man, as now and then he did, a secret, sneaking twinkle would show in the cowboy's eye, and then he would turn suddenly grave. The G Bars had suffered much, but now they were waiting, waiting!

That was one thing that Sycamore was not good at—waiting. Anything that called for action was right in his line, but this loafing around under surveillance, this keeping a careful pose and never submitting to any friendly impulse, was beginning to get monotonous.

Sam Slocum came to town and

talked the matter over with him impersonally, with a chance word here and there about the advantages and exemptions attending upon turning State's evidence; but Sycamore answered him guardedly, taking it for granted he was talking about somebody else. For Sycamore had never spent a dollar of his stolen money, and there was no man who could prove that he had stolen it—no man, that is, except Jack Haines.

They were crowding Jack pretty hard now, and his record was against him. What if he should weaken and confess! Then it would be Sycamore Brown who would serve the long prison sentence, while Jack and Lum dug up the treasure. These and similar thoughts passed through his mind as he dawdled about the town, loafing in front of saloons and walking up and down the streets; but he put them resolutely away from him, for they had all sworn to stand pat to the end.

It was while he was in this uneasy mood, his young blood clamoring for action and his mind clouded by doubts, that he happened to wander down to the depot one day to meet the train from the west.

More than a year had passed now since he had come to the short-grass country, but his mind kept turning back to the old range—the *sahuaros*, the sandy desert, the Mexicans and Indians, and all the old boys around town. Even as he was conning them over the train came in and a gay young man, with a cigar in his face, dropped down from the rear of the smoker. He was dressed in the latest style and had on a derby hat, but somehow his walk seemed familiar. Though he had no friends who wore hard-boiled hats, Sycamore looked at him again, and at the same moment the stranger recognized him.

"W'y, hello, old socks!" he shouted, struggling with a heavy sample-case as he rushed over to shake him by the hand. "I thought you was punching cows back on the Gila!"

He wrung his hand effusively, and as Sycamore looked it gradually dawned upon him who the man was—Roy Hackett, a boy who had been shot-gun messenger with him when they were bringing out treasure from the old Paymaster Mine at Chula Vista.

"Well, hello—Roy," he said, backing off and sizing up his loud attire. "Well, who'd a thunk it—where'd you git that hat?"

"Chicago!" answered Hackett briskly. "On the road now—selling clothes to order. Have to rag up, you know. Say, where's the best hotel in town?"

"Right over ther," replied Sycamore, pointing to Hackamore's one caravansary; "and the worst, too!" he added; "but, for the Lord's sake, Roy, where'd you git them pants?"

"Made in Chicago, old boy—The Bon Ton Tailors. Come around to my room and I'll measure you for a pair, free of cost, for old times' sake. I'm traveling for 'em, you know. No more cow-punching for me, brother—I make more money on the road in a week than I made on the ranch in a year. Gee, I'm glad to see you again, Syc; how are they coming, anyway?"

"Oh, so-so!" answered Sycamore; "I'm deputy sheriff here now. But, say, I got to git me a pair of green goggles if I'm goin' to look at that suit much. How long you goin' to be in town?"

"Overnight—that's all. May stay another day if I can get orders enough to justify. By George, Sycamore, you're just the man I'm looking for! Gimme a knock-down to your friends and say a good word for me, and I'll rig you out like a king. Come on over to the hotel with me, and we'll talk it over—and I'll show you the latest spring styles."

They hurried off together, and in the excitement of looking over the styles and samples Sycamore entirely forgot what was on his mind. Here at last was a chance to spend some of his hidden money and have it go out

of town, and after a jolly supper together he left his old companion and slipped out to the hole by the fence. After all, it is the joy of spending the money that counts—the knowledge that you have laid it away gives pleasure only to a miser.

And to meet an old friend like Roy Hackett! Why, he and Roy had took the town of Chula Vista several times when they were off duty at the mine. He was a great kid, old Roy—always laughing and talking; but he had his nerve with him, too!

So thought the simple-hearted Sycamore as he rooted out part of his treasure—and in a manner of speaking he was right, for in the interval of his absence the nervy kid Roy was holding a hurried conference with Sam Slocum.

The stage was all set when he returned, and Roy was just as laughable and talkative as ever; but as he measured Sycamore for his new suits he became silent and prepossessed.

"All right, old man," he said at last; "there's the measurements, and I'm sure it'd be a good fit; but by God, Sycamore, I kind of hate to take your money!"

"Oh, that's all right!" laughed Sycamore. "I got plenty more. Here!" He chucked him fifty dollars, as if to make light of the sudden display of anxiety, but Hackett still looked at him solemnly with anguish in his eye.

"Syc," he said, "I've always been a good friend of yours, haven't I? I wouldn't give you a steer if it wasn't right—now, would I? Well, while you was gone I was out looking around, and I heard something that give me a scare. I don't know what you've been up to, Syc; but if half of what this feller said was true, you won't be here when I git back—so you better keep your money."

He sighed regretfully and handed the fifty dollars back, but Sycamore paid no attention to it. He had suddenly caught the idea.

"What did the feller say?" he asked, and, though he spoke calmly and quietly, there was a wild, hunted look in his eye—for if it ever came to a pinch he had made up his mind never to be taken alive, not if he knew in time.

"Well, I'm a stranger here and couldn't make much out of it, but he said you and another feller had robbed the train—and a feller named Lum Martin had arrested your pardner—and he was going to confess. Jack, he called him, and he said the judge was up there waiting for him now."

"Jack who?" demanded Sycamore, his eyes dilating with fear.

"James—or Hayes—or something like that," answered Hackett; "but I couldn't just—"

"Jack Haines!" corrected Sycamore—"a dirty, low-flung hound!" Then, loosening the pistol beneath his belt, he started for the door. "But the lyn' whelp will have to be pretty quick to beat me!" he cried impulsively. "If he's there already, I'll shoot it out with him; and if he ain't, I'll tell myself!"

He hurried up the street, with Hackett following; and, sure enough, when he came to the justice's office there was a light inside and Judge Purdy sat waiting at his desk. Behind him stood Sam Slocum, the detective, his big eyes looking out into the night.

"Where's Jack Haines?" demanded Sycamore, striding in before them.

"He's not here," replied the old judge primly.

"Well, I understand him and Lum Martin are comin' here to swear me into the pen. Is that correct?"

"Ah—ahem!" quavered the judge. "I—I really cannot say."

That settled the matter with Sycamore. The old judge, trembling and evasive; the detective, looking past him and saying nothing—here were the men he was looking for, and Haines had not yet arrived.

"Mr. Slocum," he said, turning upon that man of iron, "I want to

make a confession to you about that train-robbery. Will you promise not to prosecute me if I tell you all I know? All right, then! You're witnesses to that, judge and Roy. Now, git me a piece of paper and I'll put it down in writin'."

"Better let me write it," said Slocum, sitting down and grabbing up a pen; "it'll be quicker. Go ahead now—you can sign it afterward."

He balanced his pen and looked up, his eyes still vaguely interested in the black night without, and Sycamore began to talk.

"One night last August Lum Martin took me out to his house," he began, and as he hurried on, oblivious of the limitations of a writer, Sam Slocum's pen fairly raced across the pages to catch the precious words.

He told it all circumstantially, and Slocum did not interrupt him, though he was in a fever to get to the end. Roy Hackett closed the door behind him and stood breathless; the old judge made careful, laborious notes, stopping at every fourth or fifth word to dip his pen; and still the tale ran on. The plot, the quarrel, the plans for the hold-up and escape—and then the fateful night.

"And so we took the empty bags," Sycamore was saying, "and Jack and me got on our horses bareback, him with one of these here strap-bridles and me with a regular rope hackamore, and—"

"What in hell!" exclaimed a sudden voice outside, an angry voice.

There was a thud of feet on the sidewalk as two men leaped up from the street; then the door burst open and Lum Martin and Jack Haines rushed in, wild-eyed and panting with rage.

"Syc, you damn fool!" cried Martin; "what yuh doin'?"

"Shut up!" thundered Slocum, leaping suddenly to his feet and confronting them. "Don't you interfere here, Lum Martin, or— All right, boys!" he sung out, thrusting a hand

inside his coat, and the next moment a side door was thrown open and the muzzles of two sawed-off shotguns shoved in. The chief himself held a six-shooter, Roy Hackett was behind with two more, and in the sudden calm that followed Sam Slocum's voice rode out harsh and rasping.

"Lum Martin—Jack Haines—I want you boys for train-robbery!"

"Well—I'll—be—damned!" muttered Martin, and together they held up their hands.

CHAPTER IX.

The Fighting Fool Repents.

SYCAMORE BROWN was a fool.

The look on Lum's face, the staring shotguns, and his own heavy heart all told him so. He had listened to a friend who was not a friend, and now Lum Martin was in the toils. There was no occasion for Jack Haines to curse him—he knew what he was better than any cursing could tell. To save his own hide in a panic he had sold out his partners to the sleuths. His name would be a by-word now, whatever he might do.

A wild rage, a fierce longing to strike out and defend himself, swept over him at the very moment, and, regardless of shotguns and pistols, he turned and felled Hackett at a blow.

"Well, shoot me then, you coward!" he cried, as Hackett sprang vengefully to his feet. "Go on and shoot me, you express-company sneaks—"

"Aw, shut up!" scoffed Jack Haines, scowling over his shoulder as they led him away; "you're nothin' but a stool-pigeon yoreself!"

"You're a damned fool, Syc!" said Martin as he turned to go, and he said it in such a way that Sycamore never forgot it. A fool indeed he was, but no stool-pigeon; and from that day forth, whatever else he did, he was always true to Lum Martin.

They put Lum in his own jail that

night for safe keeping, and early in the morning with a guard they took him over to Gun Sight. It was not the first time in Gun Sight County that a deputy sheriff had broken into jail, but when the sheriff booked him and "frisked" him for his valuables he stripped him of his star. There was an election coming in the fall, and Dillon could see his finish if he kept such men as Martin and Jack Haines on his staff.

Already they had discredited his administration, for the Los Angeles and El Paso papers were big with scare-heads which linked his name with theirs. The style of the write-ups was bad, too—with "Train Robbed by Sheriff" for the head-line, and only the small type to explain that the sheriff was a deputy. Then the Alkali Ike cartoonists got busy, and there were pictures of train-robbers with badges on their breasts.

It is the kind of advertisement that Arizona gets too much of, and the citizens of Gun Sight were scandalized and indignant.

So the sheriff put Lum Martin into the county jail, where he would not offend them by his presence, and every time one of the aforesaid scandalized citizens butted in to gloat at the miscreant the prisoners' kangaroo court laid hands on him and fined him at least a dollar. This was a bold proceeding, truly; but the prisoners were bold, bad men, who took advantage of every opportunity.

Some there were who protested against this outrage—the idea of prisoners seizing a visitor's hat and holding it till he paid a dollar—but there was one party which gave up without a murmur. The G Bar outfit rode over *en masse* and took a good, long look.

But while the G Bars and others were laughing their heads off and declaring that it was all over but the shooting, Sam Slocum and his lynx-eyed associates were in a lather of exasperation. Immediately after the ar-

rest of Lum Martin they had searched his mysterious adobe house from the mud roof to the dirt floor, and thence on down till they got tired, and the only thing they had found was a dollar watch, buried in a tomato-can. As to just why a man should bury his watch in a tomato-can echoes answers not, but certainly there is nothing criminal about it, and even an expensive lawyer would have trouble in persuading a jury that this bit of jewelry was loot.

But that was all—absolutely all—they got for their trouble. They went over the flat with a fine-tooth comb and dug up every post in the corral, but their labors were in vain.

And to cap the climax, Sycamore Brown, their one and only witness, repudiated his alleged confession and absolutely refused to talk. More than that, he defied them to arrest him or prove that he had done aught that was wrong. If he had been weak or easy in the beginning, he was roughshod and insolent now, and met all attempts to placate him with a snort and a toss of the head.

"Ump-um!" he grunted when Sam Slocum offered him inducements. "I learned my lesson from Roy Hackett, blast his heart! I ain't got no friends now—nobody but Lum Martin—and I wouldn't testify against him if you filled my hat full of twenties!"

At first old Sam only laughed at this, for he had heard such talk before; but as the time wore on and his search turned out bootless he found that it was so. Sycamore was only a boy, but his pride had been touched. He had betrayed his friend and sent him to prison, but he would never send him to the pen.

Even so, then, reasoned Slocum, perhaps he could use the boy yet. From what he had learned already he was satisfied that Lum Martin—and Lum Martin alone—knew where the treasure was buried; and the treasure was what he was after. It was a great treasure, minimize it as they would;

for, besides the money and jewelry that would be of value to the robbers, there were bundles and bundles of papers that meant fortunes to the owners.

And the owners were clamoring for them—there were indemnities due on them—his own position was in jeopardy if he failed to produce the goods. So he came back once more to Sycamore; this time to appeal to the very passion which, so far, had balked him.

Sycamore was ashamed that he had betrayed his chief, he reasoned. He would do anything to retrieve his mistake. Very good. Now, Lum Martin was a man who could never be influenced—he would carry his secret to the grave. But Sycamore had been worked once, and he doubtless could be worked again. This was no time to balk at trifles or consider the abstractions of the law—it was better to turn Lum loose, if necessary, if only he would show Sycamore the cache.

"Mr. Brown," said Slocum, after thinking this over, "I'll make you another proposition. You go over to Gun Sight and square yourself with Martin and find out where that stuff is hid. Then you tell Lum that if he will come through with the boodle the case will be thrown out of court and I'll turn the two of you loose. Now, that's fair, ain't it? Jack Haines is the man that hatched all this deviltry. All right, let him pay for it then—what we want is the boodle."

"I ain't got no boodle!" answered Sycamore, rolling his eyes warily.

"No, I know you ain't," responded Slocum with a wise smile. "But Lum has. Now, he can take his choice between giving up that plunder and going to the pen for life. A jury of these cowboys would soak him for stealing that old dollar watch—and that ain't all we got against him—by no means. Now, here's the point—old Lum is obstinate. If I go to him with this proposition he'll refuse. But if you go over there and talk with him, why perhaps you can work it—and if

you do you'll more than make up for getting him into jail."

"He ain't got no use for me now," murmured Sycamore despondently. "They's no use of my goin' around."

"Oh, I don't know," countered Slocum. "Now what's the matter with this for a play? I'll arrest you and put you into jail with him—you'll be in the same cell together. And then you can ask him where that treasure is buried. It ain't much—I'll take my oath there wasn't two thousand dollars worth of gold and bills in the whole safe."

"The rest was just papers—stocks, bonds and securities—worth a whole lot to the men that shipped them, but nothing at all to you. Now I don't believe that Lum knows that. He took them bags in a hurry and buried 'em somewhere and thinks they're full of bills, and that's what's making us all this trouble."

"Now, here's the proposition, Sycamore, and I just want you to take it quietly and see if I ain't right: Either Lum Martin intends to tell you where that treasure is or he don't. If he don't, that's just another way of saying that he intends to beat you out of it—the thing has been done before, my boy, many's the time. And if he does intend to tell you it's to your interest to find out right away; now, isn't it?"

"As it is now, you stand to lose either way; because if you want to be a crook you've been buncoed out of your swag, and if you want to be straight and help your friend out of jail, you've got nothing to square yourself with—or him. Now, what do you say—I'll put you in jail with Lum—you find out where the stuff is buried and tell me, and I'll turn you both loose the same day. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Ump—don't like it," grunted Sycamore; "sounds too dam' slippery and crooked."

"Well, what do you want?" demanded the chief indignantly. "What're you going to do—bun-

around town till I git tired of talking to you and send you back to jail? Make me a proposition of your own, then, if you think you're so awful nice!"

"Well," responded Sycamore, with a sudden flash of spirit, "I can tell you one thing right now: I'll never take up no proposition that comes from a company detective! If you think you've got the evidence to convict me they ain't nothin' I'd like better than to go to jail and have it over with; then, after I was acquitted, I could tell you all where to go. But as long as you keep these low-browed sleuths followin' round behind me I won't do nothin'—that's all."

"And suppose I call 'em off?" suggested Slocum.

"Well, in that case I'd like to go over and see Lum and see what he has to say."

"All right," responded Slocum heartily. "I'll go you."

"And you understand," warned Sycamore, "I don't guarantee you nothin'. I ride out of this here town a free man, with my own horse and my guns and my deputy's star, or I don't go out at all. And I don't promise no man nothin'. May break the dam' jail down, for all I know, and turn old Lum into the hills; but the first time I see one of them skulkin' detectives of yourn, and I reckon I know 'em all by sight now, I'll either take a shot at the dastard or turn around and come straight back home. Now, there's the proposition, and you can either take it or leave it."

"I'll take it," said Slocum promptly. "When do you want to start?"

"Can't git away too soon to suit me," answered Sycamore, rising up to stretch his slack limbs. "How about right now?"

The chief nodded, for he was a man of great decision, and he thought he read Sycamore Brown like a book. And so he could, for there was no guile in Sycamore's heart; but on the way out to get his horse a brand-new

idea came over him, and so powerfully did it appeal to his simple mind that he went straightway and dug up the rest of his money. This was taking a big chance; but Sycamore was a man who was strong for hunches, and the impulse of the moment was good enough for him.

Catching up his horse he rode back to his humble lodgings, fetched out his saddle-gun and two pistols, and ambled off without looking either to the right or to the left. No longer was he a hang-dog culprit, a suspect, subject to the beck and call of sleuths; his carbine was under his leg again, and in his heart he was an outlaw.

CHAPTER X.

A Jail Delivery.

FAR out over the plains galloped white-maned Round Valley, rejoicing in his strength and the long road that lay before them; and that night they camped in the open—Sycamore rolled in his saddle-blanket and Round Valley feeding on his picket. At dawn they were on the move again, picking their way through mountain-passes, and when at last they gained the rugged valley where Gun Sight lay in the shadow of its lofty pinnacles the sun was well up in the sky.

It was a great city yet, this town in the heart of the jagged, granite-spined Sierras, though its first glory had departed. On the hillside above it everything was modern—hoists, mills, corrugated iron buildings, and smoking stacks; but below lay the same old city that had been built by the flamboyant discoverers and dedicated to the pleasures of life.

This is the spot to which the wild adventurers of that wildest and most adventurous land had rushed with a unanimity so startling and overwhelming that they had driven the Apaches from their very stronghold; and here, fighting against every adverse force in nature, they had mined and milled

and separated until their gold could be measured by wagon loads.

Within a year Gun Sight had become a thronging metropolis, and now in its serener days it still gave forth its riches, though the waters had crept in and flooded the lower levels. It was quiet now, so the old man said, but to Sycamore it seemed big and populous, and he rode in by a side street, unostentatiously, for he harbored that in his heart which called for silence and stealth.

But had he not told it already? Yes, he had given fair warning, and to old Sam Slocum himself! And now he had come to make his word good—to break the jail open and turn Lum Martin loose.

Men said he was a stool-pigeon who had sold his friends to the law—he would show them now that he was a man of honor, and a fighter second to none. For he would either save his friend and fly with him across the line, or he would die in the attempt and go down with guns in his hands. But now he hid his pistols cunningly, slipping them inside his waistband and covering the butts with his vest, and when he rode up to the court-house he tied Round Valley where he would not be noticed, at the same time scanning the string of horses at the hitching-rack for a likely mount for Lum.

Then, as the mill whistles shrilled the hour of noon, he stepped out boldly and went straight to the sheriff's office.

"Here's a note from Slocum," he said, as that official surveyed him coldly, and dropped the missive before him.

"Um-m! ahum-m!" grunted Dillon, as he read it through. "So you want to see Lum Martin, do you? Um-m, 'see him in private,' eh? Well, I'll tell Charley about it—move on!"

He rose and led the way down the corridor to the jail, which occupied the rear half of the court-house on the ground floor.

Unlike most Arizona jails it was shut off from the public absolutely, a

steel grating and a solid iron door serving the double purpose of excluding visitors and confining the noise of the prisoners. Dillon pressed the electric button for the jailer and waited sullenly. If he could have followed his own instincts in the matter he would have seized Sycamore by the scruff of the neck and thrust him behind the bars, too; but when at last the solid inner door was swung open he merely passed in Slocum's note, nodded dumbly to the jailer and went out to get his dinner.

Once more, in his turn, the jailer read the letter through and grunted at the contents. Anything that Chief of Detectives Slocum asked would be granted, of course, and that without question, but along with his chief and the rest of the deputies Charley Randall held a grudge against Sycamore which he felt under no obligations to conceal.

"'Bout my dinner time," he observed, as he unlocked the outer door, "so cut it short."

"All right," answered Sycamore, stepping in and peering about in the gloom. He watched the locking of the doors and noted the particular pocket in which the jailer kept his keys. Then he followed along behind him as he led the way to the cells, passing down a darkened passage, around a corner, and stopping at the cell-room door.

"Lum Martin!" called out the jailer, striking with his big key against the bars, and as Lum shambled up he passed him through the gate without a word.

Inside the bars the prisoners were resting at their ease, some stretched lazily upon the floor, others sitting in groups and smoking, others perched on top of the steel cages and reading or playing cards. It looked more like the reading-room in a cheap lodging-house than the jail of the most lawless county in Arizona, but many of these men had friends on the outside and it was no part of the policy of Thomas

Dillon to maltreat and harass his charges.

Indeed, so freely were they indulged that the prisoners' kangaroo court was practically in charge, and trustees were often allowed in the corridors to apprehend unsuspecting visitors and shake them down for their dollar. But in return for this the prisoners confined their depredations within the bounds of reason and strictly enforced the rules of decency and communal order.

It was one of their rules that no prisoner should approach within listening distance of any other who was talking with a visitor, and though many a furtive glance was cast in Sycamore's direction no one came near to overhear their conversation. The jailer also retired up the corridor, in order to leave them alone, and the moment his back was turned Sycamore winked at his partner significantly and touched a bulge at his belt.

Then, to divert suspicion, he talked upon indifferent topics for several minutes while the fierce light glowed and grew in Martin's eyes.

"Lum," he said at last, still speaking in his ordinary voice, "Sam Slocum has got it in for you. He's goin' to send you up for life unless you come through with that treasure.

"Now, I got you into this, Lum, and I'm goin' to git you out of it if you jest say the word. I got two pistols here, and when Charley comes back to lock you up I'll throw down on him, take away his keys, open up the doors and turn you loose. You can git yore pick of the horses at the hitchin'-rack and we'll pull our freight for Mexico. What do you say?"

For a minute Lum Martin's deep-set eyes gleamed and glinted as he thought out the possibilities, but in the end he shook his head.

"What's the matter?" inquired Sycamore, grieved that his rash plan was not approved.

"Old Sam can't git me on what evidence he's got," answered Martin.

"I ain't a goin' to take no chances—they might ketch me and give me the limit for jail-breakin', or horse-stealin', or somethin'. Nope, he can't convict me on his evidence, and once I'm acquitted I'm safe—a man can't be tried twice for the same offense."

"No, but listen," protested Sycamore. "Sam Slocum knows that you've got that boodle hid, and that Jack and me don't know where it is. He told me so, and he told me to tell you that you could have yore choice between givin' up that cache and goin' to the pen for life. He means it, Lum! That feller will bury a can of Mexican dollars in yore house, if he has to, and then dig 'em up for evidence.

"He's offered me every inducement he can think of to testify against you—and if he can't git me he'll git somebody else. Now, I'm tellin' you what I know, and I been with him a month. But say, Lum," he continued, leaning closer and speaking eagerly, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I got you into this—now you tell me where that boodle is buried—Slocum says it ain't nothin' but papers, nohow—and I'll go and dig it up and tell him it was me that did it. Then he'll turn you loose and—"

"Not much!" rasped Martin, shaking his head knowingly and regarding Sycamore with a malevolent eye. "You can't work that on me, Mr. Stool-pigeon!"

"Work what?" cried Sycamore, aghast at this sudden change. "You don't think I'm tryin' to do you, do you, Lum?"

"No, I *know* it! You done me dirt once, by Gawd, but you won't git to do it again!"

"All right, then," answered Sycamore, smiling bitterly. "I jest come with this offer to square myself for what I did—if you don't want to take it I won't bother you again!"

He turned to go, but Martin clutched at him, a new terror in his heart. What if Sycamore should go back and tell? What if he should testify against him now, out of spite, and

send him to the pen? That would be the last of his treasure, and the last of his hold on life.

"Here! Wait a minute!" he hissed. "What's yore blasted hurry? Are you on the square with this, or is it another steer?"

"You know whether I'm square or not," grumbled Sycamore scornfully. "Old Sam told me you was tryin' to beat me out of that money and I begin to think he was right. I don't owe you nothin', Lum Martin—I come over here to help you, but now you can go to hell!"

He tried to jerk away, but Martin held on to him resolutely and at the same time there came into his voice a sudden note of pleading.

"Now, here, Syc," he entreated, "don't go off and leave me in the hole. It's awful, shut up here for days and days, and I want you to help me out. I didn't mean nothin' a while ago—"

"Say!" broke in the voice of the jailer. "Ain't you boys pretty near through? I want to go out to dinner?"

"Jest a minute, Charley," answered Martin hastily. "Now here," he went on, speaking earnestly to Sycamore, "we got to be quick about this. When Charley comes down with the keys you hold him up, I'll frisk him, and we'll turn the whole jailful loose and skip out while they're ketchin' 'em—savvy?"

"All right, Charley!" he called over his shoulder, and stood back with a wise look while Sycamore felt for his guns.

The jailer was a thin, nervous man, bleached a pasty white by his confinement, but no less resolute for that. Only the dead drop would make him give up, and if he had a gun he might fight anyway, so Sycamore fell behind and watched him warily. Very glumly he took out his bunch of keys, selected one, and opened the outer lock-box. He was just unlocking the inner combination when Sycamore

whisked out his long, hidden pistol and shovel it against his back.

"Throw up yore hands, you dastard," he ordered, "and do it quick or I'll shoot you full of holes!"

"You damn coward!" sneered the jailer, looking back at him over his shoulder; but at the same time he held up his hands.

"What d'ye think y'r' goin' to do?" he demanded, turning suddenly and facing him.

"Never you mind," returned Sycamore significantly, "but jest keep them hands up high. Frisk him for a gun, Lum; he's gettin' fixed to shoot!"

"Ain't got no gun," declared the jailer, as Martin felt him over, and so indeed it proved.

"Keys are what we want," commented Lum, and relieved him of his key-ring instead. "Now you jest stand right there, Mr. Randall, while I go and unlock that door."

He shook out the bunch and began to fumble among them for the keys to the outer doors.

"Here, give me them keys," broke in Sycamore impatiently. "I know which ones they are. You take this gun"—he drew his spare gun left-handed—"and watch Charley—and give them boys a talk!"

A sudden tumult and excitement had broken out inside the bars, some of the men demanding to be released while others threatened vengeance if the jailer was harmed or hurt.

"Here, you boys, key down a little!" ordered Lum, flipping his pistol muzzle in their direction. "What d'ye want to do—give the whole snap away?"

"Well, let us out then," clamored the leaders, "or we'll holler out the winders!"

"Wait till he gits back with the keys," answered Martin roughly. "Git a move on, Syc, and open them front doors!"

Sycamore rushed down the dark corridor and threw himself upon the

solid iron door, but hardly had he fitted the key to the lock when he heard a scramble, a warning shout, and then the resounding *whang* of Lum's pistol. There was an instant's silence, and then the voice of the jailer spoke up.

"Don't shoot," he cried, "I'm down!"

"Well, stay thar, then!" cursed Martin, and at the sound of his voice Sycamore turned back to his job on the doors. The moment they were open he came running back to help, but Randall was doubled up in the corridor nursing a bloody wound in his leg.

"Never mind him!" shouted Martin, as Sycamore stopped to look. "Let his damn stool-pigeons take care of 'im—here, gimme them keys!"

He reached out and grabbed the bunch and, before Sycamore could do more than drag the wounded man aside, the first lot of the escaping prisoners came rushing around the corner and went scuttling out like rats.

Close behind the leaders came Lum Martin, still bearing his revolver and the keys. Then the voice of Charley Randall rose up, calling to the men to help him and not to leave, and as the crowd hung back, irresolute, Lum clutched Sycamore Brown by the shoulder and dragged him to the door.

"Hurry up to them horses!" he cried, "before somebody else gits 'em. But don't run when you git outside—and ride slow till we git out of sight."

They hurried out the court-house door, tucking their guns under their waistbands and looking about warily, but the street was silent and deserted. The first rush of men had passed out and disappeared and no more came out from behind—Charley Randall was holding the short-termers with the fear of a swift return. Only a row of sleepy cow-ponies, standing along the hitching-rack, met their eye, and they made for them with a rush.

"Take that blue roan," said Sycamore, hustling off to get Round Val-

ley, and a moment later they were both in the saddle and loping quietly out of town.

But now a sudden popping of pistols broke out behind them, six-shooters being emptied into the air as fast as the owners could shoot, and every man in Gun Sight ran out to fight the fire. Often in the still of night that same *pop, pop, pop*, had burst forth and whole streets had been wreathed in flames—for Gun Sight had burned down twice. So the entire population surged into town, while Lum and Sycamore rode out, and when the alarm had spread and men came galloping on their trail they were several miles well on their way to the line.

"How'd you come to shoot Charley?" inquired Sycamore, as they rode out the mouth of the pass and headed across the plains for the line.

"Huh?" grunted Lum, waking suddenly from his long silence.

"I say, how'd you come to shoot Charley Randall? Did he make a break to git you?"

"No," grumbled Martin, "he made a break for his guns!"

"He's a fightin' dastard!" observed Sycamore, hoping to extract a few details, but the master mind was still—old Lum did not reply.

So for twenty miles they rode, each deep in his own thoughts, until they were safe in Mexico. No one pursued them across the open and there was no one at the line to turn them back. Arizona is a big country and a man is hard to catch. They passed through the barbed-wire drift-fence that the cattlemen had built between the monuments and stopped to breathe their horses and close the gap, and still Martin was glum and silent.

"By Joe!" exclaimed Sycamore, striking his knee as if taken by surprise, "we plumb forgot Jack Haines!"

Martin looked at him just once, and then off into Mexico.

"Wonder what happened to him!" suggested Sycamore.

"Humph!" grunted Lum.

"Think he got away?"

"Nope," responded Martin, "I know he didn't. The cussed fool was in the solitary for raisin' a rough-house and I forgot to let him out."

"Oh!" said Sycamore speaking softly, "Oho!"

And as the significance of the words struck home he blinked and said no more. As for Martin he fixed his gaze on a banner of distant smoke that rose from a far blue mountain; and when the sun went down he was still riding toward it, his eyes squinting, his jaw set, with never a look behind.

CHAPTER XI.

Up Against the Rurales.

THE border province of Sonora is just like Arizona, except that it is a little rougher and tougher and the Mexicans hand out the law. If the ruler had not slipped Sonora it would be a part of the United States to-day, but somebody told Mr. Gadsden that Yuma was a seaport and he drew the line to that point—otherwise it would have gone to Topolobampo and salt water and saved us a thousand-mile haul.

But as it is, of course, the Mexicans think that this ruler mark across the map is the place where they turned the proud gringos' back, and they keep a bunch of rurales or rural guards along the line to remind us of the fact. And a rural can be just as ugly as he wants to, as long as he doesn't kill the wrong man.

Lum Martin had guarded treasure in Cananea, where the smoke-banner rose to the south, and he knew the ways of the land, from rurales to the price of drink. There is no protection for the American in Mexico but his gun and his two good hands, for our government does not follow up its citizens. If they insist upon shooting up the town and trying to whip the *gendarmes*, well and good, let them lie

and rot in jail—that is what happens to Mexicans in Arizona; but if they will keep the peace and avoid trouble, Mexico is a haven of refuge when the north country gets too hot.

Now Lum was riding a stolen pony, branded G Bar on the left hip, and that would mean trouble if the G Bars ever got track of him; but in Sonora they don't ask any questions, as long as you keep out of jail.

Strictly speaking, they had no right to ride into Mexico without declaring their property at the customs house; but that would all depend upon whether they met a rural or not, and Lum knew how to get around them. So they rode forward unobtrusively, avoiding the public thoroughfare and buying food from isolated Mexican houses, and on the second night they rode into Cananea, the copper city, with their horses still fresh and strong.

Though located in the heart of Sonora, Cananea is essentially an American town. The mines are owned and controlled by Americans; and so indeed is the town site, the railroad that leads to the line, and most of the surrounding country as well.

First, there is the American section, spraddled out over the northern mesa; then, in a low arroyo comes the Mexican section, called the Ronquillo; and above that, on the side of the mountain, is the maze of trams and buildings and stacks that go to make up the mining-plant. The American town is a typical Western boom-town, the Ronquillo the usual aggregation of Mexican huts and shacks. But there is one institution in the barren vale of Cananea which cannot be duplicated elsewhere, and that is the Jockey Club.

The Jockey Club is the most elegant and palatial saloon in Sonora, but it is more than that—it is the Monte Carlo, to boot. According to law there can be no gambling in Cananea, and when the governor, who sells the concession, passes through the town the games are shut down in order to save his face, but at all times the club is the

great attraction for men with money in their pockets, and the rest come just to look. So, after putting up their horses in the Mexican quarter, where Martin had some mysterious friends, and visiting a saloon or two in the hope of hearing some news, Lum and Sycamore finally plucked up courage and drifted into the Jockey Club.

It was a busy place, the long bar crowded with miners and millmen and others with a thirst; and, following the custom of the country, they went up for a drink. Then they wandered about watching the games and, as no one paid any attention to them, they soon forgot their fears and became absorbed in the varying fortunes of the roulette wheel.

"Let's try'er a whirl!" suggested Sycamore, who had a number all picked out. "The black's lucky—I'm goin' to drop a dollar on that."

The black won. He let it ride and won again. Then he shoved the whole four dollars out onto the board and left it on eighteen. But the little ball skipped right by eighteen and fell into twenty-two. Sycamore dropped another dollar on the black—and lost; he dropped another, and won; then let it ride and lost both of them.

"Got any money?" he inquired of Lum.

"Nope," responded Martin, who was not playing; "you're losin'—better quit."

"Ump-um-m!" objected Sycamore, "I feel lucky to-night—I'll break one of these twenties at the bar!"

Ever since leaving Gun Sight they had been living on Sycamore's money, the gold he had dug up before he left far-away Hackamore and Mr. Sam Slocum, and though he had divided up with his partner he still had some twenties left. So he stepped over to the bar and threw down a big yellow eagle, never dreaming that it could betray him there.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, as the barkeeper looked hard at the coin. "Ain't it good?"

"Sure it's good," responded the barkeeper, glancing out at him sideways—"good for about forty-two Mexican dobies—but we don't get many of them gold twenties down here."

He threw out a shower of heavy Mexican dollars, and as Sycamore stuffed them into his pockets the barkeeper glanced at him again.

"You must've come from California," he observed genially; "they say it's all gold in there."

"Um-m," assented Sycamore absently, and hurried back to his game. He was busily feeding out his pocketful of dollars and doubling or losing his stakes when Martin crowded in beside him and gave him a quick dig in the ribs.

"You better quit," he whispered in his ear; "it's time to go."

"All right," responded Sycamore; "in a minute!"

He played again and got another dig in the ribs.

"All right!" he said.

"Well, quit, you dam' fool!" hissed Martin. "Ain't you got no sense?"

At this Sycamore glanced up, and the croupier raked in his stake. One look into Lum's eyes was sufficient—he saw there was something wrong.

"Well, I'm through," he announced, making way for another man. "Come on—let's have a drink!"

They went over to the bar together, apparently in the most jovial humor; but that was far from their mood.

"There's a big black rural over in that corner," muttered Martin, "that's been watchin' you for half an hour. The barkeeper that broke yore twenty is the man that tipped you off?"

"All right," answered Sycamore without looking around. "I'll let on that I'm drunk and you take me out the back way."

"Gimme whisky!" he said to the barkeeper, and his eyes drooped drunkenly as he spoke.

"And yours?" inquired the barkeeper of Lum.

"Gimme a thin one," responded Lum.

They drank and ordered another one; and while they were drinking it a squad of four rurales filed past the door.

"That means us," muttered Martin. "They don't want no shootin' in here, so they're goin' to pick us up outside. I believe they got a guard by that back door, too."

"Well, take the front one, then," whispered Sycamore—"and say, let's take it now!"

He threw down a dollar as he spoke and staggered away, with Martin supporting him by the arm.

"Them fellers outside don't know us yet," growled Lum; "so hurry by 'em and make for that railroad-trestle."

Now the Jockey Club is located on one side of an ore-tramway that runs down from the mine, and directly across the track lies the Ronquillo, where Sycamore and Lum had their horses. On account of the deep arroyo here the track runs over a trestle just below the saloon and, once through this, they could plunge into the rambling street of the quarter and lose the rurales in the darkness.

Traveling with surprising swiftness for a drunken man, Sycamore won the door before the inside rural noticed his flight or, noticing it, could give the alarm. Outside stood the guard of four, their carbines at a rest; but they passed without a challenge.

Then they wove down the dusty street, avoiding the glare of the lamps and listening for pursuing footsteps. But either the sergeant inside was negligent, or he was deceived by Sycamore's condition, for no pursuit was heard until they had nearly reached their goal; then, with a military *pat*, *pat*, the guard came double-quicking down the street, and they bolted through the trestle like scared rabbits.

Through the gulch and down into the Ronquillo they dashed, and in the clatter of their own boots the sound

of the pursuit was lost. Though it was early in the evening the quarter was dark and silent, for the peon cannot afford candle-light, and only the baying of curs in leash and the yapping of skinny lap-dogs marked the course of their hurried flight. But this alone was enough to betray them, and as they passed a quiet alley Lum stopped suddenly and stepped aside to let the hue and cry go past.

Outside in the main street a lamp burned dimly, but here they were safely hidden, and for what seemed to them an eternity they waited for the search to end. The footfalls came and went; then the dogs ceased barking, and at last with infinite caution they crept out and headed for their corral.

There were Round Valley and the swift blue roan, saddled and only needing to be bridled and cinched, and once upon their backs they could laugh the rurales to scorn.

But their escape was not made yet, for a Mexican rural is like a Texas ranger—a picked man—and his business is the hunting of men.

Just as they passed along the wall of a house two men stepped out from around the corner, and in the dim light of the street-lamp they could catch the glint of their carbines as they brought them to a ready. The trim tightness of their trousers and short jackets and the huge felt sombreros which topped their heads left no doubt as to their identity. It was a pair of the lost rurales, and they were undoubtedly waiting for them.

For a moment they looked to the right and left, seeking some gap or way of escape, but the rurales had chosen their ground well, and there was nothing to do but keep on. To turn and run would be foolish—and besides, it was not their style.

"Gimme another drink!" commanded Sycamore, reaching out and grabbing at his partner. "No, I mean it," he insisted drunkenly. "You gimme 'nother drink!"

"Aw come on!" protested Lum,

falling into his old part; "stan' up here—what's the matter with you!"

At this the two rurales left off their wary waiting and approached them bruskiy, as was their custom with men who were drunk.

"*Alto!*" they ordered. "Halt!" And each picked out his man and covered him with his carbine.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Sycamore of the tall sergeant—the man who had been watching them at the saloon, and who now had the muzzle of his gun about two feet from the pit of his stomach.

"Throw up your hands!" commanded the sergeant in Spanish.

"*No, señor,*" responded Sycamore in the same tongue. "Do you think I would surrender to a condemned Mexican? *Seguro que no*—not much! *Mira, Señor Mexicano, I am an American—see?*"

The sergeant saw. About half his work in the past few years had been along the line of cajoling half-drunk-en Americans into giving up their free-born rights and prejudices, and he had heard this line of talk before. Also the experience had taught him not to crowd such men too far, unless he wanted a fight.

"You are a little drunk," he suggested diplomatically.

"That makes no difference," broke in Sycamore, advancing closer and waving his arms in protest, and at the same time he called him bad names in Spanish.

"Halt!" cried the sergeant, raising his carbine suddenly and pointing it at his face. "Stand back, you—"

"*Now!*" shouted Sycamore in English, and striking up the muzzle of the gun he plucked the heavy six-shooter from his belt and struck his man over the head with it. They grappled then for an instant and the sergeant went down, with Sycamore riding him to the ground. At the same moment there was a flash of light and the loud *whang* of Lum's forty-five.

The second rural fell clattering upon the rocky ground, writhing beneath a shower of belting blows from Martin's pistol, and before Sycamore could leap to his feet Lum had stripped him of both carbine and revolver and was starting down the street.

"Come on!" he cried in passing, and Sycamore was not slow to follow.

Grabbing up the sergeant's carbine, to keep from getting shot in the back, he wrenched the rural's pistol from its scabbard and sprang after him, throwing the gun over the first dead wall he came to in order to run the harder. At the gate of the corral he came upon Lum wrestling with the fastenings in the darkness and, not opening it at the first try, they threw themselves against the rickety gate-frame and smashed it through the middle.

Yet even this took time—and it scared their horses, too—and by the time Sycamore got Round Valley to the gateway the whole quarter was in an uproar. Terrifying cries of "*Socorro!*" and "*Ladrones!*" rose from the neighboring houses where women had been startled by the smashing of the gate, and from up the street came the hoarse shouting of men, who were gathering about the battered rurales.

While he waited, Sycamore cinched tight his saddle and slapped on the single-strap bridle, but Lum was still struggling to soothe his mount.

"Come in here, Syc," he called at last, "and' help me ketch this fightin' devil— No, stay where you are or he'll get out the gate. Oh, hell!" And the noise of his scuffling was resumed.

Meanwhile a sudden patter of hoofs had sprung up from over in the direction of the cuartel, and Sycamore knew the reserves were coming on the run. Then a woman across the street began to shriek to a purpose.

"*Aquí! Aquí!*" she squalled. "*Aquí hay! Dos Americanos! Here there are—two Americans! They are stealing horses!*"

And that did settle it, for the mob came on the run.

"Here they come, Lum!" yelled Sycamore, swinging up on his horse and plunging into the corral. "Git on, anyway, and I'll drive him out ahead of me!"

"All right," grunted Martin, who was fighting to get on a bridle and springing into the saddle he went out the gate like a rocket, guiding his horse by the swing of his body and a sudden slap on one side of the head.

After him came Sycamore, riding hard on the snorting roan and just in time to catch the eyes of the rurales. On they came with a rush, boring recklessly through the stampeded crowd, and then they all went down the road together, Lum far in the lead on a pony that ran like a scared wolf, Sycamore eating his dust behind, and the rurales shooting and yelling in the rear.

It was a lively race, full of doublings and turnings and wild shooting in the dark, and it never really ended until Lum and Sycamore crossed the line and took shelter in Arizona.

CHAPTER XII.

Flight Into Papagueria.

IT was a hard-looking pair of *hom-bres* that came up out of Mexico, and they were only a short mile ahead of the rurales. A relay of these mounted police had picked up their trail at dawn, and only the speed and bottom of their wiry cow-ponies had saved them from a fight.

Even after they crossed the line between the two white but distant monuments they did not take any chances, for more than one man in those parts has been arrested by a bullet and extradited afterward. It was a good three miles and more before they stopped to water their horses in the sandy river that flows from Mexico north, and even after that they pressed on to a higher ridge where they could look out the land to the south.

"What's the matter with them

dogged rurales?" demanded Sycamore querulously, as he sat rolling a cigarette and scowling at their retreating enemies. "The last thing I remember is playin' a dollar on the red, and seems like it's been nothin' but rurales ever since. Of course, we beat up a couple of 'em and took away their guns, and that's why these fellers is so red-eyed over it; but what I want to know is, what did they jump on us for in the first place?"

"Humph!" grunted Lum, rubbing his grimy growth of beard and gazing wearily out over the deserted landscape, "you ought to know that. Didn't you notice the way the bar-keep was lookin' at you when he gave you dollars for that twenty?"

"Well, you want to keep yore eye peeled for a while—old Sam Slocum knowed we'd blow into Cananea, and he had every barkeep in town on the lookout for them cussed twenties! Seems like, between you and Jack, that money keeps me in trouble all the time!"

"Oh, it does—does it?" sneered Sycamore. "Well, I guess if it wasn't for that little sack of twenties I brought along you would've starved to death before you ever got to Cananea; but if that's the way you feel about it you better gimme back that hundred and twenty I give you!"

"Oh, hell!" growled Lum, "they's no use quarrelin' about it; I guess we've got to spend 'em, or starve, but we got to make a raise somewheres—either that or git out of the country. Them dam' rurales will be watchin' for us now, and if they ever git us within gunshot we're just as good as dead. And then, if they should happen to put us in jail, they'd turn us over to Slocum and tell him to do his worst."

"You remember them ten thousand Mexican dollars, don't you, that you put on top of yore powder? Well, they belonged to the Mexican government and was being shipped down here to pay off the soldiers, and such. Oh,

we're goin' to be popular, on both sides of the line, but they'll never git me into no Mexican prison—not so long as I can crook a finger or lift a leg!"

"Hum-m!" murmured Sycamore, gazing about him doubtfully, "what's the chances of Sam Slocum and these rurales gittin' together and wipin' us off the map?"

"Well, if you want to know my opinion—they're good!"

"All right, then—what you goin' to do about it?"

That was the big question, and Lum pondered it over in silence.

"I know a mine over here," he said at last, "where they ship out about ten thousand a week—in gold. It would be easy took, too. Then we could make a sneak for a year or so and come back and dig up that Hackamore cache."

"What's the matter with diggin' up the cache now?" inquired Sycamore pointedly. He had never quite forgotten Sam Slocum's words: "Either Lum intends to show you that money, or he don't."

"Huh!" grunted Martin scornfully, "you must want to get caught with the goods. That's jest exactly what old Sam is waitin' for."

"Well, I bet you I can slip in there in the night and git away with anything in Hackamore—where have you got it buried, anyhow?"

"That's all right!" answered Martin shortly.

"Sure it's all right," responded Sycamore with spirit. "I guess I got as good a right to know as you have!"

"Um," said Martin—"very likely."

"You won't tell me, hey?"

"Nope. Likely to git us into trouble."

Lum rose up from his seat on a rock to indicate that the matter was closed. "Come on," he said crippling stiffly over to his horse, "let's git agoin'! I'm so hungry for somethin' to eat I could steal leavin's from an Apache!"

"Well, where you goin'?" demanded Sycamore sullenly. It was a long

time since he had had anything to eat, too, and the subject interested him in spite of his grouch.

"Let's foller them cow-trails," suggested Lum, pointing to the deep-worn ruts that led away to the north, "and mebbe we'll come to a Mexican house—I never been over in this country before."

They followed down the stream for a while and finally came in sight of a windmill, with a large barn and ranch-house hid away among the cottonwoods that grew below.

"Ump-um, that don't look good to me," said Martin, drawing his horse back under the cover of a hill; "that's a big outfit of Americans. There's a reward up on us now, sure, and if them cowboys ever git after us we're done for—that's all. Let's hit west and see if we can't find a Mexican house."

"Let's hunt along through these willers first and see if we can't shoot a rabbit," wailed Sycamore. "My stomach is shrunk up till it wouldn't hardly chamber a liver pill—I tell you I'm sure hungry! Say, there's a jack over there right now—and I'm goin' to kill 'im, too!"

He rode in on the unsuspecting jack-rabbit, dropped quietly off his horse, and potted him with his carbine; but when he started to build a fire Lum objected.

"I'm hungry, too. Syc," he said, "but somebody might've heard you shoot, so let's move on a ways and git where we won't show no smoke."

They moved as fast as the weary ponies could travel, and then going down among the willows they lit a small fire and broiled and ate the rabbit.

"Ah," sighed Sycamore, licking the grease off his fingers, "I begin to feel like a man again. Now if—" he paused and reached quietly for his rifle, and Lum rose up and shifted his gun to the front. A muffled and distant drumming, changing rapidly to the clatter of hoofs, came to their ears, and the next moment a tall Texas cow-

boy with a carbine across his saddle came riding along the trail. Evidently he was looking for something, for he was leaning over to see their tracks; but when the trail ended abruptly and he looked over and saw them watching him his manner changed suddenly to a pose of affected ease and he pretended to be pleasantly surprised at their presence.

"W'y, hello!" he called. "Is that you, Bill? I thought it was some dam' Mexican out beefing another—" He paused and rode in closer. "Well, excuse me, gentlemen," he said looking them over warily, "I thought you was a friend of mine," he added, looking at Lum.

"Nope," answered Lum, and the cold uncompromising way in which he said it seemed to discourage the Texan right there.

"All right then," he said, turning his horse about, "heerd yore gun go off, you know, and thought mebbe—" But what he thought he thought, though of small consequence, was lost in the thunder of his retreat.

"That feller was lookin' fer us," muttered Martin, as they hurried out to bridle their horses. "I've seen them stage-plays before, and we'd better drift for the line."

They drifted, and shortly after they had crossed they saw a big cloud of dust come scurrying down the valley like a cyclone, with a bunch of cowboys at its front.

"This country is gittin' too hot fer us," grumbled Lum, and putting spurs to their jaded horses they turned their faces to the west. For over the granite mountains that loomed before them lay the desert and Papaguería, and if any man followed them there it would show that he wanted them bad.

Moreover, they would know he was after them as soon as they saw his dust, for Papaguería is not a white man's country. Nowhere in the world is there a place where a man can look farther and see less, and even the desert-bred Papagos find the country

too barren for them and move about uneasily from place to place.

In the winter they live in their *rancherías*, small villages of adobe houses perched upon some hill or ridge in the neighborhood of a tank or spring, and there they tend their ponies and cattle and watch the great plain below.

In the spring they move to the mountains to bake mescal heads and water their cattle; and in the summer, when the heat is fiercest and the thunder-caps pile up in the sky, then they flock out to pick cactus-pears from the giant *sahuaros*, or, if they are ambitious, to tend their poor fields of corn if the black clouds will give down rain.

It is a desperate country, truly, unwatered for hundreds of miles, but desperate men may not question their destiny—they must go where they are driven. With a band of cowboys behind them and vengeful rurales across the line, there was no other place for Sycamore and Lum Martin to flee to, so they turned their gaunted horses to the west.

A desolate Mexican ranch-house near the line furnished them with food that night, the occupants staring out at them fearfully, too tongue-tied to name a price. There was nothing in the house but jerked beef and a stack of *tortillas*, but Lum bade them bring it all out—everything they had to eat—while Sycamore made them rich with a couple of his Cananea dollars.

Then they bought corn for their horses, and a flaccid pig-skin to carry water, and rode on toward Papaguería.

Two days later, coming up out of a level plain that was dry as the floor of an oven, they cut a series of pony trails heading north and came in sight of San Ignacio. Their way had led over broken land and ridges, green with sticky creosote bushes but desolate of human life; then it had taken them past high, granite mountains with long washes of sand and boulders reaching far out into the plain.

their courses marked by ironwood and mesquit-trees and palo verdes, yellow with April flowers; and then it had led through sinks of silty sand, a soil so rich that the coarse *galleta* grass stood three feet high by the trampled trail, and delicate evening primroses and star-eyed daisies gazed up at them as they passed, but the water lay a day's journey apart, in mud-holes and stagnant tanks, and if Sycamore had not been desert-born they would have passed it and died of thirst.

But far to the north, where the railroad gives the desert life, the tribe of the Browns had struck root and produced a hardy stock, and even this barren waste looked good to Sycamore, for he had lived in it all his life.

To Round Valley it was like a return to the old range where he had run wild among the rocks, and every time he passed a clump of *galleta* grass he bit into its wiry top. The flowering tips of mesquit-trees tempted him at every step, and at night he grazed at his rope's end until he mowed a circle clear.

It was different with Lum Martin and his roan. They were thirsty all day long, and only followed along because they knew no other way to go.

At first sight the *rancheria* of San Ignacio was only a dark shadow on the top of a knoll. Behind it there rose a clean-cut mountain, its broad flanks richly forested with giant cactus; then as they drew nearer there appeared below the village a sunken treetop of almost transparent green—the cottonwood by the well. Then the dark spot across the hilltop broke up into checkers of black, the shadows beneath sun-struck brush *ramadas*, and suddenly the adobe houses stood out from the mud-color of the hill, each sheltering its square of treasured shade, and in the black doorways there appeared the figures of women and children, staring out at the unusual guests.

Not once in a month, or in six months, did a white man come to San Ignacio; and then he was not pressed

to stay, for the Papagos do not welcome strangers, as Sycamore knew full well.

Once well in view the two wanderers came on slowly, and as they watered their horses at the guarded spring, the womenfolks stepped inside. Then the little ones followed reluctantly, leaving nothing but the barking dogs; and at the top of the trail an old man came out and sat down to wait.

"Just let me pull this off," suggested Sycamore, as they mounted to make the ascent. "I know how to git around these Papagos—been raised among 'em. I'll talk with the old *capitan* up there in Spanish, and he'll let on he can't understand English, but all the time he'll be listenin' to what we say to each other, and you can bet there'll be somebody that'll savvy every word—the kids go to Indian school. So look pleasant and don't make no breaks and we'll git a bit to eat."

They mounted the hillside slowly by a trail that was worn deep by human feet and as they reached the summit the old Indian rose up to meet them.

He was a sturdy figure of a man, supple, with shoulders still square and straight and a great display of muscles in his sun-browned legs. Unlike the younger men, who stood at a distance, he showed no traces of the new régime, but wore nothing more than a shirt and breech-clout, with his hair hanging down to his shoulders.

As for the boys, they were dressed like ordinary agency Indians, in tight-fitting, lace-topped overalls, shirts with fancy armlets, turned-up hats, brogan shoes, and a bristling hair-cut withal. But one look into the old man's resolute face told Sycamore who was chief, and he addressed his remarks to him.

"Howdy," he said, as he touched his hat in salute, "are you the captain here?"

For a minute the old man looked them over, their haggard bearded

faces, their gaunted horses, their superfluity of arms, and his wrinkled face became set.

"Uh!" he grunted, "*no intiendo Americano!*"

"*No le hace,*" answered Sycamore easily, "that's all right;" and he asked again in Spanish.

"*Si!*" responded the old chief, and at that Sycamore got down off his horse. The pipe of peace is gone now, along with the tomahawk and the blanket, but a cigarette helps take its place and passes the time away, for an Indian cannot do business in a hurry.

So Sycamore and Lum rolled a cigarette apiece and passed the makings on to *el capitan*. They smoked then, gazing about at the yapping dogs, the staring "boys," and the flat-roofed adobe houses that went to make up the town.

"Um-m," commented Sycamore to Lum, "the old man has got a big town here."

"That's right," agreed Lum, though he ill liked the part he played; "and he's got lots of water in his well." It was the only good thing he could say for San Ignacio, and he had to say that quick.

"This house here's the dandy, though," went on Sycamore, jerking his thumb at a large, well-kept adobe house, with a broad brush veranda in front of it, which was evidently the chief's.

"Keeps it nice and clean, too."

He smoked a while after this, looking dreamily off into the distance, and then the old captain relaxed.

"Where you go?" he asked in Spanish.

"Very far!" answered Sycamore, waving his hand in a broad gesture toward the west.

"Uh!" grunted the old man. Then, after gazing hard into his face: "Where you come from?"

"Very far!" answered Sycamore again, pointing his hand toward the east, "Cimarron Valley—Gun Sight!"

"*Si, si!*" nodded the chief, a smile creeping into his eyes, "I know!"

"You been there?" inquired Sycamore eagerly.

"*Si,*" responded the captain proudly; "Cimarron, Chiricahua, San Carlos, Sierra Madre—I know!"

"Hu-u-u!" piped Sycamore in well-simulated wonder; "that is very far from here! What you go for?"

"Me scout!" asserted the old man, tapping himself on the chest. "Go fight Apache!"

"Aha!" breathed Sycamore, and this time it was in genuine admiration, for a man who has fought the Apaches and come away alive is never without honor in Arizona.

"You bet—me War Chief Juan!" declared the old warrior, lapsing for the first time into English. "Me fight Geronimo, Chihuahua, Naiche! Me chief—Papago scouts—Lieutenant Johnson!"

He plunged now into a long and discursive account in Spanish of General Crook's last big campaign against Geronimo, dwelling with much particularity upon the part played by the Papago scouts in running down a remnant of the renegades who had sneaked off the night of the surrender. For eight months they had followed on the trail, down through the Mexican Sierras and back to the White Mountains in Arizona, and not until they were within a hundred miles of Fort Apache did they overtake their enemies.

Many were the tricks and stratagems resorted to by the Chiricahuas to throw them off the track, but on through the burning deserts and up over the pathless Sierras followed Chief Juan and his tireless tribesmen, for they were the hereditary enemies of the Apaches, with a thousand raids to avenge.

And at the end, seeing that they could not escape and to save their warriors' pride, the renegades headed for Fort Apache, there to surrender to the white commander. But even in that

the Papagos foiled them and, cutting in ahead, compelled them to lay down their arms or answer with their lives.

It was a long story—as told by War Chief Juan—and Lum allowed his eyes to wander toward a shed near by where some women were cooking meat; but Sycamore followed it closely with many an appreciative grunt of admiration and wonder—and at the end he held out his hand.

"You big *capitan*," he said in Spanish; "*muy bravo, muy coyote*—you white man's friend—no?"

"*Si, señor*," assented the old chief proudly; "I am the white man's friend!"

"Good!" cried Sycamore, reaching out his hand; "you be my friend, too!"

"*Starwano!*" echoed the chief who

was so brave and crafty, and without more ado he offered his hand.

They sat down then and lit another cigarette, while Martin squirmed uneasily and took up the slack of his belt. But after the smoke was over the old man glanced toward the cook-shed and spoke again—to Sycamore.

"You are hungry, my friend," he suggested benignly.

"Yes," answered Sycamore—"a little!"

And at that Lum Martin snorted. "A little!" After living on jerked beef and tortilla crumbs for two days! But Sycamore knew his man.

"Very well," said the chief, rising to his feet, "we will eat." He moved off a step or two. "And bring your friend, too," he added. But he turned his head away.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

ASHES O' LOVE

By Faith Baldwin

A FLOWER blooms; and when it dies
Its little, crumpled, fragrant soul
At rest beneath its birthplace lies,

Returning, part of that great whole
That brings forth other buds as fair.
Man lives and dies. The splendid scheme

The struggling spirit lets go free,
And other mortals strive and dream,
Each with their cup of life to dree.
But dust returns to dust, and lo!

Is laid in nature's fertile bed,
Immeasurable and boundless, so

Her countless children may be fed.
Nothing dies; all live, unseen;

Save one thing only, Love—the wraith,
When that is killed, by sword made keen,

By murdered trust, or perished faith,
Then all is over; sorrow, pain—

All vanish as time's beads are told;
Dead flames we try to light in vain.

A dead love? Naught so chill and cold!

THE PURCHASE *

A SERIAL IN IV PARTS—PART III

BY E. J. RATH

Author of "Two Women, or One?" "The Projectile," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

THE town of Thomas has been in the grip of a political gang headed by Harvey Johnson, when a young reform element, satirically known as the "college boys," put through a ticket of their own headed by Winston Harris as mayor, Jim Wayne as commissioner of public works, etc. Harris is a New York architect who has never been able to make more than a scant living. Not so very long after he has been placed in office, however, he is dazzled by the receipt of a letter from a firm of stock-brokers informing him that a certain deal which he negotiated through them has been so successful that he has won no less than \$25,000. Harris immediately calls on the brokers and assures them that he has never given such orders. They answer that the order has reached them through his agent. They insist that there has been no mistake, and they insist on his taking the money. Still protesting that the money does not belong to him, he none the less banks the check, determined not to touch it until the whole thing can be cleared up. Scarcely a day goes by without equally mysterious winnings pouring in on him. He calls in his friends—Billy McAllister, managing editor of the *Star*, and Phil Sharkey, a political reporter; also Jim Wayne, commissioner of public works, son of Peter Wayne, a retired millionaire, and brother of the fascinating Constance, with whom the distracted mayor could very easily fall in love. They determine to stand by each other and fight it out, whatever transpires. Not long afterward Harris uses his hitherto untouched funds to float a necessary municipal bond-issue which the gang sought to defeat. Then Constance learns that Harris is about to be investigated by the grand jury. She warns the mayor, but is pained to discover that he is keeping something secret.

CHAPTER XII.

The Boss Gives Orders.

THE boss again paused in his walk before he reached the end of the corridor, and appeared to find something interesting enough in one of the marble squares that composed the flooring to fix his attention. He was thinking, however, of a matter entirely different. As he stood thus a puzzled, intent look came into his face, accompanied by a slight raising of the eyebrows.

"Huh!" he muttered, suddenly, and resumed his walk.

Down the steps of the city hall he

went slowly, oblivious to the salutations of several persons who passed him and who liked to keep on pleasant terms with the still powerful leader. He crossed the square with a deliberate, heavy tread that was so familiar to frequenters of the public buildings in past days, ascended the court-house steps, followed the main corridor for half its length, and then turned into the offices of the district attorney.

It was not Johnson's habit to make inquiries as to whether the chief was in; he always looked for himself, and none of the understrappers ever ventured to suggest that Meade was busy or engaged. He did not depart from his custom in this instance, but went

* This story began in *The Cavalier* for March 8.

ponderously through a series of rooms, pushed open a door, and entered the workshop of Harrison Meade.

The district attorney glanced up from a newspaper, tossed it to the floor when he saw who his visitor was, and moved a chair as an invitation to sit down.

"How are you, Mr. Johnson?" he said.

"Hello, Meade!"

The boss settled his big body into the vacant chair, leaned back until it creaked, and glanced idly around the room, as if he had not seen it a thousand times before. Then he fumbled in his cigar pocket and drew out two fat, black brevas. Shoving one of them across the desk toward Meade, he bit the end off the other, lighted it, and puffed uninterruptedly for half a minute.

"Was in to see you about two hours ago," he said abruptly.

"Sorry I wasn't in," answered Meade, toying with the cigar, but not venturing to light it. Johnson's taste in tobacco was too pronounced for him.

"Taking a little air—eh?"

Meade nodded. "It's been a dull day," he added.

"Calling on a girl, I bet?" suggested the boss musingly.

"Well, yes," replied the district attorney with a smile.

"You young fellows!" grunted Johnson with a short laugh.

He smoked on for a while and Meade tipped back his chair, waiting. Johnson arrived at his point in his own way and did not care to be hurried. He had a habit of beginning business with irrelevant trivialities.

"How's the investigation coming?" he asked at length, turning his eyes slowly in the direction of the other.

"It's coming on," answered the district attorney. "Probably as fast as we can expect."

"How fast?"

"Why, I think it may warrant presentation to a grand jury."

"May warrant! Ain't you sure?"

"Well," said Meade slowly, "we don't want to start something without sufficient grounds to make a showing."

"Why not?"

"It might react, you know."

Johnson appeared to consider this for a minute.

"Nobody's got any wind of it yet, have they?" he asked.

"Oh, no; that's practically impossible. I'm working the thing alone, you know."

"You haven't talked to anybody about it, of course?"

"Not I," said Meade with a laugh.

Again the boss paused to consider the reply. Then he said, in an even, heavy voice:

"That's a lie, Meade!"

The district attorney tipped his chair forward suddenly, brought his feet to the floor, and stared at his visitor. His face went white, and he bit his lip nervously, although his eyes gave the boss a cold, appraising look.

"I don't understand what you mean," he said sharply.

"Yes, you do. You just lied to me. It isn't good for people to lie to me."

Johnson's eyes were expressionless, his voice calm, his cigar still burning briskly. Meade was thinking swiftly and restraining an impulse to retort hotly. His pride and dignity rebelled against the blunt, uncouth accusation, even if it did come from the lips of the political power of the county. There were some things that even Johnson had no right to say to him. But what did Johnson know, and what was he driving at? The district attorney's caution reasserted itself.

"I'll have to ask you to explain that," he said coldly.

"Sure. You talked to Pete Wayne's daughter about it."

Johnson watched his political protégé as the latter received this announcement. He saw a tightening at the corners of the mouth, a narrowing of the eyes, an almost imperceptible

bracing of the muscles. The boss waited for a reply, and then added:

"You did, didn't you?"

"Well—suppose I did?"

"I want you to say that you did," rumbled Johnson, but with no show of temper.

"All right; I did." There was a faint note of defiance in Meade's voice.

"That's better," said Johnson. "You told the truth then. Now I'll tell you something. She's told the mayor."

He watched Meade to see what effect this would have, and saw his jaw drop slightly and a look of surprise come into his eyes. Meade began drumming softly on the table with a forefinger.

"How do you know that?" he demanded.

"Now, listen," said Johnson. He laid his cigar on the edge of the table, fixed an unwinking glance upon his principal political asset, and began:

"I'm out taking the air myself, way out along the Blythewood Road. It comes time to start back; Clutch turns the machine around, and we start back. Just before we get to Pete Wayne's place out swings a gray runabout into the road and starts along ahead of us, hell bent. Young lady driving. She's in a hurry, because she loses her hat and doesn't even stop for it. I tell Clutch to speed up and see what all the row is about.

"We speed. And it takes some speed, too, you can believe me. Pretty soon the lady in front tops the last hill coming into town and begins to slow down. We slow down. It looks like she's seen something. We take a look and see something. Red car ahead. All hands breezing along easy for a while. Then the red car makes for Meadow Street. Young lady follows a little ways, but gets restless. All of a sudden she cuts off one block to the north, and then into Hamilton Avenue. Then she opens up the throttle and cuts loose again. We follow a ways, and then ease off.

"Half an hour later I'm walking

through the city hall. Same young lady comes out of the mayor's office. Understand?"

Johnson paused and appeared to be interested in the slim forefinger that was drumming on the top of the desk. Then he added:

"That's why I knew you lied to me, and that's why I knew Pete Wayne's daughter told the mayor whatever you told her. I knew it the minute you tipped your hand and told me you'd been calling on a girl. Understand now?"

Meade was angry with himself, angry at the girl, and in a sullen but unspoken rage against the boss. What was there to say? Johnson had put the facts together faultlessly. And his first idle questions upon entering the office had not been without their definite purpose, after all.

"So we know that the mayor is wise," continued Johnson. "That gives him a chance. Now, what I want to know is this"—he reached for the cigar, puffed it into life again, and settled back in his chair—"why did you tell Pete Wayne's daughter?"

Meade was considering his reply when Johnson put another question:

"Are you trying to double-cross me? I want to know it if you are."

"I'm not trying to double-cross you, to use your own phrase," said Meade. "I simply told Miss Wayne to put her on her guard against Harris."

"How?"

"Well, Harris has been hanging around there—out at the Wayne place; that's all."

"What do you care?"

"I believed that Miss Wayne was entitled to sufficient information to enable her to act so as to avoid possible embarrassment. That was my only reason in telling her."

"I see," said Johnson, nodding. "You want the girl."

Meade's pale cheeks flushed slightly, and he answered crisply:

"That is something we will not discuss, Mr. Johnson."

"We'll discuss it if I say so," said the boss evenly. "Understand that?"

"Miss Wayne is not to be dragged further into—"

"Miss Wayne is getting no disrespect from me," broke in Johnson. "The girl is all right, if that's what you want said. You want her. Well, that's all right, too. Harris wants her—maybe. So's that all right. But—and don't you forget this—I *want Harris!*"

It was the first time during the conversation that Johnson had employed emphasis. He did not raise his voice, but there was an added heaviness.

"Well?" Meade said it for lack of other comment.

"And I'm going to get Harris. Understand? And you're the man that's got to get him for me. Remember that, Meade. And I don't stand for any misdeals, or talking about my business with young women, or doing anything except carrying out my orders."

"Orders!" Meade felt the hot impulse rising in him again.

"Yes—orders! Who put you here?"

"I was elected."

"Right. Who nominated you?"

"I was nominated in the regular county convention."

"Yes? Whose convention was it? I'll tell you—if you need to be told. It was mine. I made it. See here, Meade, don't try to whip the devil around the stump with me. I nominated you, and you know it. I gave you a chance to make a reputation, and I haven't asked much in return. You've had a free hand."

"You may as well come off your horse, son, because if you don't I'll begin to get angry. Understand? You've been my personal counsel, and that was worth a good bit of money to you—wasn't it? I've given you a better chance in this town than most any young man I know of. I did it because I thought you had some brains. Then I give you a job to do that I'm interested in and you blow it."

"How could I know Miss Wayne would tell the mayor?"

There was an undisguised sneer in Johnson's smile.

"I guess Miss Wayne does her own picking," he observed.

"Look here," exclaimed Meade, with sudden heat, "if you expect me to abandon—"

"Shut up!" said Johnson roughly. "I'm not asking you to abandon anything. I'm just telling you to keep a tight lip when my business is concerned. Do you get that? I don't care who gets the girl. She can take care of herself, I judge, and if she can't Pete Wayne can. Now, don't be mussy or nasty or peevish with me. You haven't got anything on me at all. You haven't transacted all my business, Meade. Some things that I was particular about were turned over to people who don't talk too much. I usually know my man. I think I know you."

Meade watched the boss with a malevolent eye, but he did not answer. Had he asked himself why he remained silent he could not have told.

There was no reason for him to sit cringing and take the insults of a coarse brute. His family was influential, he had money of his own, he had a social position that even Johnson could not assail. He could laugh in Johnson's face, if he chose. But why didn't he? Why didn't any of the men who sunk their own independence and acknowledged the authority of Harvey Johnson? Deep in his heart he knew the reason and he raged against it. But he would not even acknowledge the reason to himself. He simply did what others did—obeyed.

"Now, the upshot of things is this," said Johnson, dropping back into his even tones. "This investigation has got to be hurried. If it isn't it may be blocked. You've put them on. There isn't to be any more delay and there isn't to be any failure."

"Well," answered Meade, "suppose there should be no evidence against

Harris. Suppose we can't make a case. What then?"

"There's got to be a case. There must be evidence. Do you suppose that nobody made anything when that franchise went through? Don't kid yourself. The goods are there. I know it. Now, you find 'em."

"Have you any information yourself on which I can act?"

The boss looked at Meade thoughtfully.

"If you don't turn up anything in the next two or three days," he said slowly, "come to me."

He sat thinking for a moment after that, then rose and picked up his cigar.

"I guess you understand things now," he remarked. "You've made a break. It's up to you to mend it."

And without further speech he turned his back on the district attorney and walked from the room. Meade watched him go with cold rage in his heart—rage that was mingled with shame at the miserable cowardice and subservience that had made him a mark for insults of a gross political boss.

CHAPTER XIII.

Harris Takes an Oath.

WHILE the city of Thomas did not pay its mayor a very large salary, it none the less expected him to earn it. Harris had solemnly promised during his campaign that he would make every effort a conscientious young man could put forth to do that very thing, and that there would be no failure for the lack of trying. And now he was deliberately breaking his promise, for he was not making the slightest pretense of transacting official business.

Instead, he was drawing pictures on loose sheets of paper. As fast as he drew one he tossed it aside and began another. There were seven or eight pencil sketches lying in disorder on top of the desk and a couple on the floor. The waste-basket held a few more.

And every sketch contained a picture of a building.

Some of them were done in the merest outline; others had been elaborated with details. Some sheets even contained two or three sketches, apparently of the same building, but viewed from different angles. One or two were accompanied by marginal notes and computations in arithmetic. There were also sketches where bits of landscape had been added, with fences, trees, driveways, and backgrounds of rolling hills.

For Harris was working at his trade, as he liked to call it. He was an architect again. It mattered not to him that he was pursuing this occupation at his office in the city hall, where things relating to public affairs were all-sufficient to keep a healthy young man busy eight or ten hours a day, with something left over to think about after he went home for the night. Just now he was making sketches, and nothing else seemed to count.

If they had been sketches of public buildings there might have been some excuse for the mayor's dalliance with his pencil. In fact, on one occasion he had done a bit of designing for the city, when he drew plans for a library and presented them to the taxpayers free of cost, so that the fees of an architect might be saved.

But he had resolved never to do that again, for he had brought upon his head the loud wails of fellow craftsmen. They declared that he was taking bread and butter out of the mouths of members of his profession; asserted that the people had hired him to be a mayor, and did not expect him to remain in the field of designing buildings. He was keeping his resolve, too; for just now he was not drawing sketches of public buildings.

By no manner of means could the picture upon which he was at that moment working be construed as an edifice intended to house a municipal department. It was not a jail or a court-house or a library or a public

bath, or anything suggestive of a market or a monument.

On the contrary, it was a rather domestic building, with an exterior that was a combination of brick and shingles. It was not more than two stories high. There were broad porches on two sides, with wide dormer windows above them. The roof ascended in a long, gentle sweep, and climbing up one side of the building was a monster chimney which, if it had been extended skyward a hundred feet or so, would have been capacious enough for a factory.

The building was generous in expanse. It took all the ground it needed, without reference to the price of building-lots. And, to emphasize this prodigality, Harris had apparently set it far back from any street; for there was a wide, deep lawn in front of it, shaded by clusters of trees, and off at one side a sunken garden, approached through a pergola that was fifty feet long if it was an inch.

Harris surveyed the sketch critically, and then remarked aloud: "The windows need shutters."

Whereupon he rapidly hung shutters on either side of every window in sight. "Now, let's see about the driveway."

He put in a tentative driveway, then erased it as being too commonplace, and also as being at variance with the landscape effect. He substituted another, which took an entirely different course through the plenteous lawn, and which required the removal of several trees before it could be brought to a proper conclusion at the porch-steps. This was better, and Harris then constructed a path around the sunken garden. There was still room in the background to the right of the building for a garage. He put it in.

"Now, that's more like it," he said as he surveyed the work. "Let's see what it would cost."

He began figuring roughly on the margin of the sketch, frowned as he progressed, and finally shook his head.

"Couldn't be done under twelve thousand dollars, unless skimped inside. Oh, those liars who draw pictures of three-thousand-dollar houses! I never saw one that you could build for less than six, unless you wanted to put it up in China, where they say labor is cheap."

Still the sketch pleased him, and he lingered over it a while, adding a detail here and there, and piling up additional expense with every stroke of the pencil.

"How absurd!" he finally exclaimed. "With the price of land hitting the blue sky. Why, I've let those grounds run all over the map. And yet it would be an artistic crime to put that thing on anything less than a two-hundred-foot front, and it needs three hundred in depth."

To confirm this space requirement, he found room for a pleasant-looking vegetable-garden off at the left, half hidden by the trees.

"She's rather strong on the bungalow idea," mused Harris.

He picked up a couple of the discarded sketches and examined them with plain disapproval.

"Too severe—too classic for a cottage. Too much formality about it to suit her. While this—oh, this is impossible! She's got to have a porch, and you couldn't put one on that thing without getting arrested."

He consigned the offender to the waste-basket, tipped back his chair, and lighted a cigarette. For a while he smoked dreamily, his eyes fixed on the newest sketch, his mind filled only with the picture of a girl in a white dress, whose chestnut hair was flying riotously about her temples, whose cheeks were flushing through their tan, whose clear-blue eyes were now grave and sympathetic, now whimsical and mysterious with hidden mirth, and now frankly boisterous with merriment, raillery, and tantalizing laughter. How well she looked in white!

Some girls needed colors. She could wear them if she wanted to—but she

didn't *need* them. That was the beautiful part of it. She must always wear white, Harris decided. He would not permit—

Permit! Harris awoke from his dream. Permit! He laughed, but it was a harsh, short laugh that did not relieve him. What right had he even to think that he would ever be in a position where he could *permit* anything? None whatever, at the rate at which he was getting on in the world.

For here were two things which, when he wrenched himself away from his visions, he could see as clearly as if they were stenciled in great letters on the walls of his office. Constance Wayne was the daughter of a rich man. All her life she had lived among rich things and rich people. Every year she could and undoubtedly did spend more money than Harris could possibly earn in the same space of time. She had never known what a hardship or a privation was, and Peter Wayne would see to it that she never did.

The man who captured Constance must be able to transplant her to a home into which she could enter with the sense that she had lost nothing in the exchange. Not that she was selfish or timid or too luxuriously bred to accept less than her father could give. No; she was too real, too sincere, too vital for any such narrowness as that.

But no man who could give less had a right to ask her to take little for much. That was one thing that Harris always saw before him when he descended from the clouds of pleasant unrealities.

The other was himself. He had a profession. What had it done for him? Rather, what had he done for it? He always considered the latter aspect, for he did not try to deceive himself or to shift the responsibility upon a thing when it belonged to him. Well, he had followed that profession since completing his college course, and had earned a living at it. He had put by a little money in the bank. He was getting a

practise. Had he given himself over exclusively to "pot-boilers" his earnings would have trebled. But he had taken life easily, not too seriously, never overworked, and did mostly the things that he liked to do.

Despite this leisurely pursuit of fortune, however, his business had been growing. He had begun to attract the attention of people. He was really getting on.

And then what happened? Politics! He had dropped the drawing-pencil to take a hand in a business utterly foreign to what he thought were his tastes. Why, he often wondered. He could recall no boyhood interest in things political. Even as he passed through his twenties he had paid but cursory attention to what other men made a trade.

Sometimes he concluded that it was an innate love of conflict that had turned his career suddenly and angularly. He did not even pretend with himself that it was any unusual zeal for the welfare of the people or any altruistic ambition to right the wrongs committed against them. Yet, almost by magic, he was in the thick of a strange, noisy, and tumultuous manner of life. With what net result?

He was mayor of a city. It paid him the modest salary of five thousand dollars a year and demanded all of his time. His work as an architect was abandoned. The practise that had been drifting to him was drifting away again. When the city got through with him he could begin all over again, falling in behind a lot of other young fellows with whom he had formerly been walking abreast.

And politics itself? And the job of being mayor? The one was dirty, sordid, repugnant—yes, even at times monotonous. The other was drudgery. It was like learning a trade without the slightest intention of following it for a living.

There was power—yes. But that made no particular appeal to Harris. There was honor—perhaps. But how

long would that last, and what was it worth? There was the opportunity to do something decent for the town in which he lived; and that, in the last analysis, was about the only part of his job that made it worth while or even bearable.

"I was a fool," he said aloud, rising from his chair and walking over to the window. "An idiot! I wish to Heaven that politics and the mayor's office were at the bottom of the sea! I'm not fitted for the work. I have to drive myself to it. Where did I ever get such a twisted idea of fun?"

"They say it's a fight. I don't mind a fight. But for God's sake, why can't it be a clean one? Why don't they come out and fight in the open? Why don't they take an election at its face value and give a fellow a chance? Not any more for me, when I get through with this.

"They can call me a quitter if they like. I'll stand for it. But this is the first and last trip. Now, Jim Wayne likes it. He's built differently. He's always had his eye on the game. Why didn't they take Jim? He's the man that ought to have my job. Yes, and I'll make him take it next time—if there is any next time for the 'college boys.' By George, that's what I will do! I may never play politics but once more in my life, but when I do it'll be to hand this job to Jim Wayne!"

He walked restlessly back to the desk and began idly examining the sketches again.

"Making plans for something that'll never happen is fine business," he muttered with a scowl. "Quit reaching for something you can't get, my boy."

And with a sweep he crumpled the drawings between his hands, twisted them into a ball, and tossed them into the basket. And then, as he stood contemplating this abrupt dismissal of his dreams, Harris started at a thought which crept into his mind. Involuntarily he turned, as if some one were at his shoulder listening.

Then he paced the office again, his hands clenched behind him, eyes fixed, unseeing, straight ahead. Harris had begun a battle with a temptation.

"Beyond my reach? I wonder if she is. Why should she be? Why don't I wake up to the fact that I'm not so poor as I told myself I was? It's a lie that I'm poor! I've got money—more than I could ever earn in ten years. They say it isn't my money—Jim and Mac and Phil Sharkey. Whose is it, then? God knows! It was given to me. I haven't stolen it. I've done what a man could do to find out where it came from. They think it's from the gang. Maybe it is. I didn't ask them for it. It's not graft.

"And then they tell me I mustn't spend it. That was all right for a while. But now I've spent it—two-thirds of it! If there was any crime in that—why, it's done. The amount doesn't matter—it's spent. And the gang made me do it! Made me buy the bonds! There was no crime in that. I did it for the city. Maybe there was some personal pride in it; maybe that was the biggest reason. I don't care. It's done.

"Why can't I spend the rest? I may as well die for a whole sheep as a lamb. If I've stolen anything I may as well be a big crook as a little one."

Harris was becoming excited, but he made no effort to restrain his imagination. It was running too close a parallel to his desires to be checked by a mere effort of will. He wanted Constance Wayne. He loved her. How long he had loved her he made not the slightest attempt to discover in his heart, nor did he care.

He simply loved her now, knew it, and that was all sufficient. She seemed suddenly near to him. The barrier between them had melted as if by magic. Why should he have to serve, like David, for his wife?

"I'm not a beggar," he kept repeating to himself. "She might take a beggar, but I wouldn't ask her. I'm—why, I'm almost rich!"

And then he checked himself in the midst of his exaltation. Did Constance love him? Had she shown by look or word or gesture that he was more to her than any other man to whom she was a friend? Like all lovers, Harris was at once plunged into the maelstrom of doubt.

The man who would win Constance Wayne must be made of pure metal. He must have achieved something in the world; must have lived for some purpose, with some result. What had he achieved? A paltry beginning in a career which he had abandoned and a public office which had lost the savor of its attraction and become a wearisome load of disappointment and discouragement.

That seemed little, indeed, to lay at the feet of Constance Wayne. And he knew her to be too proud, too true to herself and her ideals, to give herself to any man whom she not only did not love, but did not exalt in the temple of her heart.

And yet— Harris plunged onward again in his fancy. Why had she revealed that amazing enthusiasm in the affairs with which he was now concerned? Was it all because of her brother? Why had she taken a man's interest in the things which usually fell only to the lot of men?

And why—yes, why—had Constance Wayne, flushed with excitement and apprehension—eager, loyal, and earnest—come to him with the wings of the wind to tell him of a threatened danger? Was that mere friendship for the man who was her brother's friend? What was the message in her eyes as she stood before him, breathless from her haste, to warn him that an enemy plotted?

"She *must* love me!" he declared. "She's got to love me! I'll make her love me!"

And then he did something curious. He did it with no thought of anything save reverence and solemnity. He did it as naturally, almost as unconsciously, as if it were a habit of

men. He walked over to a little table in the corner of the room where there lay a few books. One of them was a Bible, a worn, soiled volume kept for years in the mayor's office to be used in cases where the administration of an oath was necessary in the transaction of public business. Laying his hand upon it, he said aloud:

"Winston Harris, you swear yourself to marry Constance Wayne."

A load seemed to have been lifted from his shoulders. He threw his head back and drew a deep breath. It was as if the difficulties had been surmounted, the hill climbed, and the certainty of things beyond revealed. He wandered back to his desk and sat down like a man who has achieved comfort and happiness.

Presently he reached down into the basket and drew out the crumpled mass of sketches. Carefully he began spreading out and smoothing the sheets. At last he found the one that seemed nearest what he believed to be her ideal, and he fell to studying it again with professional criticism. Undoubtedly he could improve it. Yes, he would redraw it, enlarge it, elaborate it—

There was a short, uncertain ring of the telephone-bell, as if the girl in the exchange had discovered a mistake or changed her mind abruptly. At first he paid no attention; then an impulse caused him to lift the receiver and place it to his ear. He heard a voice—deep, deliberate, and familiar. But the voice was not talking to him. There was a buzzing, snapping sound on the wire, such as would come from an imperfect connection or an interference. Harris listened.

". . . before the week's over," said the voice. "Yes—absolutely necessary and final. Understand? So go to it for all you're worth. And Meade—Hello, Meade! I'll probably turn up something else for you beside that. We've got something planted. Yes, it's been planted quite a while. A new stunt. No—not now. I'll tell you

when it's ready. What? Never mind who planted it or how. It just looks as if the plant was ready to grow some. Now, you hustle! Understand?"

Harris replaced the receiver mechanically and raised a haggard face. All the dreams had vanished again. All the plans and hopes and aspirations were gone in a flash. He could feel the load on his shoulders. He winced as if to escape an impending blow. The crash was coming now—swiftly.

He had heard Harvey Johnson decree it.

CHAPTER XIV.

Anonymous and Private.

THE boxlike office of McAllister was in a far corner of the editorial floor of the *Star*. Tradition required that the floor be half hidden under newspapers, the waste-basket spilling galley-proofs like a horn of plenty, the desk a thing of magnificent disorder, the ink-bottle moist with rivulets on the outside, and the paste-pot smelling musty and pungent.

But the managing editor of the *Star* chose to violate tradition. His little office was so neat, so bare of the outward evidences of his profession, that the staff wondered how he could manage anything, much less edit.

McAllister was looked upon as a freak, and simultaneously acknowledged to be a "crackerjack." It was he who made the *Star* a living thing—a fighting force—with a tongue that could lash and a power that could punish. People did not make it a practise of deliberately getting in the way of the *Star*. If they collided with it by accident, the beauty and interest of the resultant combat depended entirely on their own ability to trade punch for punch.

The *Star* could always be relied upon to give a proper and manful account of itself, and equally to brag about it after the smoke had ceased to rise from the battle-field.

Harris was sitting in a corner of the office, reading some manuscript. The sheets were typewritten on yellow paper, and there were many pencil-marks upon them, constituting eliminations from and additions to the text. McAllister was smoking a stubby brier and watching the mayor.

Phil Sharkey, author of the narrative which Harris held in his hands, was also an observer. He was in no sense embarrassed by frequent comments from the reader. Criticisms of his "copy" were not new to Sharkey and never disturbed him, for he was secure in the calm knowledge that he wrote good copy, and that the average person who read it was not so good a judge as himself. Jim Wayne sat by the mayor, occasionally looking over his shoulder.

"Now, I don't like this," said Harris. "Where it says:

"Harris sat and looked at the fifth check in utter despair which finally gave way to futile anger. The young mayor paced back and forth in his office like a beast in a cage. The mystery was becoming oppressive and fearsome."

"Well, what's the matter with it?" demanded McAllister.

"It's just like a great deal of the rest of it," complained Harris. "It sounds too sensational—too yellow—if you don't mind my saying it."

"Certainly it's yellow," agreed McAllister cheerfully. "You can't make us feel badly by circulating a charge like that. But isn't it true?"

"How do you know I paced back and forth in my office, for instance?" demanded the mayor.

"Always do," observed Sharkey laconically. "Always do when your goat is lassoed."

Harris laughed. "Well, perhaps I do. I never thought much about it. Come to think of it, I dare say I did walk up and down. But what's the use of sticking in a lot of odds and ends and trivialities? Now, here's where it goes on to say:

"The mayor took the check, as he had the others, and deposited it to his account in the Palmer Trust Company, still with the same furtive sense of being a mere instrument in the hands of a power that he could neither feel, hear, nor see."

"Now, why not end that sentence with the word 'company'? All the rest is sheer superfluity, and it gives a dime-novel aspect that seems entirely foreign to the substance of the article."

"It's a dime-novel story," said Sharkey, grinning.

"Certainly," confirmed McAllister. "Now, look here, Win. This story can be told in half a dozen different ways. I judge from your comments that you'd like to have us tell it so that it would read like a street-opening advertisement or a page from a school arithmetic. That's one way of doing it. Another way is to run that story so that it will hit every man, woman, and child who reads it bang in the eye, like the report of a theater fire or a murder."

"We want to make people sit up. The *Star's* got a reputation to sustain. We're not dishing out the 'Rollo' books at a cent a copy. We're giving the people good, red meat."

"You call it sensational. Of course it is. How can it be anything else? The whole thing is a stupendous sensation from beginning to end. You can't whisper a sensation to people. You've got to yell it at the top of your voice. The only way to handle this thing is to play it up—big! Why, I'd be ashamed of myself if I put that story out in such shape that people would think the *Star* didn't know a big thing when it had it."

Harris resumed his reading. He passed over several pages without comment, and then suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, I say, Mac! Here's an interview with me. I haven't given you any interview."

Again Sharkey smiled, and this time he turned his eyes to catch the amused expression of his chief.

"Read it first," he said.

Harris went through a page and a half more, and then glanced up at Sharkey, shaking his head in a puzzled way.

"I don't remember having said it, Phil," he declared; "but it's all right. I'll stand for it."

Sharkey waved aside the compliment with a gesture and lighted a fresh cigarette.

"I think I'll let you write my annual message for me," added Harris. "You seem to be a mind-reader."

"I'll bet you a hat you don't dare let me write it," said Sharkey challengingly. "But if you do, I'll guarantee that the babies in the cradles will read it and get their little fingers all gummed up pasting it in scrap-books."

"I suppose so!" laughed Harris. "It would be something like this, I imagine."

"Oh, worse!" answered Sharkey cheerfully. "It would be a new thing in the line of public documents."

"I know just how Phil feels," observed McAllister placidly. "I've often felt that way myself. I'd give five years of my life if I could write just one President's message. Gee! Think what a chance that would be—to give folks a real story to read! The trouble with Presidents is, they get the idea that posterity will be simply pining to read something ponderous."

Sharkey nodded an indorsement of this sentiment, while Harris continued the reading of the manuscript. Finally he laid it down with an air of resignation, and said:

"As to facts, it couldn't be straighter. So far as style goes, it's too strong for me; but I suppose I'll have to let it go that way if you boys insist."

"The only reason you don't like it," remarked McAllister, "is that you're neither a newspaperman nor a constant reader. You're only a mayor—and a mayor or any other public official is an ex-human being, who is so absorbed in his reincarnation that he forgets what he used to be."

Harris smiled, and Jim Wayne broke into the conversation for the first time in half an hour.

"Mac's got us about right, Win," he said. "I'm getting so doped up reading official papers that I find I'm losing my taste for anything that doesn't sound like a contract or a specification."

"Now, this story, of course, takes a seven-column head," said McAllister, returning to the business in hand. Harris made a movement of protest, but it was ignored. "We'll run a two-column bank on either side of the page, with a layout in the center."

"What's a 'layout'?" asked the mayor curiously.

"Well, here's one," explained McAllister, fumbling in a drawer where there were some artists' proofs. "A layout is a group of pictures, usually half-tones, hitched together with some ornamental scrollwork and curlicues that are supposed to make it artistic. Sometimes we run little margin sketches, depicting various episodes in the life of the deceased, or the divorced, or whoever may be the hero or heroine."

He tossed over to Harris a drawing that made the latter gasp. It contained three pictures of one girl, evidently a person of some acquaintance with the stage. Running across the top of the group and down one side were half a dozen dashing little sketches, representing a wine supper, an automobile accident, a rescue from a highwayman, and other gingery episodes.

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed Harris, "that you're going to fix me up in any style like that?"

"Oh, it'll be different, of course," said McAllister professionally. "That just gives you a general idea. In place of Flossie's picture we'll have yours—that one where you look stern and handsome. In place of Flossie in costume we'll have a photograph of your city office, where you received the checks. In place of Flossie in her

automobile we'll run a facsimile of the first check.

"We'll probably stick in a couple more half-tones, too. Down one side there'll be a falling shower of bank-checks, while on the other we'll have Hull work in a few of the principal episodes in line-drawings, such as the burglary of your office, the bond sale, and yourself listening at the telephone while the boss is instructing Meade to assassinate you. It's going to play up first-class, I think. Won't it, Phil?"

Sharkey nodded hopefully.

Harris sat staring at McAllister, something akin to horror in his face. Then he threw up his hands with a groan of despair and shook his head helplessly. Wayne was grinning like a schoolboy.

"Believe me, son," said McAllister, "when we get time, as we have in this case, the *Star* can do a job right."

"I suppose I may as well quit kicking," said Harris resignedly.

"Absolutely. Now, the only other question is, whether we are going to print it at all—and, if so, when?"

"Why, I thought that was settled!" exclaimed Harris in surprise.

"It's never settled until you go to press—in this business," said McAllister. "Now, you say that Johnson told Meade he must get action this week."

"I picked up the receiver when he was in the middle of a sentence," Harris explained. "All I caught was 'before the week is over.'"

"Well, that doesn't necessarily mean he'll call his grand jury this week. I figure that it will go before a special one. In that case it can hardly meet before the beginning of next week, although it might. We've got to do some guessing. Of course, we must forestall the meeting of the grand jury, but we don't want to forestall it too much.

"By that I mean we don't want to spring this until a grand jury is actually called and the notices sent out, because they might not call it at all then and leave us in a foolish position.

We've got to be able to show a concrete case of animus against you, such as the summoning of a grand jury to investigate you."

Harris nodded.

"You see," continued McAllister, "we've built up this story on the theory of a mysterious plot against you. The grand jury business forms another link in the chain and is important to round out the case. If we are premature they may either call off the grand jury or else swing it in on the ground that the facts printed in the *Star* demand investigation and contain presumptive evidence of a crime. It's our job to show the grand jury as a part of the conspiracy.

"On the other hand, if we're going to print it we mustn't hold it so long that the *Times* will spring some sort of a story first. We've got to get the public ear right at the start and fill it up with the facts before anything else gets into it.

"Now the thing for you to decide, Win, with a full understanding of the situation, is whether to print the thing at all, or just let it develop in the ordinary course of news, as it's bound to, sooner or later."

"What do you say?" asked Harris.

"I'd rather you'd decide that yourself," said McAllister. "That part belongs to you."

Harris glanced at Wayne inquiringly, and that young man echoed the words of the editor. Phil Sharkey appeared to be utterly indifferent and more interested in some late proofs than in the conversation.

The mayor remained thoughtful for a moment, then threw back his shoulders with a sudden movement and squared himself.

"Print it," he said tersely.

"You're right, son," said McAllister, reaching out his hand. "That would have been my advice, but I wanted you to say the word on your own judgment. How about it, Jim?"

"Right," echoed Wayne. "There's nothing else to do."

Sharkey did not need to utter a word. His face showed that he was glad to know that his story was not to be "killed."

"Print it whenever you consider the time right," added Harris. "Of course I'd like to know when it's to be sprung."

"Oh, sure; we'll keep in touch," nodded McAllister. "Now, there's just one word more of caution. Be careful to keep your accounts straight, and have every penny where you can produce it. I'm sorry you took the chance on those bonds, but we've put that in the light of a public service. I'm glad that you bid high enough to dispel any idea that you were after a profit in them. But hang onto the rest like grim death."

As the conference in McAllister's room broke up the managing editor remembered something.

"Have you got a good print of that picture of yours I spoke about?" he asked Harris.

"I think there's one over at the office. In fact, I'm quite sure."

"Go along with him, Phil," said McAllister, "and bring it back. We have to make a new cut."

Harris, Wayne, and Sharkey walked out through the city-room and down-stairs to the street. At the entrance to the city hall Wayne left the group, and the mayor and the reporter went on together to Harris's office.

While Harris was searching in a drawer of his desk for the photograph, Sharkey was idly glancing at some papers that lay on the blotter.

"Get many like that?" he asked suddenly.

Harris looked up and Sharkey tossed a letter to him. The address on the envelope, a plain, white affair, was typewritten. The only feature which would attract more than cursory attention was the word "Private" in the lower, left-hand corner. It was apparent that the address had been written on a machine with a two-color ribbon, for while the name and address

of the mayor were in black, "private" was in red, with capital letters, underscored.

Harris ran his finger under the flap of the envelope and opened it. Within was a single sheet of paper, and upon it a solitary typewritten line:

"Do not be afraid to use the money."

There was no signature, no date—not a single mark or character of any other kind on the sheet. Harris stared at it, reading and rereading the sentence. So absorbed did he become in this occupation that he completely forgot the presence of Phil Sharkey, who stood watching him, scenting instinctively something out of the common. Finally he coughed slightly.

Harris looked up, and without a word passed the letter to him. Sharkey gave it the same intent study, although in a more practical way. He turned the paper over and over, held it against the light to examine its texture, and rubbed his fingers over the typewritten words to discover if they were fresh enough to be blurred.

He compared the typewritten sentence with the address on the envelope, and also examined the paper of which the latter was composed. Then he turned his attention to the postmark. The letter had been mailed in the big city, had arrived at the Thomas post-office about two hours before, and had probably been lying on the mayor's desk for more than an hour.

"Huh!" commented Sharkey as he continued to study the missive.

Harris was utterly bewildered, and for the moment bereft of speech. He felt the same helpless sensation that had come to him each time one of the mysterious checks appeared in his mail.

"Ever get anything like this before?" asked Sharkey.

The mayor shook his head.

"Funny it should come here," mused Sharkey. "All the other stuff went to your business place, didn't it?"

"All of it," assented Harris. "There was never even a scrap of paper sent here."

He turned to the pile of letters that lay on his desk and ran over them hurriedly, but found none that did not bear the stamp of ordinary. This was the only one which his secretary had failed to open. The bright-red "private" had accomplished its purpose of preserving the confidential character of the message.

"Been going to your city office much lately?" asked Sharkey.

"No. Not for a week."

"Huh! Whoever sent this is keeping tabs on your habits. They wanted you to get it—quick. They didn't want to wait until you made your next trip to the city."

"What do you make out of it, Phil?"

"I can't figure it just yet," answered Sharkey deliberately. "Of course it comes from the same source; that's evident. And whoever sent the money wants you to do something with it. It seems likely, too, that they haven't tumbled to the bond sale, because they'd know then that you weren't afraid to use the money. But what are you to use it for?"

Harris stirred uneasily. The memory of an air-castle had come to him. But it was nothing that he could tell to his puzzled companion.

"Well," said Sharkey, pocketing the letter and the envelope, and picking up the photograph which Harris had found in the drawer, "I'll see what Mac thinks about it."

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Harris apprehensively.

"Photograph 'em, of course."

"For what?"

"For the paper. This belongs with the story; that's certain."

"But it's meaningless," protested Harris.

"So is a whole lot of the other business—at present," answered Sharkey. "We'll have to print it first and find out the meaning afterward. Don't worry. I'll let you have this back."

And Sharkey hurried from the room, leaving the mayor to his

thoughts. They were not very coherent thoughts. They piled one upon another in a confused heap and he made no effort to disentangle them.

"Don't be afraid to use the money," he murmured. And then in a flash came the memory of McAllister's final warning: "Hang onto the rest like grim death."

Harris turned abruptly to his desk and rang a bell to summon his secretary.

"I must go to work at something," he said aloud. "I've got to get my mind off this thing if I can. I wonder if I'm going crazy."

CHAPTER XV.

Rivals.

HARRIS paused for a moment on the steps of the city hall, watching people hurrying back and forth across the square. Occasionally somebody who recognized the mayor nodded to him in a friendly way. It was midafternoon, and the city of Thomas was going peacefully about its business affairs, unmindful of the cares of its mayor.

As Harris watched the scene he felt himself in the position of a man with a bomb concealed in his pocket, about to create a condition of turmoil, riot and noise, and more than probably disaster. Nobody could have suspected the mayor of such an intention, for outwardly he was placid and even cheerful. Yet Harris knew he was about to cause the biggest sensation that the town had known in all its municipal history.

The *Star* would print the story in the morning. That much had been settled. McAllister had it in type; he and Harris had read the proofs. The time had arrived when postponement seemed perilous. To-morrow the fight would be on.

Harris drew a deep breath of satisfaction in the knowledge that the first blow would come from him. The sus-

pense was over, at any rate; and that in itself had served in large measure to lift a load from his shoulders. On the eve of the revelation of his strange experiences to the taxpayers he wondered vaguely if the people would believe him. It was asking much of any man to put implicit faith in a tale so utterly strange and improbable, yet he was not giving himself much concern about that.

Ultimately the people would have to believe, for he had the proofs. Meantime he would at least get the credit for voluntary action. And, whichever way the coming battle should end, he had hastened the issue.

He went down the steps slowly and crossed the square in the warm, spring sunshine. As he reached the courthouse corner a familiar gray runabout shot up to the curb and a voice that he knew called:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor."

Harris raised his hat to Constance Wayne, then frowned involuntarily as he saw Meade alight from the car. The district attorney nodded to him rather curtly, then turned to the girl.

"It was a delightful drive," he said; "and it was very kind of you to set me down at my office. As soon as my own car is out of the shop again I shall ask you to permit me to return the courtesy."

"Why, of course," she answered, smiling. "And don't forget to come and see me again, Mr. Meade."

"You may be sure I won't," he replied earnestly. And with a bow and a grasp of her hand over which he had an impulse to linger, Meade went up the court-house stairway.

Harris had not waited to see the parting. He had merely bowed and passed on. Meade was odious to him; he could not even go through the outward forms of friendly greetings. And, loyal as he knew Constance Wayne to be in her friendship, he felt a sense of quick resentment that she should thus bestow marks of cordiality upon the man who was, as a tool

of the boss, trying to bring him to ruin. It was a foolish jealousy, he knew, but he could not put it aside.

Slowly he walked up the court-house block, nursing a dull, unreasoning anger, when once more he heard the soft purring of a motor drawing up to the curb, and a voice:

"Oh, Mr. Mayor. Are you running away?"

Harris bowed again and stopped. Constance Wayne had mirth in her eyes.

"I think you might at least have stopped to say it was a nice day," she added. "You gave my recent guest a really awful look."

"You didn't expect me to embrace him, did you?" asked Harris rather crossly.

"Well, no-o," she answered, pursing her lips. "But then you ought to be polite to me; don't you think so?"

"I apologize if I was rude, Constance. But—" and he glanced back at the court-house and shrugged his shoulders. She laughed.

"Why, Mr. Meade is really a very interesting man," she said. "He is cultured, and he knows lots of things. And he is absolutely devoted to his profession."

This was a thrust, and Harris winced. Also, his temper did not improve.

"Mr. Meade may be all those things," he said. "But that does not make him a friend of mine, and I don't think that—"

He paused and she finished the sentence for him.

"That I ought to have him for a friend either. Well, really, Win—I mean, Mr. Mayor—you're in a very unreasonable mood this afternoon, and that is an almost unforgivable thing on such a beautiful day. I believe it would do you a lot of good to get a breath of country air. If you will accept the poor hospitality of my little car I'll promise to drive you at least as far as I drove Mr. Meade, and if you should happen to become nice instead

of horrid, perhaps I will drive you a little farther."

He forced a smile and stepped into the car, half ashamed; angry at himself for having revealed a childish petulance and still a little bit sulky.

"Which way, sir?" she demanded. "Or will you drive yourself?"

"Oh, you drive, please," he said. "You know the car better than I do; and anyhow, you're a better driver. Anywhere will suit me."

She moved a lever and the gray runabout rolled smoothly out through Meadow Street.

Harris sat silently, a man nursing a grievance. Occasionally the girl glanced sidewise at him, and the shadow of a smile seemed to hover on her lips, but Harris did not notice. He was looking straight ahead, apparently absorbed in the perspective of roadway that stretched ahead of them. But his thoughts were of Meade, of Constance, and of the cordial friendship that seemed to exist between them. The car left the city street and entered the suburbs.

Constance allowed the speed to increase and gave her whole attention to the road.

For nearly half an hour they drove thus, Harris rousing himself from time to time to admire the skill with which the girl handled the swift little car. She drove fearlessly and with a spice of recklessness, yet there were always a skill and caution present that banished the idea that she was taking dangerous chances.

Speed she loved, but she escaped what would have been foolhardiness in others through a sure, certain, and steady manipulation of the controls that stamped her as a cool and expert driver. They were out in the country now, where the well-kept road ran through a pleasantly rolling landscape, winding in and out, now ascending a rise, now sloping downward at easy grades. The odor of fresh spring verdure was in the air, which was warm and still.

Presently she slackened the speed and turned a frankly, inquiring pair of eyes upon her passenger.

"If you don't talk to me," she said, "I shall put you down and let you walk back."

Harris recollected himself and forced a laugh.

"What shall we talk about?" he said. "Your friend, Mr. Meade?"

As he framed the speech he knew he would be sorry after it had been uttered, yet his mood was stubborn and gloomy. He watched her cheeks flush quickly, and saw her lips compress tightly. For a moment she did not answer. Then she said slowly:

"Win, you are not very kind today. I might be justified in getting angry, but I won't. I am just going to assume that you don't intend to be rude to me. I am not going to believe that you are attempting to establish a censorship over my friends. If I wish to receive Mr. Meade as a friend, it is my privilege. My father is the only man who would have the right to interest himself in the matter—and my father does not object. Besides, Win—"

She paused, and Harris detected a sudden moisture in her eyes. He put his hand over hers impulsively, and said with contrition:

"Forgive me, Constance. I have been unpardonably brutal. I didn't mean it, and yet— Why, when I saw you with him, it seemed as if every nasty trait I've got just jumped to the surface. I know I haven't got any right—yet. But, Constance—"

A speech was trembling on his lips when she turned to him hurriedly, smiling again, and interrupted:

"There! I knew you would get over it. Don't apologize any more."

"I wasn't going to," said Harris. "I was going to say something else. Constance, I was going to—"

She reached for one of the levers, and the car shot forward again at an increased speed. Harris smiled grimly and sighed. Was she merely teas-

ing him? Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes bright, but the hands that rested on the steering-wheel were cool and steady. Once she gave him a swift glance and a fleeting, half-mocking smile. He answered it with a look that drove her eyes to the front again. Presently she slowed the pace once more and began to speak. Her tone was crisp and businesslike.

"I've got some more information, Win."

"About—"

"About the grand jury."

Harris straightened up in his seat involuntarily.

"They are going to play trumps at the start," she said.

"And what are trumps?"

"You."

The mayor started and uttered an exclamation.

"How do you mean—I am trumps?" he asked.

"They're going to call you before the grand jury first, the minute the investigation is started."

"Who said that?"

"Mr. Meade."

She smiled faintly as she gave him the answer. But Harris was too eager now to pause for a consideration of why Constance had showed an apparently marked friendship for the district attorney.

"But," he said quickly, "if they are really after me, and they call me before the grand jury on the franchise matter, that means immunity?"

"They will ask you to waive immunity," she answered.

"They cannot compel anybody to do that."

"But they say—Mr. Meade says—that you cannot refuse to waive it; that if you did it would be almost equal to a confession."

Harris gritted his teeth. Meade was right. What would the public say if their mayor hesitated or refused to waive immunity from possible prosecution? It would be equivalent to the refusal of a witness to answer on the

ground that he might incriminate himself. The gang was subtle and clever. Meade was a capable instrument.

"Well, I'll waive immunity," said Harris shortly. "I'm not afraid. There has been nothing crooked."

"Then, after you," said Constance, with an approving nod, "they are going to call the members of the council who voted for the franchise."

"And ask them to waive immunity also?"

"Yes; Mr. Meade says that if you waive the rest will have to follow."

"Did you hear when the grand jury was to be called?"

"For Monday, he said. The call has been prepared and signed. The notices are going out this afternoon."

"And what do they expect to show as a result of all this?"

"They are going to try to show that there was a consideration for granting the franchise," she answered.

Harris laughed confidently.

"They can't," he said. "I didn't get anything for signing it, and I'm absolutely sure that no man who voted for it did. It was a public necessity and we put it through."

"But Mr. Meade said," she continued, "that a consideration might be indirect and still be a consideration. He said nothing about increases in realty values or railroad stocks."

Harris caught his breath at this. He wondered if Meade really knew about the mysterious Blythewood deal. Well, it would all be out in the *Star* to-morrow. Then Meade would be welcome to make the most of an exploded shell. He mused in silence for a while over the information she had given him.

"Did Meade tell you all these things voluntarily?" he asked in a surprised tone.

"Some of it," she answered.

"And the rest?"

"Why—I asked him."

"You mean you pumped it out of him," said Harris in admiration.

She colored and laughed.

"Constance, you must be a wonderful cross-examiner," he said warmly.

"But, persuasive as you are, I can't yet understand why Meade should tell you things like that. And he didn't even ask you to keep it confidential?"

"No; he didn't ask that."

"The man must have lost his head," exclaimed Harris.

Constance glanced at him with a curious expression in her eyes.

"Perhaps," she assented, with a light laugh. "Although I don't know whether that remark of yours is a compliment to me or not."

"He's either lost his head or his heart," said Harris bluntly.

"Why, Win!"

She blushed crimson, gave him a startled look, hesitated, and then laughed.

"There can't be any other explanation," he went on. "He's probably lost both. I don't blame him."

"Win!"

"Well, it's true, isn't it? You've been pumping state secrets out of him; that's evident. And why? That's what I'd like to know. Look here, Constance—"

She bent over the levers, began fussing with the gears, and opened the muffler. The little car became noisy and seemed to require close attention from its driver.

"You just did it for me!" he exclaimed, ignoring the obvious attempt to make a diversion. "And I was brutal and unreasonable enough to complain of your friendship with Meade. I was a fool not to know. I did know, too; but somehow I couldn't bear— Oh, I'm ashamed of myself, Constance!"

"I think I am a little ashamed, too," she said quietly. "Sometimes I think that I haven't been fair to Mr. Meade. I feel as if I had been playing spy, and I don't like that. It seems almost despicable to encourage anybody to tell you things, just for the purpose of repeating them to somebody else. And yet—"

Her voice faltered and Harris leaned toward her.

"Constance!"

There was a report like that of a rifle, the car swerved sharply toward the ditch, and then recovered itself. Constance threw off the clutch and

brought the runabout to a standstill. She leaned over and looked at a flat tire. Then she gave a little sigh of relief.

"We'll have to put in another tube," she said, turning to Harris with an amused look.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

THE SPOILERS

By Martha Haskell Clark

THE deer have left their forest feeding grounds,
And on the hill,

Where the last snows of winter linger still,
The muffled clamor of the ax resounds;
While from their reedy coverts flapping forth,
The wild duck seek the silence of the North.

The prophet pines that line the lichened ledge
Gaze grave below,
Where melt, like sunlit banks of spring-time snow
The swift-receding miles of forest edge;
Where, nest-deserting on his northward flight
A loon wails from the shadows of the night.

The plain's wind brings the reek of camp-smoke curled,
The stir of Man,
Who, cunning working since the earth began,
Slow-forged his mighty chain that binds the world;
To grip it close with groping, giant clutch,
And leave it scarred and broken at his touch.

But calm, serene, against their mountain throne,
The lone pines stand,
Unmarred by touch of Man's despoiling hand,
The yoke of his enslaving chain unknown;
While in their kingly hearts old visions rise
Of pine-pricked leagues, and starry northern skies.

M I S S "X"*

A LONDON MYSTERY

A SERIAL IN VI PARTS—PART IV

BY WATKIN BEAL

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

DAPHNE BLATCHINGTON, a beautiful young girl in London society, engaged to be married to Lord Lauriston, M. P., a wealthy politician and society man—a coming cabinet minister. Daphne is marrying Lauriston for the sake of wealth and position. She is really in love with Lancelot Welde, a handsome young barrister, who is too poor to marry her. Neither he nor Lauriston has any suspicion that Daphne had been married when quite young to a man whom she believes to have been killed in a railway accident. Daphne receives a letter from John Pennistone, her solicitor. In it he tells her that Victor Scruit, the man she had married, is alive and in England, and asking to see her. It is a terrible blow to Daphne. She resolves to conceal from every one the fact of her husband's return, and to try to discover some means of ridding herself of him.

She goes to see Scruit, and then comes to Pennistone and tells him that she found her husband lying murdered on the stairs, and came away too frightened to tell any one of her discovery.

Pennistone disbelieves her, and refuses to act for her. The next day the papers are full of the crime and of the story of the unknown woman (Daphne) who visited the house. In terror of being traced by the police she goes to see Sir Arthur Ainley, of Scotland Yard, tells him the whole story, and asks him to have her part in the affair hushed up for Lauriston's sake. After consulting with the home secretary he promises to do what Daphne asks.

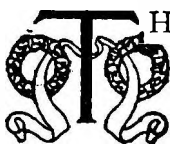
Lancelot Welde calls to see Daphne, and tells her that he has at last got a brief. Daphne is horrified to learn that a woman has been arrested in her place, and that Welde has been engaged to defend her.

Daphne confesses to Welde that she herself is the wanted woman. He is staggered. She entreats him to save the woman who has been arrested.

Mrs. Lanksbury, a widow, in love with Lauriston, has discovered Daphne's secret, and revealed it to Lord Lauriston. He still believes in his sweetheart's innocence, but determines to ask her. Will she tell the truth? Or will she further entangle herself in the web of deceit?

CHAPTER XXIII.

Her Broken Faith.

HE day that followed was one of brilliant sunshine. Miserable as Daphne felt, she forced herself to go out. The sun was quite warm, the sky blue; birds twittered in the trees, wondering whether they ought to be thinking of

mating. Daphne made her way along Knights Bridge and thence to St. James's Park. By the lake she nearly ran into Welde.

"Daphne!" he ejaculated in a low voice, and they shook hands, not without a suggestion of awkwardness, for neither could forget their passionate scene at his chambers two days before and his broken promise to see her again that afternoon.

* This story began in *The Cavalier* for March 1.

He knew that she could only construe his avoidance of her in one way, and that was that he had disbelieved her explanation of her connection with Victor Scruit's murder. However, now that they had met, they were both undisguisedly glad.

"I was just coming to you," he went on. "I have a piece of news."

"Not bad news, I hope?" she murmured.

"No—quite good," he answered. "Let us walk across the Horse Guards Parade, and I'll tell you. People keep passing here. It is about the case—the woman," he said. "She has proved an alibi."

"Oh, Lance, how glad I am—how tremendously relieved!"

"I knew you would be. I've only just heard, and I came straight to tell you. I couldn't telephone, and writing is never very safe."

"And it means that she is free?"

"Yes, she has been released. It was conclusive. Of course, she never really ought to have been arrested. It was too clear that she wasn't the right one. So my first brief—has gone. It was my first and last, I'm afraid. But never mind. I can't tell you how relieved I am—for your sake."

"And they have—the police are after no other person?" asked Daphne.

"Not so far as I know. How could they be?" Directly he had spoken he saw what a slip he had made in assuming, as it were, that there could be no one else on whom suspicion could fall, knowing what he did about Daphne's visit to Klito Road.

"Lance, you disbelieve me, too," she whispered. "You doubt my story; you suspect; oh, you are just as cruel and heartless and hard as anybody, only I don't mind in the least what other people think—but, oh, I can't bear it from you!" Her voice trailed off in a sob.

"Daphne, Daphne, how can you say such things?" he cried. "You know that I could never doubt you—that I only pity you."

"But you do—you do—I can see it in your face, hear it in your voice. No, no; it is no good protesting."

"Daphne, I swear—"

"Don't call me Daphne!" she burst out hysterically. "Don't! What is the good? Besides, you have no right to. Every time you call me by that name it is a fresh breach of faith between me and Lauriston. I owe him something. He would be loyal to me."

"You know that I am," said Welde in a low voice. "Loyal, though it is useless for me to be so. Oh, Daphne, why should it be useless?" he suddenly cried with passion. "Why not throw everything to the winds and marry me, and we will go abroad. Right away to Canada or New Zealand. We have just enough money together for us to live on, simply at any rate, and then you would be free of all this horrible affair; and I should have you always, Daphne!"

His tone vibrated with passion. Although he could not put his arms round her, could not do otherwise than walk coldly by her side, she divined the intense feeling that actuated him—that was, indeed, making his voice tremble.

"Daphne, I repeat it—it is the only solution," he breathed.

"Oh, no, no; don't say such things—don't suggest them!" she cried. "If you do, I—I might not be able to resist—"

"And why should you, Daphne?"

"It is impossible; you know it," she cried again. "Oh, Lance, you mustn't. Please don't. Whatever else I may do, or may have done, I will not add such disloyalty to Lauriston to my other shortcomings. He trusts me, and I will be as honest—as I can—with him." Her voice trailed off into a sob.

"Don't you owe something to me?" burst from Welde; but Daphne went on quickly:

"Oh, take me home! Please don't—don't tempt me further, Lance. I cannot bear it," she added.

"Poor Daphne," he murmured so low that, in the wind, she did not hear

his words, nor did she see the look of pain on his face.

They walked on in silence until they reached the road.

"At any rate, I may come and see you again?" he murmured as, a little later, he was closing the door of a cab which he had found for her.

"No; not till I send for you, please, Lance." She pressed his hand and tried to smile, but he saw that there were tears in her eyes. "You can help me most by doing what I ask," she added.

Then the cab drove off, and he walked wretchedly back to the Temple, with a feeling that he was powerless and could only watch her suffer and do nothing.

Meanwhile she had reached Hill Street, and after lunch went up to her own room to be alone. In a very little while, however, there came a knock at the door. She pulled herself together and opened it, to find Mrs. Maddox.

"Daphne, it's come!" she cried, with a smile of delight.

"What?" cried Daphne, feeling dazed.

"Your wedding-dress. It's in the drawing-room. Please come quickly. I am so anxious to see it." Then, as Daphne evinced no excitement, she added: "Surely, you want to see it, Daphne?"

"Oh, yes, awfully," answered Daphne. "I'm just dying to see it. Yes; I'll come in a second. Tell Walters to have a knife ready to cut the nuptial knots with."

Mrs. Maddox went, quite shocked and anxious at Daphne's manner, while Daphne herself went back into her room and stood in the center of it—stood quite motionless, with her arms hanging at her sides.

Her wedding-dress—the mockery of it! Then she went down-stairs. Mrs. Maddox was hovering excitedly over an immense box, and Walters, the maid, was in the background, her eyes sparkling with expectant interest.

Daphne approached the box.

"I feel as if I were going to cut the cake," she cried, and again timid little Mrs. Maddox looked horrified.

"But I shall really want a knife to undo this string," added Daphne.

"I put a penknife there," said the maid.

Daphne searched, but could not see it. Then they all three searched, but it had gone.

"It is an omen!" cried Daphne, smiling with a side glance in the direction of Mrs. Maddox. "I shall never wear it. I am doomed to be an old maid." But in her heart her thoughtless words struck home, and she felt they were true.

"My dear child," remonstrated Mrs. Maddox, "you say such terrible things."

At that instant they heard the noise of the front door opening. A minute later the parlor-maid announced:

"Lord Lauriston, miss."

"Oh, not in here!" cried Daphne involuntarily.

"I have shown him into the dining-room, miss."

Daphne was thankful for the woman's tact.

"We can take this away," said Mrs. Maddox, indicating the box.

"No; I will go down to him," said Daphne. And she went out of the room. When she pushed open the dining-room door Lord Lauriston was standing by a small table in the window, turning over the pages of a book. He came forward to meet her gravely. His usual smile of welcome was absent, but nevertheless there was the same eager fondness in his eyes.

"Daphne, I have come to take you for a drive," he said. "This perfect day is much too rare to be wasted. Down to Richmond and round the park, with time for ten minutes' stroll under the trees."

"I should love it!" cried Daphne.

"Good; then will you get ready at once? The afternoons are all too short—this one will be, I'm sure."

Daphne ran out of the room with

swift happiness, but when she had got half way up the stairs she remembered that she had left her bag in the dining-room. She went back for it, and saw at once that she had surprised Lauriston by her unexpected reentry.

He was leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece, and a haggard expression had spread over his face. So noticeable was it that she started. He stood upright at once, however, and she divined that it would be better not to remark on it. She murmured something, picked up the bag, and again went out of the room; but disquietude had seized her. She dressed with shaking fingers, and came down a quarter of an hour later depressed and nervous.

This time Lauriston was waiting for her with a smile, but she noticed that directly he thought she was not observing him the same look of gray, drawn anxiety took possession of his face.

It was such a glorious day, and Lauriston's car was such a particularly splendid one that Daphne could not fail to enjoy the ride down through Kensington, through the inferno of Hammersmith Broadway, out across the bridge over the gleaming river, and thence along the straight wood-paved road to the open spaces of Barnes Common.

When they had traversed the narrow neck of lane that leads to the park and went rocking through the gates, Daphne could not repress an exclamation of delight as the wide, free panorama of turf and woodland burst upon her.

Once on the smooth, sandy park roads the car purred along with hardly a sound. They passed over a white paled bridge spanning a rippling, sparkling brook and then took an easy, slightly rising road with green turf and browsing deer on each side, and in the distance noble trees black and bare against the afternoon sky; and, farther away still, on the crown of a hill, a spinney of silver firs with their stems shining white and their tops a delicate feathery mass.

"How beautiful, it is," sighed Daphne.

Suddenly Lauriston stopped the car. "We will have a walk up in among those trees before we go back," he said. "I have something to say to you, Daphne."

The car drew up, and the man sprang down and opened the door. Lauriston alighted and helped her down, and they both struck across the rough turf into the gloom of the oaks and beeches that covered the side of a piece of rising ground. Lord Lauriston walked with his hands behind his back and his eyes down. Daphne trailed over the grass.

When they were well out of earshot of the car and the road, Lauriston spoke gravely. "Daphne, I have something very difficult to say to you," he said; "in fact, I have great doubts whether I ought to say it; so great is my doubt that, all the time we have been out, I have been debating whether I should or should not."

At his first words Daphne had started. Now she felt the kind of tightness of her breath which one feels when one has something unpleasant to face.

"Something unpleasant, Laurence," she murmured, with well-feigned surprise. "Not a judgment on my sins, I hope."

"What I want to say to you is this, Daphne," he went on. "Some one has been slandering you, uttering malicious things about you, and I feel that I am bound to ask you if they are true."

It had come, the moment that Daphne had so often anticipated with such dread. A coldness stole over her. She wondered what she should say, and, looking ahead, her eyes met through the trees a crimson sun sinking like a ball of blood behind the ridge of the hill. They were in a dark plantation of oaks, so thick were the branches that it was quite twilight beneath them.

"What kind of things?" breathed

Daphne. "No one can have said anything very dreadful."

Lauriston noticed that she did not express surprise, for she had been so convinced of what he was going to say that it was not unexpected. "I have been told," he continued, "that you were connected with a case of a murder which was much talked about a little while ago; that you are, in fact, the woman whom the police have been searching for in connection with that case. It is, of course, incredible, yet I was not in a position to deny the rumor."

Daphne said nothing, but as they continued to walk forward she heard a dry leaf crackle under Lord Lauriston's foot, and she realized how intense the silence between them was.

"I want to know, Daphne," he continued, as she did not answer, "whether there is the slightest foundation for this story."

Again there came a breathless pause. They walked on still up toward the ridge of the hill, where the blood-red sun had sunk a little lower.

What should she say? she asked herself, and then it suddenly came to her to lie, to put off the evil day, if only for a few hours—to lie like she had to Welde.

"There is no truth in the story," she said, "because I have never done anything that could give any foundation for it, whatever it is. Could you tell me, though, more definitely, what was said to you, and who said it?"

She had Ashwell in her mind.

A slight shade passed over Lauriston's face as he thought of Mrs. Lanksbury.

"I do not think I need repeat the name of this malicious person," said he, and looked closely at Daphne. Her denial had not relieved him, it had only increased his doubts of her. He felt positive now, as he watched her profile, that she was not speaking the truth to him, and the venom of Mrs. Lanksbury's disclosures was increased again and again.

"But surely, cannot you think of any incident in your life that can have given rise to these rumors?" he added. "Think."

"No, I can think of nothing," she answered. "Though, as a matter of fact, you have not told me exactly what it was that was said about me."

"There was a case in all the papers a month or so ago," said Lauriston—"a case of murder. A man was found dead in a house at Holloway. It was a queer affair. Shortly before his body was discovered a woman was admitted to the house by the landlady. The woman was known to have gone upstairs to the man's rooms. She was not seen to leave, but afterward the murder was found out, and of course suspicion fell on her, but the police were unable to trace her. Yesterday a friend of mine came to me and told me that it was said that you were that woman."

"How horrible!" whispered she. "But, of course, Laurence, it is untrue. How could you believe anything so terrible about me? Who can be so cruel? How could you think for an instant—"

"I could not," said Lauriston, "and yet, so corroborative were certain particulars of this story, that it was hard to disbelieve. Therefore I determined to ask you."

Daphne still walked on, looking straight in front of her. All the time that he had been reciting these short facts she had never once turned her eyes to him, yet his had been fixed on her face.

"And now that you have asked me," she said with a touch of anger, "do you believe me when I say these statements are wholly untrue?"

Lauriston hesitated. "Yes," he said, and as he breathed the tiny monosyllable the whole fabric of his love for Daphne began to crumble. He had lied to her just as he was positive she had lied to him. How could there be any true faith between them any more? He shivered. At that moment he sud-

denly realized that, heartrending as this scene was to him, it meant nothing to Daphne. She had lied to him callously, carelessly. She did not love him, yet his love for her meant everything to him.

Lauriston thought of the incident of the pearl and her visit to Ashwell, and suddenly it occurred to him that before he questioned her further he would go to Ashwell and obtain the absolute truth. He must know—he could not rest until he did. He wondered now why he had not thought of going to Ashwell before; but then he remembered that he had not anticipated Daphne making a denial of this description—a denial that only increased his doubts. Such a careless, half-hearted denial that it confirmed his worst suspicions—a denial in the making of which she had expressed no surprise, no indignation, no amazement.

"I think that you should tell me who told you this about me," said Daphne suddenly.

"It appears to be—a common rumor, unfortunately," said he. "At least, the fact that this woman was some—was a lady, and somehow or other the suspicion has attached itself to you. Surely, surely you must have done something, said something, that has caused your name to be connected with this wretched case? Oh, Daphne, confide in me if it is so, and I can help you. It is such a terrible accusation that is brought against you."

For a minute he hoped that she might make some slight confession which would clear up the mystery without proving the truth of Mrs. Lanksbury's statement.

"I can think of nothing," replied Daphne in the same low, expressionless voice that she had used all the time.

This time her denial was so studied that he felt convinced that she was lying.

A stronger and colder gust of wind came sighing over the crest of the hill

and whirled one or two dry leaves resting over the grass. It seemed to separate them.

"I think that we had better go back," said Lauriston, and then they began to walk silently down among the trees.

Daphne knew that he disbelieved her. A coldness took possession of her. She felt inert. This was the end. She could do no more. She scarcely wanted to. She even regretted now that she had made a denial to him.

They walked in silence over the uneven turf and bracken. Once she nearly stumbled, and he caught her arm, but he released it again almost immediately. She scarcely felt surprised or frightened that he knew. From the moment when she had seen him leaning, haggard and pale, in the dining-room before they had started out, she felt positive that somehow or other her secret had become known to him, and therefore the shock of his question was removed, the first edge had been taken off her fear.

When they reached the car the driver had lit the lamps, and they threw long white feelers of light out into the dusk.

The drive back to town was intolerable. Neither of them spoke, and when they reached Hill Street and he helped her out, it was in a constrained manner.

"Good night, Laurence, and thanks so much," she said.

Her "good night" effectually prevented him attempting to enter the house with her, but he did bend down and kiss her. She passed straight up into the drawing-room. Mrs. Maddox was sitting there reading.

"Well, you must have had a very pleasant drive, dearest," she said. "But hasn't Lord Lauriston come in? I have waited tea."

"No, he couldn't," said Daphne.

And at that moment she heard the car drive off. The noise of its departure seemed to mark the conclusion of an act of her life. There was a curious

finality in the gradual dying away of the sound of the motor. Daphne wondered if he would write, if she would ever see him again. She was certain now that he knew that she had not told him the truth. How much did he know, and who had told him? She could only think of Ashwell.

Meanwhile Lauriston reached his house, and sprang out of the car, ordering it to wait.

He went into the library, where he had had the momentous scene with Mrs. Lanksbury the night before, and paced up and down, his arms hanging at his sides, his manner betokening nervous perplexity. Now and again he made an exclamation aloud. After a time his mood changed; it became pensive. The blow which his loving devotion for Daphne had received began to pain him. She had broken faith with him; of that he was positive; but even now she was none the less desirable in his eyes. Nothing, he might have realized, could kill his love. He suddenly divined that she had become more important than anything else in his life. She was his life. Friends, position, career, pleasures—they all faded.

He sprang up. One way or the other, he must know, must be certain. Only one man could tell him—Ashwell.

He hurried into the still waiting motor and drove to Ashwell's house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Rupture.

AFTER an interminable time, as it seemed to Lauriston, the car reached Ashwell's residence.

"Yes, Mr. Ashwell was in," the man told him.

Lauriston entered the house with relief, and was shown into a small room, where he had to wait about five minutes. Years afterward he remembered the pattern of the wall-paper, the appearance of some queer Indian

ornaments on the mantelpiece, and a crimson leather blotter and brass ink-stand placed on the table. All these trivial objects he noticed while his mind was being tortured with agonizing impatience.

Then Ashwell rushed in, still adjusting his tie, and trying to glance at a sheaf of notes which his secretary had just thrust into his hand. He greeted Lauriston, and chattered about a speech he had to make after a dinner that evening all in the same breath.

"I have only five minutes, man," he wound up. "Tell me what you have come about; can it possibly wait till eleven this evening? I shall be free then."

"Whatever your engagements, I must speak to you now," said Lauriston huskily; and Ashwell was suddenly struck with the ashen gravity of his face.

"Heavens, Lauriston, what's up?" he cried.

Lauriston closed the door carefully. "It is a private matter," he said. "You know that I am engaged to Miss Daphne Blatchington, Ashwell?"

"Yes." In a second Ashwell's quickly moving mind divined that Lauriston had heard something.

"I want you to tell me, Ashwell," said Lauriston. "I want you to tell me as a man of honor and a friend whom I trust, have you ever heard anything against Miss Blatchington's character?"

Ashwell hesitated. This sudden direct question nonplused even him. He fingered the eyeglass which hung down over his shining shirt-front with a thick black cord, which dissected the whiteness into three triangles, bordered with black lines.

"I have heard something," murmured Ashwell, noticing that beads of perspiration stood on Lauriston's forehead and that his hands shook.

"You have heard that she was the woman the police wanted in that sensational murder case a little while ago?" cried Lauriston.

"I have not heard it," said Ashwell, marveling brutally at Lauriston's agitation.

"You mean that you know," Lauriston cried quickly—"that you were approached to hide her identity—that that matter of the pearl was suppressed through you?"

Ashwell stared. Then Lauriston had heard that.

"Speak, say something, for Heaven's sake, Ashwell!" cried Lauriston.

Ashwell hesitated just a second.

"Yes," he said, "all that is correct."

"Then—then it is true?" burst involuntarily from Lauriston's lips, and he sank down on a chair, resting his hand shakily on the table.

His extreme agitation touched even Ashwell. He opened the door, calling to his secretary, who had been hovering in the hall waiting for his employer's last orders.

"Robertson, do you mind getting me a stiff glass of brandy or whisky and soda, and telephone to that place I was going to and say I shall be a quarter of an hour late?" Ashwell was always direct and concise.

The secretary departed, and a man servant brought the brandy.

"Here, Lauriston, drink this," said Ashwell. "Now," he went on, when Lauriston had recovered a little, "let's thrash this out."

"No, no, Ashwell; don't let me keep you," expostulated Lauriston. But Ashwell was determined.

"Rot! I have a right to be late if I like," he said. "Now, you want to hear what I know. Well, the affair was no business of mine, but Ainley—you know, Ainley the police commissioner—came to me. Miss Blatchington had interviewed him. The police had found a pearl—hers, in fact—and she was afraid she would be discovered. You know the facts; she had some connection with the case, though"—he wondered whether he should tell Lauriston that he had heard that Daphne was the man's

wife. On the whole he thought it would save trouble not to—"though," he went on, "I never heard exactly what. The upshot of it was that Ainley and I thought that, considering your position, we had better do what she asked—that was to suppress the matter of the pearl. You know the facts?"

"Yes, I know everything. All I wanted was your confirmation."

He paused, and drank another sip of brandy, and Ashwell was amazed to perceive how ill he looked.

"Miss Blatchington has made no admission to you?" queried Ashwell.

"No," answered Lauriston. "She had no suspicion that I knew, and I would to Heaven that I didn't. This afternoon I taxed her with the whole story and she denied it—that is why I have come to you—to make certain."

Ashwell was observing him keenly. He had few sympathies but keen perceptions. At that moment he felt sorry for his colleague. "My dear Lauriston," he said, extending his hand, "you have my most heartfelt sympathy; but I think after all that it is better that you know—as you may—for certain. There is not the least doubt that Miss Blatchington was the woman in that case."

Lauriston grasped his hand in reply. "A malicious acquaintance brought me the story," he said after a time. "I was dumfounded, of course. I couldn't believe it, and yet I felt that there was truth in it. Now I find that there is."

"After all, it is not a very dreadful story," remarked Ashwell.

Lauriston looked up curiously. "You don't mean that, Ashwell," he said. "Why, from your own words I know that you think her guilty"—he lowered his voice—"guilty of the murder."

The home secretary started. "From my own words?" he echoed interrogatively.

"You were overheard discussing

her with Ainley at a reception at Lord Murchiston's."

Ashwell had but a faint recollection of what he had said. "I was overheard?" he echoed, again reflecting how dangerous it was to talk.

"Yes, by the friend, the lady who told me." Then also there was that dinner at the Stafford."

Ashwell remembered that, and also the scene afterward which Lauriston did not know of, but it had not occurred to him that his pointed remarks made in Daphne's presence had also been made in the presence of Lauriston. He glanced toward Lauriston, wondering what he thought.

"I have been rather a fool," he said.

"You have inadvertently shown me what the real state of your mind is," said Lauriston. He leaned forward. "And knowing that, Ashwell," he went on—"knowing that I had intended to make Miss Blatchington my wife—tell me honestly, on the facts that have come to your knowledge, do you think she was guilty of that crime?"

There was tense silence in the little room. Ashwell shifted his foot uneasily. "There is no need for me to say," he replied at last; "the facts that I know, you know. I have never spoken with Miss Blatchington on the subject. I decline to judge her upon mere hearsay evidence."

Lauriston dropped his face into his hands. "You believe her guilty," he whispered.

"I decline to say," repeated Ashwell.

Lauriston spoke again; from between his hands he whispered, "I do, Ashwell."

"Have I told you everything that you want to know?" asked the home secretary after a time and a trifle coldly. He was not a great friend of Lauriston, and he rather resented being placed in such an awkward position.

Lauriston rose like a man who has wiped the past out of his remem-

brance. "Yes—everything. Thanks, Ashwell."

"Oh, it's nothing; and if there is any thing more, of course, you will come to me. I shall preserve your confidence implicitly."

Lauriston recollected that it was Ashwell who had betrayed Daphne. "Of course, I expect you to do that," he said austere.

Ashwell was impatient, and did not trouble about this slight reproof.

"Then, if you don't mind, Lauriston—if you are quite sure you have nothing more you wish to ask me, I'd best be off. People resent a man like me having private engagements, and it's always a bad plan to keep people waiting for their dinner. Men are but brutes at heart. Have some more brandy. I'll send my secretary in with it and then you can rest a bit."

"No, no, I must be off too," cried Lauriston, rising feverishly. After the first shock of this final blow he was coming back to the realities of the present.

"As you like, of course," answered Ashwell. "But, anyhow, I must rush. Good night. Come and see me again here quietly if you feel inclined."

Ashwell went out immediately, forgetting every detail of the scene in which he had just participated, and Lauriston followed him, but by the time the latter had reached the entrance hall the home secretary was already driving off. His secretary came running up the steps, having been taking directions up to the very last instant of his master's departure.

"And some people are fools enough to declare that a post in the cabinet is a sinecure," he said. "Why twenty thousand a year wouldn't pay them."

But Lauriston did not listen, instead he spoke nervously to the footman. "Is my car there still?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord."

Lauriston sprang down the steps and gave Daphne's address.

As he sped along he tried to realize what had happened to him. He would

never marry Daphne now—could never marry her. He saw it was an impossibility.

There was a scandal—a grave scandal—against her. This was the very thing that he had dreaded—the very thing that he knew that people had been predicting directly his engagement to her had been made public. He had been a fool, he supposed—a fool and a dupe.

He looked back on his intimacy with Daphne—his first meeting with her when she was almost unknown in London, their gradual friendship, then the birth of his love, its growth, the astounding revelation that she was the one woman in the world for him—and now!

The fool that he had been!

It was intolerable. Once and for all he must make an end of this wretched affair. He wished he had written to Daphne and spared himself an almost vulgar scene. Even then he thought of driving back.

And suddenly, as he realized what life would be without her, and as he looked ahead into the blankness of a loveless existence, the car stopped outside the little house in Hill Street.

He was taken up to the empty drawing-room; Daphne and her aunt were just rising from dinner in the dining-room below.

"Lord Lauriston," echoed Daphne, slightly pale. She had on a dead white dress, and her cheeks seemed almost as blanched as the sheeny surface.

"What can he have come for at such a time?" cried Mrs. Maddox. "You didn't expect him, did you?"

"No, I didn't expect him," said Daphne in a curious voice. She had risen, and now stood hesitatingly. Her aunt looked up with inquiry at her.

"Daphne, how strange you are," she said. "Let us go up to him at once, or perhaps he has not dined."

Daphne turned to Mrs. Maddox. It had suddenly occurred to her that this would be their final meeting. The scene in Richmond Park that after-

noon had been the first premonitory gust of the storm. Now it was to break in its full force.

"I think I know why he has come; I think I ought to tell you, aunt. We have had a—disagreement. Very likely after I have seen him now we shall—break off our engagement entirely."

"But Daphne, why is it? What has caused it?"

"I think," she said, "he has come to see that I am not quite of the position which he expected me to be."

Mrs. Maddox's forehead wrinkled anxiously. "Daphne, he has not heard anything about your first marriage?"

"I think he has," replied Daphne, wondering how soon her aunt would know the story that had been so carefully concealed from her.

"Oh, my poor child," burst out Mrs. Maddox, indignation against Victor Scruitt flaming up in her mind, "how wicked it is, how unjust, that even now you are freed from him his evil influence should pursue you."

"Yes, just as if he were still alive," murmured Daphne, feeling with a strange premonition that this were really the truth. "Oh, sometimes I think I am fated never to escape!"

"That is absurd!" cried Mrs. Maddox. "Come, pull yourself together, Daphne. What do you think Lord Lauriston has heard? Has he said anything to you?"

Daphne wondered what she could reply to this. At this moment she could not tell her aunt of the tragedy of Klito Road, though she felt that she would soon have to; in fact, that she wished to.

"No, he has said nothing," she answered in a low voice.

"Then what is your anxiety?" Mrs. Maddox glanced up, endeavoring to fathom the depths of Daphne's mind.

"Oh, I don't know, because I can't help it!" cried Daphne. She was standing by the table, one slender hand resting upon the white cloth, her white dress and pale face all making a pecu-

liarily colorless picture against the walls of the dining-room, which were also paneled in white. The only touches of color were some yellow and crimson tulips on the table.

"Anyhow, I must go to him now. Perhaps then I shall know one way or the other." She went listlessly to the door while Mrs. Maddox still regarded her with disquietude. "There is nothing to worry over, aunt. What has happened cannot be helped, and I would rather not marry him if he does not consider I am"—she spoke the words bitterly—"suitable to be his wife."

When Daphne opened the drawing-room door Lauriston came toward her at once. There was a terrible constraint in his manner. She had left the door ajar behind her; he closed it, still without having opened his lips. His silence destroyed her courage.

"Laurence," she began stupidly, with a wretched smile that was belied by her look of childish fright.

He held up his hand with a strange gesture for silence. "Don't talk to me, Daphne," he said. "Only answer my questions, and answer them truthfully, or I think I may kill you. Tell me just this one thing. You remember the brooch I gave you after our engagement—the golden eagle and the pearl? Show it to me. Where is it?"

"Why?"

"Why, because I tell you to; because, even in these days, there are some moments when the man expects implicit obedience from the woman." Something in his tones told her that now, in this tragedy of their lives, the real man, which had always been subservient to the cultured, artificial one, was arising within him.

"I cannot," she answered unsteadily. "Though I have never liked to tell you, I lost it weeks ago."

Then his anger and his passion, his bitter disappointment, his agony at the wreck of his love, burst forth.

"You fool!" he cried. "You fool to lie to me, lie to me with your paltry

lies, and expect me to be deceived. I have just left Ashwell. I see you start at his name. Now you know that I know. I came to you not to confront you with it, but to see, even now, if you would have made an honest confession to me. But even now you wouldn't. You are the mysterious Miss 'X.' Confess it," he went on with fury, and seized her wrists. "My God, I think I could kill you!"

"Oh, Laurence. Don't — don't! How could I dare to confess when I knew that it meant the end of our love?"

His hands dropped to his sides. Her words had penetrated to his only vulnerable spot. He suddenly realized why he had come—because he had cherished the wretched, hopeless hope that, even now, she might make some full explanation of everything. And now she had simply admitted everything without an attempt to palliate, without an attempt to explain.

"Then it is all true, Daphne?" he said, unconsciously still using the name that was so dear to him.

"All?" she repeated suddenly, wondering what he did know exactly.

"That you were the woman who went to that house; that you were the owner of the pearl that was found; that in your terror of discovery you went to Ainley and confessed to him that you have deceived me, deceived every one, been playing a double part, holding yourself out to be what you were not."

"Yes, yes. That is all so."

There was a long silence, during which he could hear every palpitating breath that she took.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered at last. "I shall not flinch from my deserts."

"Do you think I want to give you your deserts?" he cried contemptuously. "Do you think I could if I wished? No, I can do nothing. I am the victim whose loss is irreparable. You—"

She burst out, half sobbing:

"Do you think I have not suffered?"

Oh, if you knew what these weeks, ever since that awful day"—she almost said "when my husband came back," but checked herself in time—"ever since that awful day when this horror came into my life! Do you think I have not hated myself for being so dishonest with you? Yes, I have, bitterly, agonizingly! I am not bad like you think me."

"I don't think so," he began, but she burst in upon him scornfully. "Don't you, don't you, my friend! Do you think I cannot see? How you almost hate to be contaminated by being near me, in what a cowardly way; yes, I say cowardly way, you fear the degradation that might come to you by having been connected with me. Now you wish to shake yourself free, but your passion for me as a beautiful woman holds you."

"That is not true."

"Unfortunately I can see that it is," she cried, and there was more scorn in her words than his now.

"How dare you!" he stammered, stung to anger that she, whom he regarded as so far below his moral standards, should presume to be contemptuous.

"Unfortunately, Lord Lauriston," she cried, "I see you more clearly than you see yourself. Now that you fear I shall degrade you, or, worse still, make you ridiculous, you wish to separate yourself from me; but the man within you, the man that does lurk within you in spite of your absurd artificiality, cries out for me and will not be balked of his desire."

"That also is untrue," he said with difficult enunciation.

"Very well," she answered. "It does not much matter. In any case I suppose this is the end."

"The end?" The mere suggestion of finality was terrifying to his love. "I don't know. I must think. I am bewildered."

"By the imbroglio of infamy in which you find yourself through me!" she cried with intense scorn. Sudden-

ly she realized that she did not love him; she had never pretended to do that, but further still, that she could not tolerate him, could not endure him, whatever the price he had been going to pay for her love might have been. She wanted to be free. She despised him now as bitterly as he despised her.

Her contemptuous words stung him to his senses and revealed her in a new light. He glanced toward her suddenly, seeing depths in her nature that he had never perceived before. She became more than ever desirable—and yet. No! Marriage under such circumstances was impossible.

"Daphne, I will come back," he stammered—in his mind he thought, 'I will write'—"but I must go now. I am, as I said, bewildered. I cannot think, I cannot speak coherently."

"Yes, go," she said. "I should advise it, and in the bright morning light you will really see clearly what an escape you have had."

"Daphne—" He did not notice her bitter sarcasm.

"Oh, go, go—please go!" she cried hysterically; "what is the good of talking!"

For a moment he hesitated. Then he moved slowly across the room to the door, but when he reached it he stopped and turned slightly. She had not looked up. He could not go like this, even now, angry and horrified as he was; the man in him, as she had said with such horrible truth, cried out for her. He made a spasmodic movement back to her and again stopped irresolute. She made no sign.

"Daphne," he murmured uncertainly.

"Oh, go, go!" she cried, without raising her head. "What is the use? You wish to be free of me. You are free. I"—she suddenly stood up—"I give you back your freedom."

Had she made the least sign of tenderness toward him at that instant he would have surrendered to her, forgiven her everything; but her scorn was just sufficient to rearouse his anger. It

seemed to him absurd for her to throw contempt on him.

"Very well," he murmured with constrained fury; "it is best for both of us—like this."

And he went out.

CHAPTER XXV.

Murder!

THE following day London paid her price for the brilliant sunshine of the yesterday in the shape of a thick fog drawn out of the damp, murky houses and gardens by the warmth.

The fog did not disperse; on the contrary, it thickened, if anything. Toward midday London was a city of night. Motors crept about in a crippled fashion with their lights going, street-lamps shone, and shop-windows were illuminated. Men looked at the occasional patches of livid orange sky which hung over their heads, and a strange hush seemed to have fallen; voices were lowered unaccountably, and the traffic sounded muffled.

Along a broad thoroughfare in the East End two men, among many others, were pursuing their way. One hurried with a nervous motion, and the other followed him, all the time just a pace or so behind, apparently hanging on his footsteps. This one who walked behind was Hall, the man who had given the curious evidence at the inquest on the body of Victor Scruit; the other man's face was hidden in the fog.

After a time Hall drew up just behind him so that he could speak into his ear.

"You're what I calls asking for trouble," he said. "Why can't you help me and be done with it?"

"Haven't I told you that I won't, because I can't?" cried the other.

"That's only a darned silly excuse."

"It's all you'll get."

"Will I?" retorted Hall in a sneering tone. "Won't I get something from the police if I tell them what I knows?"

The other man stopped so abruptly that Hall ran into him. "Who said you were going to the police?" he cried. "What d'you mean?"

"You know what I mean. Business, if you don't do what I asks—don't comply with my rightful demands."

"Look here," muttered the other threateningly. "You mind your own business and not mine, and don't talk about the police. I dare say they want you as much as they do any one. Don't you come hanging round me when I don't want you."

"Give me what I want."

"Go to blazes! There's a policeman there. He'll see that you don't follow people."

Hall did not want to come in contact with the law yet—though he might be eager enough to later. He did drop a little way behind, therefore, taking care to keep the other man well in view and not to lose him in the darkness.

So they went on, each walking briskly, the one fleeing, furious at this impudent dogging, the other following with a malicious satisfaction.

After a time Hall again drew up to the heels of his quarry.

"Won't you do what I ask?"

The other man's patience seemed exhausted. He hissed out a vile expression. "How much longer are you going on like this, and what do you really want? A month is it now almost that you've been treating me to this sort of game. Mind, I won't stand it much longer."

"Not if you can help it," sneered Hall.

"Can't I help it? There's one way I can, and that would make pretty short work of you, you sponger."

Unconsciously he had raised his voice, and a passer-by stared and then stopped.

The other man and Hall moved on side by side as if by common consent.

"Give me five quid—only five—and you'll be quit of me forever."

"I tell you I haven't got it. Haven't got five pence."

The tone of impotent, irritable fury in which this was said left little doubt of the truth, and that the money would have been forthcoming fast enough if it had been there.

His tormentor did not care about that, however, and was convinced that, at any rate, his victim was good for something.

"Very well, I go to the police—with what I know."

Once more the other man faced suddenly. "Look here, come down the next turning and talk it over there," he said.

This was more to Hall's liking and he assented.

They went on a few paces and then turned into a by-road, a road of dismal houses all alike, in the darkness, however, almost indiscernible. No one seemed to be about. There were very few lights.

"Now then," cried the other man after they had proceeded a few yards, "name a reasonable—mind I say a reasonable—price and I'll see what I can do."

Hall thought. "Thirty bob, then, gov'ner," he muttered cringingly.

"Thirty bob," echoed the other, as if he were considering the offer, but all the time he was watching Hall with glittering eyes. Then suddenly his hands and his foot shot out. If it had not been dark the villainous expression in his face would have been terrible. In a second he had Hall by the throat and had kicked his heels from under him.

There was a gurgling sound. Hall tried to cry out, but so skilful was the grip that he could not. The other man did not speak. Silently in the darkness he bent over the struggling Hall; for a second their two faces were close together. The other man's demoniacal, Hall's with the terror of death in his eyes.

He knew his man and he knew his luck. His only chance was a passer-by. But none came.

The other man was deft. He with-

drew one of his hands and got his knee and the other on Hall's throat. Then something sharp was drawn from his pocket.

Hall made one frantic effort to free himself; if he could not, he knew that he was a dead man. Just for one brief moment he almost succeeded.

"If I get away from you now," he cried, "there won't be no quarter. I'll let them know there wasn't no need for an inquest on you—"

Then his voice was stifled.

That little sharp instrument that the other man now held point downward in his free hand glistened. Then—a quick motion of that hand, a helpless jerking of the knees of the man on the ground, one last cry that burst from his lips too late to call help—an oath—then it was over.

But the fog hid the tragedy which it had assisted; and amid the strange hush of the darkened street there were just audible the swiftly retreating footsteps of the other man.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Two Crimes.

MR. THOMAS, of Scotland Yard, and his attendant police-inspector, got into the cab waiting for them outside the court-room in the squalid street in Whitechapel, where they had just attended the inquest on the body of the man Hall. It was regarded as a sordid little paltry crime, and, the victim being almost an outcast, little notice had been taken of the affair in any quarter.

Mr. Thomas thought differently, however.

The detective lit a cigarette, but the inspector, whom nothing less than a pipe would soothe, and who feared to light one in the presence of his august companion, merely removed his cap to cool himself, and sat bolt upright with his knees very wide apart. He suffered most unfortunately from a superfluity of muscle, fat, and heating matter in

his ponderous body, which caused him to be hot and short-breathed when most people were quite cool and undisturbed.

"Well, we've not got much worth getting out of this little picnic," he observed pantingly.

"Don't you think so?" murmured the detective, who was not in the least like one is popularly supposed to be, but rather more resembling a musician. "I think we have," he added after a pause.

"But there wasn't a single piece of evidence," expostulated the inspector, "worth having."

"Not in this case."

"I don't follow you, Mr. Thomas."

"I was thinking about the first case." The inspector had had charge of the Holloway case, but Mr. Thomas had only taken that up when others had failed.

"The first case." The inspector became hot again in the agonies of mental effort and wiped his forehead.

"The Holloway crime."

"Oh, because this man gave evidence at the inquest there. Quite, Mr. Thomas; but isn't it all the worse for you now he's dead. Never could say anything but what was a wild chimera, do you call it, and now he's dead and can't say nothing else, not if you wanted him to."

"Quite," answered the detective. "But in my opinion he's done more by dying like he has than he could have done by all he could ever say or swear. Just think now how he came by his death. An amazing affair."

"Well, I am thinking," said the inspector, which was painfully obvious.

"Isn't it probable that these two crimes were committed by the same person?"

"It hadn't occurred to me, Mr. Thomas."

"They were similar. In each case death was effected by a peculiar method of cutting. In the former case we had no evidence of the instrument used, but in this one we had—a knife used by South Americans, or, rather, the natives of South America."

"Well, but you don't know that the Holloway case was done with that description of instrument."

"We are practically certain that it was done with a peculiar and very sharp knife, and that in itself would be curious, considering that the victim in this one was connected with the other."

"I can't say I see that it helps at all," answered the inspector stolidly.

"The conclusion I have come to," went on the detective, "is that each of these crimes was committed by a person who has been in South America. Now we know that two men have—Ward, the victim of the last, and this man Hall."

"Then who did this one?" asked the inspector.

"What?" said the detective.

"If I follow you right, Mr. Thomas, you think that Hall was the author of the first crime. Well, then, I ask you who killed Hall?"

The detective took a whiff of his cigarette delicately. He was a rather effeminate man.

"I think nothing of the sort," he said. "As a matter of fact, what troubles me is not the identity of the persons who committed these two crimes, but of the two victims. Now, there were two men whom we know of connected with these two cases. We know that the cases have some connection. We know that one man is dead—Hall—but do we know that Ward is dead?"

"Of course we do; wasn't he the victim of the first case?"

"There, you are asking me," said the detective, with a slight note of triumph, "precisely what I feel the strongest uncertainty about."

"But he must be dead. Haven't we held an inquest on him?" cried the inspector.

The detective regarded the end of his cigarette with a wicked smile. "Haven't you ever heard of an inquest being held on the wrong man?" he asked.

"Certainly, certainly."

"Then the mere fact of holding an inquest on Mr. Brown, for instance, does not prove that Mr. Brown is dead?"

"No, at least— Good Lord, Mr. Thomas, you don't suggest that Ward is still alive—"

"Alive and very dangerous, judging by the way this wretch Hall came to grief. Nasty expert way of getting rid of people Ward seems to have."

The inspector, however, sat bolter upright than ever, and mopped helplessly at his forehead.

"You surprise me," he panted. "You think of such extraordinary things, Mr. Thomas. I never should think of them."

"That's possible," murmured the detective. He had the artist's pride in having revealed a neat theory in an artistic and delicate manner. He had not overdone it. It was a silver point in the way of theories, not an impressionist theory or a healthy sane one such as the inspector would have thought of.

The latter had, in fact, been revolving it many times in his mind much in the way that a cow chews its cud, and now he had suddenly digested it.

"What you mean is that the man we thought was dead was really the man who killed some one else. That's a funny theory, Mr. Thomas."

"Why?" asked Mr. Thomas quickly.

"Well, it's the first time I've ever heard it advanced. If the chap Ward ain't dead and he killed another fellow, who's he, let me ask you?"

"Ah, that's just the point," smiled the detective lightly. "If we knew who he was just think how simple it all might be."

"So it might," murmured the inspector heavily.

The detective smiled again. He was walking round and round the inspector, from a mental point of view, and smiling all the time. There was something almost elfin in his disconcerting method of developing theories.

The inspector went on panting and puffing and mopping his forehead and patting his knees.

"It almost gets over me, Mr. Thomas," he stammered, "to think of your suggesting that the man we actually held an inquest on"—he used the regal "we" implying the criminal authorities *en bloc*—"to think that you should suggest that the chap we held an inquest on should be the chap that did the murder. It's incomprehensible."

"No, it's not," cried the detective swiftly, "and what's more, I'm quite convinced that it's the right scent. When we get back I'm going to start a little trekking round for Ward. He can't be far off yet. There's no place like London after all."

And at that moment the cab happened to stop in the traffic somewhere in the city.

"By the way," cried the detective, "I think I'll get out here. So-long."

He opened the door and alighted nimbly just as the vehicle went on again with a jerk.

"Bless my soul," puffed the inspector. "He might have been killed. What a man. He fair takes my breath away. And to think that he has the impudence to think that a man we held an inquest upon was really the fellow as did the crime. Absurd."

And he lay back, stretched out his ponderous feet, and lit a pipe luxuriously.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When Greek Meets Greek.

LADY FARJEON stood in her boudoir in deep thought. Absurdly fashionable and artificial as she was, she was nevertheless a very business-like woman. At this precise moment she was considering what she had best do. She was fearfully perplexed. Mrs. Lanksbury had just left her, and Mrs. Lanksbury had come "with the most, startlin' rigmorole you ever

heard"—all about Daphne and a murder and Lady Farjeohn's own dinner at the Stafford, the home secretary, Mr. Ashwell, and a pearl, and Lady Farjeohn, who was not imaginative, and who never read sensational murder trials or bothered her head about such low, dull things, could not make head or tail of it.

She thought there was an undercurrent of suppressed venom about Mrs. Lanksbury's recital which pointed to her having already been to Lord Lauriston with the amazing tale. After a little hesitation she decided the best thing was to see her brother herself, and as it was then nearly six o'clock she thought she would probably catch him at home if she went right away. She therefore ordered the car, and in a few minutes had reached his imposing residence in Uppingham Square.

Lauriston's own man came out to her deferentially.

"His lordship is in France, my lady," he said.

"In France," she echoed. Then, quickly digesting this surprising information, and seeing in a flash that this meant that something had happened that she had not heard of, she asked when he went.

The man named the day.

"Oh, he went suddenly?" she murmured.

"His lordship went very suddenly, my lady."

"Oh!" she ejaculated, then added: "Tell them home."

She leaned back, the polite old butler accepted his rude dismissal stolidly, and the car swung round and rushed away.

"He knows; he must know," she said to herself; "and he can't give her up. He must be in love with her, the—fool! He can't have broken it off, or he'd have come runnin' to me with the news at once."

She crossed her knees irritably. "How irritatin' men are, to be sure," she murmured to herself, "and Laurence the biggest fool of any I know."

The car sped on, and nearly got back home, then Lady Farjeohn suddenly came to a decision. She looked at the little clock fixed in front of her eyes. Yes, there was just time. Then she leaned forward, pushed back the little patent glass flap in front of the interior, and commanded:

"Hill Street, Thomas, and drive faster."

The car again switched round, sped down some by-streets with frantic jerks, and ultimately reached its destination.

Lady Farjeohn alighted with careless *sang-froid* as soon as she had ascertained that Daphne was at home, and despite the fact that it was long past a reasonable time to call and that she was going to perpetrate one of the most brazen insolences that she had ever been guilty of, she was quite unruffled.

Then Daphne came in. Lady Farjeohn smiled out of sheer habit.

"So obligin' of you to give me five minutes at this unearthly hour, Miss Blatchington," she murmured, after they had shaken hands. "but I've somethin' I want to say to you most particularly, and, well. I thought I would take my chances of findin' you in."

Daphne inclined her head. She had never liked Lady Farjeohn, and she gathered now that her visit at this particular time could not be anything else than hostile.

"You see," went on Lady Farjeohn, raising her eyebrows and appearing much more bored than nervous. "I happen to have just heard that your engagement to my brother is—eh—practically broken off."

"Yes, that is so," flashed Daphne.

Lady Farjeohn congratulated herself on a lucky shot. "In fact, is unlikely to be renewed," she hazarded.

"No," answered Daphne. "I hardly think so."

"I can't pretend to be sorry," murmured Lady Farjeohn with the brazen insolence of which she was such an ex-

pert exponent, "but that is not what I wanted to say. Supposin' Laurence does try to renew the engagement, all the same?"

"He will not," replied Daphne. "You see—"

"Well, if he does," said the other. "The fact is, I happen to have just heard a curious story about you, one of which I have no need to doubt the truth, that you were the woman connected with a delightfully sensational murder case a few months ago. Is that correct?"

Daphne paled. Somehow or other the fact of being confronted with her secret by this matter-of-fact woman of the world was much worse than when it was done by any one else, even Lord Lauriston.

"Yes," she whispered, feeling that denial was useless, and believing that Lord Lauriston must have told his sister.

"Well," said Lady Farjeohn, "I haven't a very clear idea what you have done, but I imagine it's somethin' discreditable, and if you attempt to renew your engagement with my brother, if you take one further step toward becomin' his wife, that story will be made public; do you understand?"

Lady Farjeohn had stood up also by this time, the languor was gone, and she was erect and determined.

The two women faced one another, Lady Farjeohn's sharp but well-shaped face quite horrid in its expression, Daphne's rigid and colorless.

"There will be no need for you to trouble," she said. "I shall never attempt to do anything of the kind."

"No, but my brother might," said Lady Farjeohn dryly. "You quite understand me, Miss Blatchington."

"I decline to talk to you further, Lady Farjeohn. It can do no good."

The latter laughed with the rude contempt for which Daphne had no defensive weapon.

"Please do not forget what I have said," were her final words.

"You need have no fear," cried Daphne. "I never wish to see your brother again, and therefore, whatever connection you and I have had, Lady Farjeohn, is, happily, at an end."

Then as the door closed on Lord Lauriston's sister she threw herself down in a storm of sobs.

This brutal, insolent contempt was more than she could bear. "Some day, even now, I will prove that I am not bad. I will prove my innocence," she cried passionately to herself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Back from the Dead.

DAYS passed, days of infinite slow torture to Daphne, and there came no sign to her from Lord Lauriston.

Then at last she got a letter bearing a postmark abroad. It was very short. "My dear Daphne," it ran, "I have come here"—the address was in France—"and intend staying for some little time. Till then let it be understood between us that no step is taken to put an end to our engagement publicly. I will write to you again shortly."

Daphne crumpled the letter angrily between her fingers, then almost as quickly smoothed it out and reread it. It was so typical of the man. The meaning was too clear. He wanted to think, to have time to make up his mind whether he should disown her, or whether he could overcome his scruples for the sake of the obvious desire which he had to make her his wife. And, until he should have decided, she was to hold herself at his pleasure and to continue the mockery of their engagement. She trembled with anger, for there was something in the nature of a gross affront in such treatment of her.

She sat at home all the morning—the letter had come by the first post—wondering what she should do. Her first impulse was to have a formal

paragraph put in the papers announcing the breaking off of their engagement, and then to acquaint him with what she had done. That at least would be one method of turning the tables upon him. But she hesitated, for she did still cling to the idea that after all the marriage was to her advantage, a necessity, in fact; yes, she knew it was a necessity, for there in her desk lay the numerous unpaid accounts which, without the help of Lord Lauriston's money, she would find it difficult to settle.

A faint flush of humiliation welled over her cheeks when she thought of this, and she got up and walked about, trying in her mind to solve an insoluble problem. After a time she went out listlessly. At the corner of Knightsbridge she paused, wondering whether she should make her way into the park, or in the opposite direction toward Piccadilly. She chose the latter.

It was a pleasant day, not warm and not cold, with occasional flushes of watery sunshine. She had scarcely gone a dozen yards when she saw a familiar figure coming in her direction—Welde.

He saw her and came toward her with a smile.

"I was just coming to see you, in spite of your commands," he said, reminding her of the fact that the day they had let their chance meeting in St. James's Park suddenly lift them out of every-day life into the realms of passion, she had told him not to come until she sent for him.

"And you are glad, I can see, Daphne," he added.

She was very glad, but he had no suspicion that it was because so momentous a change had taken place in her life—a change that was equally momentous for him.

"I ought to tell you," she said, "that I have bad news. It is very unlikely that I shall marry Lord Lauriston now."

"Daphne!" He was amazed. "Why?"

"He knows; he has heard about the case—about me."

"But how?"

"I don't know. Some one told him. Mr. Ashwell, probably. Evidently I have enemies. He simply taxed me with it." Her voice trembled, and she showed a tendency to cry. "At first I denied it stupidly and wickedly. Oh, Lance, I lied! I couldn't help it. I have had to do it so often lately. We had an awful scene. He was terribly angry. Now he has gone away. I know that he will never marry me now. I don't think I want him to. He loves me, but he is afraid that I should disgrace him."

Welde listened to this disjointed narration of burning facts with a wrinkled forehead. He knew Lord Lauriston's character exactly, and could picture the brutal priggishness with which, no doubt, he had let Daphne understand that he did not consider her suitable to become his wife.

"Poor Daphne," murmured Welde.

"It is rather awful," she said. "I do not pretend that I loved him, but oh! Lance, you know the difficulties I have had to fight, and why I ever submitted to the engagement."

"And is it quite broken off?" he asked.

"Virtually, yes. Not quite." A bitter sarcasm crept into Daphne's voice. "He is trying still. I think, to see if he can fight down his scruples against allying himself to such a woman as he considers me. Yes, that is the bare truth," she cried, as Welde made an indignant exclamation. "Oh, Lance, you cannot conceive how horrible it all is for me, what I endure. I am not bad. I do not wish to deceive people or hold myself out to be what I am not. I am merely hideously unfortunate. I do not know what I shall do. I don't think I care."

"I do," said Welde.

Daphne did not look at him, but she divined the passion that actuated these two monosyllables.

"I believe you forget that I care," he added.

"No, I do not," whispered Daphne.

They walked on in silence, her skirt sweeping over the leaves that had fallen from the trees. They were right in the center of the park now, and no one was near them. Ahead was a fallen trunk of an elm, and Welde suggested that they should sit down on it. They did so.

"Supposing Lord Lauriston still wants to hold you to your engagement?" said Welde after a time.

"I don't think I shall let him," replied Daphne slowly.

Welde moved restlessly. Suddenly it burst upon him that this fresh turn of events meant that Daphne would be free. Daphne did not speak, she seemed to want to rest contentedly in silence, and Welde sank deeper into the thoughts which had just gripped his mind. Daphne was free! Free for him!

"Daphne," he said with a touch of sternness, "now that he knows, you can never marry him."

She started, not so much at his words as at his manner of saying them.

"Why not?" she said. "If I could do so while I was keeping this from him, surely if he still wishes it, there is much more reason why I should do so now."

Yet she knew that her words were false, and that they represented the exact opposite of her feelings.

"No, because he is not the sort of man who could overcome such scruples — though he might think he could." He moved a little closer to her. "Daphne, can't you understand?" he cried. "Marriage to him is impossible now. This is like an accident of fate specially happening to further our love, to bring us together—"

"Oh, no, no, Lance!"

"But I say that it is," he cried, and suddenly he gripped her in a passionate embrace. "It is, it is," he re-

peated, putting his face close to hers, pressing her to him. "Now that it has happened, I can't give you up, Daphne. Can't you see that it is so, that we have passed the barrier from beyond which there is no going back? Yes, at this very moment we have passed it. Now, as I take you in my arms and you don't resist, we have passed it—forever."

"No, no, Lance." She struggled a little to be free, but she had closed her eyes, and her face was very white.

"But I say yes!" he cried. "Daphne, it is the inevitable. Now that he has cast you aside, how can I fly in the face of fate and give you up? Besides, it would be impossible for me to now. Darling, dearest, you don't know how overmastering my love is. How I have hungered for you day and night, how I have repressed myself, the torture I have borne. Now, now you shall, you must be my wife."

Suddenly he kissed her, again and again. She let herself lie unresistingly in his arms and he knew that she had surrendered.

"My darling, my darling," murmured Welde incoherently. "Why have you kept me waiting so long? How have we endured it?"

Twilight had almost completely fallen before they moved from the trunk of the fallen tree and began to walk back toward the highroad, and neither of them had noticed how chill the afternoon had grown.

"How long we have sat there," murmured Welde, as he supported Daphne over the inequalities of the turf with jealous care. "You must be cold. I know you are."

"No, not a bit — of course not." She laughed with a touch of hysterical joy, but he was not to be reassured, and seized one of her hands.

It was not until they had almost got back to Hill Street that Welde recollected an appointment which he had.

"Love is demoralizing you," said Daphne.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," he murmured, yet at the same time he betrayed that it was more serious than he admitted.

"Don't miss it for worlds," cried Daphne, "if it is really important. Do go now. Take a cab, and you will be just in time."

"Then I may come this evening?" he stipulated.

"No, to-morrow morning," said Daphne.

He protested.

"Really," she said. "I am so tired. And I shall have to break this emotional somersault, which I have performed, to aunt, and — and — oh, Lance, I want time to think."

A peculiar feeling that something would happen when she got home—something horrible—urged her to press this objection to his coming again that night, and so, at last, he gave way, and they fixed twelve o'clock the next morning for him to come to Hill Street.

Then after he had driven off Daphne crossed the road and walked the few yards further on home.

She let herself in with the key that she always carried, and, recollecting that she wanted to telephone to a shop about some orders she had given, she went toward the little back room where the telephone was fixed. She had no sooner thrown open the door than she started back paralyzed with terror.

Sitting in the chair placed at the writing-table there appeared to be a figure the exact representation of her husband—Victor Scruit. Her first impulse was that it was a strange phantasy of her brain. Then the figure rose.

She clung to the edge of the door, rigid with terror, too horror-struck to move or cry out, trembling, breathless, her heart stopped. Then the figure spoke; the voice was the proof of its materialism. "Don't speak,

don't cry out," it said; "I am your husband—alive."

Then she knew. She saw the firm flesh, the muddy boots, the shabby clothes, all the other proofs of a material object. It was, in fact, Victor Scruit who had returned thus inexplicably to prove the untruth of his supposed death.

But now she had got her voice, and she gave one cry; then, before she could give another, he had seized her and pressed his hand over her mouth and closed the door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Give Me Money!"

DIRECTLY Daphne had recovered from the first terrible shock of her husband's return, her impulse was to preserve secrecy and avoid a scene.

This, however, he had partially effected by stifling her cry and flinging the door to after she had entered the room.

They were each of them eying the other. Daphne's fingers were at her throat, as if to check the violence of each terrified breath which she took. He watched her with the crafty, shifty glance of the social outcast. Outcast he was indeed, for she saw that his clothes were more than shabby, that he was unshaven and unwashed, unregenerate and unashamed.

She shuddered.

"Daphne!" he cried, and her name sounded loathsome falling from his lips.

"Don't — don't call me that!" she cried. "You have no right."

"I have the right of a husband. I have done nothing that can make me forfeit that right."

"What have you come back for? How have you come back? I thought you were dead that day when I went to Klito Road."

"You went to Klito Road?"

"Yes," she said steadily. "To see you, and I saw—oh, I can hardly talk

of it now! I thought it was you, and it must have been another man."

"Yes, it was another man." There was a sneer in these words.

He looked at her craftily, wondering how much she knew and understood.

"Who?" she asked.

"That is my affair," he answered, with an insolent smile.

"But some one was murdered there!" she cried.

"Yes, some one was murdered there."

His crafty eyes this time betrayed a slight shiftiness, a tendency to look away from her.

"What have you come back for now, then?" she breathed.

"To claim my rights."

"Your rights?"

"My place, then, if you like to call it so, as your husband."

"Never, never!" she cried with extraordinary vehemence, her whole slim body quivering.

"Why not?" he asked. "You know I have the right."

"You have forfeited it, morally, if not legally," she cried, and looked at the sallow, cunning, repulsive face, dark down the sides and round the chin with a couple of days' growth of beard, the coarse features, the squat, yet powerful, figure, and the shabby clothes—the traditional clothes of the business man, black tail coat, top hat, patent leather boots, all much the worse for wear.

"You know that I have done nothing to forfeit it. I could compel you by law to live with me again, but I prefer not to do that. I shall be satisfied with your help."

"I suppose you mean money?" she said, contemptuously.

"Yes, I mean money. I must have it. You don't know how badly I want it, not merely to live, but"—he spoke in a lower tone, as if even in this little room there were people furtively listening to him—"but to get away. The police are after me."

"The police?" she echoed.

"Yes, there's a detective fellow—Thomas is his name, I believe. He's got on the right scent, though most of them were such fools that it's taken all of them all these weeks to get the hang of it; but they've got it now and they'll get me soon. Besides, that's not the only job they want me for now. God! Daphne, you don't know what a dog's life I've been leading. Not even as good as a dog's; no money, not a cent to buy myself a clean collar with even, and the danger of discovery the whole time. I couldn't have stuck it much longer. But I've got to get out of the country now. Right away, and your money's got to do it. I haven't the ghost of a chance anyhow else."

"But why are they after you?"

Daphne spoke haltingly, with an awful conviction gradually gathering strength in her mind.

"Because they see now I'm the man they want. First they thought as you did—thought I was the man who'd got—well, done for. Now they find I'm the man that did it."

"The man that did it—the—the murder?"

"Quiet; don't speak so loud."

"Oh-h-h!" She shrank back shuddering from him, suddenly realizing that here she was in the presence of a man who had taken another's life, tied to him, bearing his name. "Oh-h-h," her voice rose again to a hoarse cry. "Don't tell me you—it was you—did—it! Oh—how, how horrible—how awful! You didn't do it, Victor!" She unconsciously used the Christian name by which she had been accustomed to call him years before. "You didn't kill him in cold blood?" She covered her face with her hands.

"No, it was a case of me or him; I swear that, Daphne. He'd have done for me if I hadn't done him, and—well, it happened to be him. He deserved it."

"Oh, how have you the face to come back to me and tell me! How

could—how can I give you up—you, my husband! And yet justice demands it of me. How I hate you—how loathsome you are!”

A trace of shame spread over Scruit's features.

“Come, come, you liked me well enough once,” he cried, “and now that I'm in a tight place you surely won't turn on me. Besides, it's for your good to get me away. That's why I've come to you. To give you a chance.”

“To give me a chance!” she echoed contemptuously. “You have stopped at no infamy, and now you come to me with this brazen lie on your lips. To give me a chance, indeed. I will go straight to the police, I will telephone.”

She sprang toward the receiver, but in a second he had risen and gripped her arm and she shrank back, for he had whipped out a tiny revolver and was holding it close to her forehead.

“You little fool!” he cried. “Would you do it? Would you tell the police? Just think, please, before you indulge in such rash actions.”

She sank down cowering from him. He still retained his hold on her arm, and his repulsive face was close to hers.

“Attempt to do such a thing again, and, by Heavens, I will blow out your brains—yes, even yours. I'm desperate, I tell you. It's everything or nothing with me now. You are the one person who can help me. I don't dare go to any one else. I do dare come to you because I know it would be as much your ruin—yours and this lord of yours—as much yours as mine if you gave me up. It would look nice to have all your pretty little history in the papers, wouldn't it? And then when it turned out that you'd got a husband alive—me! A criminal. Heavens, what a shindy there'd be then, and that would be nice, too, wouldn't it? No, Daphne, don't give way to any more impulses of that sort, but just think things over seriously,

and you'll soon see them from my point of view.”

“You brute,” she breathed, still crouching, terrorized and shrinking from him. “You brute and villain. Oh, I never thought even you would have sunk to this.”

“I told you I had to—was driven to it,” he said sulkily.

“Tell me,” she cried, “who was the man?”

“A pal—a South American. He came to my lodgings, the ones you came to, and kicked up a row, and, well, it happened.”

She shuddered. There was a terrible callousness in this brief recital.

“I found the body,” she whispered. “Then I got away. I don't know how. You see—I thought it was you.”

“Of course, that was what saved me. All the fools thought it was I. It only shows how useful it is not to have any friends or relatives in a place. I was utterly unknown—and I got away. If it hadn't been for Hall I should be all right now.”

“The man who said he had seen you? He was right, then?”

“Yes.”

Daphne crouched on a chair, her eyes fixed on him with a kind of mesmerized stare, her fingers locking and unlocking, her whole figure hunched in an attitude of extreme terror. Scruit paced about, or rather took two or three steps each way, for that was the extent of the room. He was an animal at bay.

“Anyhow,” he went on, dismissing the subject of his crime with business-like callousness which made her shudder afresh, “what I've got to do now is to get out of the country. I was all right here so long as they weren't looking for me, but now they are. I haven't got a cent. I came here broke, and I meant to get something out of you when I wrote to ask you to come to me, only this happened. Since then I've been living from hand to mouth. Now I'm just on my beam-ends, so I've come to you.”

"And supposing I won't help you?" she cried.

"You must, you will."

"I will not," she breathed in a low voice, quivering with hatred.

"Then you'll be a fool."

She did not retort anything.

"Come," he cried, after a time, "think just what it means to you to help me. If you don't I shall be done into a certainty, and then I sha'n't hesitate to let them know who I am and who you are. Don't think you'll do me this bad turn and get nothing for it. If I'm going under you'll go with me, that I'm determined. But you won't let me do that, I know," he added with a sneer.

Daphne rose slowly.

"I must think," she murmured. "At present I can't believe—anything; I can't realize it all."

He approached her a little, looking at her.

"Do you want to?"

"You want to get away?" she queried. "Where?"

"To America. At once."

"How much will take you there?"

"Fifty or sixty pounds, I suppose."

"I couldn't possibly let you have that." This was the truth. Daphne had let her resources run so low, anticipating her marriage, that she was now really short of money.

"Come," he sneered, "when you're running a little snug place like this surely it would be worth your while to know that the herring pond was between me and you."

It suddenly occurred to Daphne that she might get more from Mrs. Maddox. She would, of course, have to tell Mrs. Maddox of Scruit's reappearance, and she would be just as eager as Daphne herself for him to be got out of the country.

"I might give you a check for twenty pounds now," she said, "and I dare say I could let you have twenty more in a day or two."

"You'd better give me the lot now."

"It's impossible." Daphne's des-

perate tone betrayed the truth of this assertion. She would have given him anything, had she had it, to get him out of the house immediately, and put an end to this horrible interview. She was visibly trembling with fury and hatred and loathing of his presence.

Scruit was sharp, and he thought he saw that she was not deceiving him.

"Well, well," he murmured; "give me the check for twenty now and the balance by to-morrow evening. If I don't get it I shall come for it quickly enough."

"If you dare to come to this house again I shall hand you straight over to the police."

"You would be very likely to," was his sarcastic rejoinder.

Then she went out of the room and fetched her check-book and wrote the check, her hand tracing the familiar name—the name that she had hoped so fervently that it would never write again—with horror.

How she loathed to do it—loathed even to remember that he was within the four walls of this house which she had called her home.

She went down-stairs again. Scruit was nonchalantly examining the furnishings of the room.

He took the check in silence, but immediately said: "This is no good to me. Victor Scruit had been dead—years. I should have told you, only I thought you would write it down here. I am George Vallancey now. I shouldn't dare try to cash this one."

He gave her back the slip of paper. She had not brought the check-book down and had to go up-stairs again and fetch it, bringing it with her and writing the fresh check in his presence.

"Yes, that is right," he said. "And destroy this," he added, touching the old check. "For all I know, now, the police may have discovered that the man called Ward they are looking for may have been called Victor Scruit once. You can't be too careful in these little matters, Daphne, trifling as they are."

"And now please go," she said.
 "And is that to be our parting?"
 She did not even evince any sign.
 "Daphne!"

Still she was immovable. He made a gesture of contempt and smiled.

"Ah, well," he murmured, "I suppose I deserve this."

"Deserve!" burst furiously from her. "What do you not deserve? Oh, leave me at once or I think I shall strike you."

Her short sentence was surcharged with such intense hatred and loathing that even Scruitt divined it, perhaps winced a little, for once, just for a very short time, he had loved Daphne.

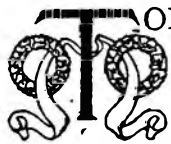
He smiled again, but there was something just suggestive of shame and perhaps regret in his face, and certainly not of contemptuous amusement. Then he went out, and Daphne followed him and closed the hall door of the house behind him.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

THE LATE SENATOR SMITH

A SHORT STORY

BY MOLLIE MARTIN



TOM SMITH and I graduated in the same law class at Harvard. He carried off the honors and I got through by the skin of my teeth.

I often told Tom that I did not believe the law worthy of a man's best efforts, and confessed to him that I intended to locate in the far West, and make friends of the type that would send me to Congress. I also had other political aspirations.

Tom was rather a silent young fellow—not taciturn, but a good listener. Consequently I did more than my share of the talking in those days.

Occasionally I would feel conscience-stricken and make an attempt to draw him out; but it always ended by Tom turning with his slow but radiant smile to listen to something that his little narrative had suggested.

I was a trifle more than six feet and Tom was five feet nine. His voice was just a little deeper than a full contralto.

He was a better student than I, but I comforted myself with the thought that my appearance and gift of gab would outweigh Tom's real ability, in Barnumizing the world. We were in the habit of speaking lightly of our most serious ambitions.

Before I was twenty-eight years of age, by a sharp turn of fortune's wheel I was made Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, which caused me to postpone the selection of my "far Western State."

Meantime Tom Smith was practising law—plodding away in a certain middle State, which shall be nameless, because of a certain happening on which hinges this story.

The senior Senator from this State fell ill and died. The Governor, whose life's ambition had been to step into the dead Senator's shoes, was not inclined to appoint any of the ambitious gentlemen who might not be willing to step down and out, to fill the unexpired term.

While the old Senator lay in state at the Capitol the game began. For several days excitement ran high. The Governor, who was between the devil and the deep blue sea, accepted overtures in a manner which fanned hope into a flame, of the two leading candidates who wished to gain a foothold in the Senate at this crisis. But to the surprise and disgust of both these men and their friends, the announcement was made in the morning papers that Thomas Smith had been appointed to fill the unexpired term of Senator —.

And who was Thomas Smith, for the Lord's sake?

Two politicians sitting at the breakfast-table in their hotel unfolded their newspapers simultaneously, read the head-lines, and looked foolishly at each other. Both were disappointed, but for different reasons. Both felt like abusing the Governor, but for the same reason suppressed their wrath. (The Governor must be somebody's ally.)

The newspaper told that Thomas Smith was a well-known lawyer of C—. He was best known through having been employed as assistant counsel in the famous Barton and Preston breach of promise suit. The defendant was a man of note and proven a guilty one after his cross-examination by Attorney Smith.

It had been made plain that he had perjured himself at least a half dozen times. He had mopped his brow, lost his temper, and been threatened by the court. Smith had been merciless in his probing, and had asked such questions, in his drawling tenor, that no guilty man could answer satisfactorily to himself.

Newspaper readers were familiar with the Barton and Preston suit (it had been pretty bad reading), but the name of Smith, in connection with the appointment, was decidedly confusing.

So that was the Smith.

I may have been the owner of a snobbish exterior in those days—I think I was—but my heart was still in

the right place. I knew by the unenvious way it thumped when I read those head-lines and recognized the bad wood-cut of my lucky friend.

When Tom came to Washington he appeared but little changed. In his thick black locks there were a few white hairs, which he seemed to prize immensely. If he was handicapped by his youth, certainly his modesty was much in his favor.

It leaked out, about the end of the second session of the unexpired term, that Senator Smith was quite a man. There was something in the flash of his dark eyes which said that he was not always going to occupy a back seat.

Of course he was regarded as an infant in statecraft, but he had not put himself in a position to be snubbed by the wiseheads—some of whom cultivated him for political reasons, and others because they liked him personally.

A friendship developed between him and the Speaker of the House. Perhaps the big man was attracted by Tom's sincere and open admiration of him. Certain it was that this great politician liked the simplicity of the younger man, which savored not of diffidence, but of deep detestation for ostentation.

He also fell into favor at the White House, which did not tend to lessen the public's growing respect and esteem for him.

Tom had struck the combination, the flood-tide of fortune, and that he could bear it without inflation was the wonder of it all. He listened to my garish conversation in the same old attentive way when we were together. Now and then I felt my inferiority—that I had really achieved nothing through merit, and that I was fit for nothing but a baseball team.

During one of my spasmodic honest moments I confessed something of this sort to Tom, and he stroked my egotism by turning to me one of the most candid pair of eyes I have ever looked into, and said:

"I had rather be you, Jonathan, and on a baseball team, than to be myself."

He lived in an unpretentious neighborhood and his apartment was cared for by an old colored woman, whom he called Margaret, and introduced to me as a life-long friend. He transacted business at the Maltby Building. His secretary, John Mills, and a stenographer, whom he called Miss Brewster, appeared deeply attached to him, but stood just a little in awe of his reserve.

"Margaret takes the best care of me," he said on one occasion, when I was advising him to live at the Arlington and cut a swell; "you know, Jonathan, she nursed me when I was a baby, and I think that the only thing that would reconcile her to my death before her own would be that she could prepare me with her own hands for burial. She has performed the undertaker's work for all of my family but one, and—but this is a subject that makes me blue. Speaking of living at the Arlington and cutting a swell—I wouldn't know how—and what's the use to try to do a thing when you don't know how?"

"Same old common-sense Tom," I said, laughing.

The last year of the unexpired term of Senator —, politics in this middle State began to boil and bubble. The Governor had announced that he would not be a candidate for reelection to the gubernatorial chair, which meant that he and two other gentlemen would be candidates for the nomination to the Senate; and the nomination meant election, for the Governor's party was in control.

There was the usual wire-pulling, but it was whispered that there was a live-wire which no one had dared touch, and that live-wire was Senator Smith. The Governor had counted on Smith's support. True, he could not accuse him of bad faith; there had been no understanding, but every one knew that Smith was devoted to his law

practise — and, good Heavens, what had the man been appointed for?

A quiet man, with a winning smile and a mantle of dignity, is a difficult proposition to handle in politics, and because he does not stand on a goods-box and talk about the down-trodden poor is not an indication that he is minus an ego, or that he doesn't want to be *It*.

It is not my purpose to tell about the contest, from the time the factions were mobilized until it was closed, and Thomas Smith elected to the Senate. A leading paper of the State said in a leading editorial that Senator Smith had already been an honor to his State, and gave him a few hints how he must proceed if he would hold the ground he had gained.

When I asked Tom about the ins and outs of the game and how he had managed to defeat such astute politicians, he just grinned and said:

"I had not one thing to do with it, Jonathan. Jealously, envy, and abused confidence took a hand in the fray, and here I am again, shaken out of destiny's dice-box."

I knew that he would not have said so much to any one else, and because I knew this I thought better of myself.

Now, Tom's life in the Senate began in earnest, and he grew in grace and waxed strong. When he made a speech, even the old Senators listened instead of writing letters, and the galleries were crowded.

There was something very captivating and convincing about his style—the utter absence of oratorical effort, his thoroughness and pith; and then his ability to handle an interruption without losing his temper when he had been prodded with sarcasm, was quite remarkable. His own sarcasm was so tinged with humor that the vanquished man usually joined in the laughter.

"That gosling knows what he is about," said one of the very elderly Senators to his colleague.

"That's because he is defying his

party," replied that gentleman insinuatingly.

"For God's sake go to Smith, if you want an appointment," said a member of Congress to one of his constituents.

"But I am from your district," said the voter, "and I don't even know Senator Smith. What sort of a man is he? Will he make me feel like creepin' in an auger-hole?"

"Not on your life," said the Representative from the Fifth District, thinking of his fall fences; "and the reason I want you to go is because he is in a position to do more for you than I can. Just go over to the Senate and send him your card. You may have to wait a spell, but don't be discouraged by that. There is always a curious conglomeration of people waiting for him, and he always sees every one, like a medical specialist. They go in at one door and come out at another. They may go in looking anxious, but they are sure to come out smiling. If he can do a favor he always does it. Never lets up until he has exhausted all honorable means. If he is compelled to disappoint a man, he is so genuinely sympathetic that the man feels like consoling him for his own disappointment."

"What's the use of trying to economize," said the Chairman of the Appropriation Committee, "while Smith's in the Senate, forever tacking on amendments."

Society threw a lasso at the young Senator's head, which he dodged so adroitly that the effort was repeated several times.

"I can't say that I care so much for Senator Smith," said a leader of fashion, in a fit of pique, rumpling her brow, which had only been massaged an hour before; "but Helen Hope, Judge Hope's daughter, you know, wanted me to ask him to my house-party in the Adirondacks. He is such a man's man that I knew if he accepted two or three of his friends would, who are so entirely different from the Willie-boys one meets at house-parties.

There are too many women in the world," said the young matron, her disappointment oozing through her pique, making her appear fretful and cross in the eyes of her dear friend, and her dear friend was not one whit deceived by what she said. Our dear friends never are.

"Oh, Smith; well, Smith's as deep as the sea. It is either the White House or the Supreme Bench for *him*. I've seen these quiet fellers before who never reach out for anything, but who have the power to make other men bring the thing they want and lay it at their feet."

And this forecaster, who was in conversation with a political weathercock concerning future political material, offered to stake his reputation as a prophet on the statement he had made.

The weathercock pricked up his ears and began to devise means of cultivating Senator Smith. He was a multimillionaire, but he had heard that Smith didn't care a damn for money.

I was not jealous of the stir Tom was making in the world, but, like many persons attached to the government, whose emolument outweighs their service, discontent began to saturate me. I was wasting my youth.

I longed to write a book or poem that would revolutionize the world, right the wrongs of the poor, elevate the menial task to such a position of honor that millionaires would vie with each other in the performance of their duties as "whitewings."

Instead, I wrote a breezy little article on finance, which was accepted by a heavy magazine, and the die was cast. Newspapers said that I was to resign my position as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury to become vice-president of a certain great bank.

To become a sleek, smooth, prosperous business man had never been my ambition, but in less than six weeks from the day I saw that I was slated for a "money-changer" I had accepted the position and refused other flattering business offers.

I inwardly sneered at myself for being lured by a red devil and its accompaniments, while my heart was honestly with the poor fellow digging a trench, but the world said that I was a financier—and the world generally knows.

Combining business with a jaunt I had long wanted to take—I went abroad. On my return to New York I was met with the news that Senator Smith was dangerously ill at his home in Washington. I caught the first train to the capital, and on arriving at Tom's apartments I found his stenographer waiting in the reception-room for the doctor. Miss Brewster's face was full of anxiety and her eyes were red from weeping.

I took both her hands and began to question her, but before she could reply the doctor entered. He was grave and professional.

I explained that Senator Smith was my old friend, but he said quite firmly that he could see no one; that his fever was 104, but suddenly his manner changed. He shot an X-ray glance at me, grasped my hand, and said falteringly:

"He is in great danger, but I think you may see him to-morrow."

Senator Smith's death was announced the next day.

I stood for an hour leaning against one of the columns in the marble-room, where the remains of Tom Smith lay in state, watching the curious throng. I no longer felt fit for a baseball team. My sense of personal loss threatened to overpower me; and I was conscious of a stinging, absurd jealousy of the public's claim, which was none the less painful, because it was petty and mean. Now and then I could hear a stifled sob, and once I saw a shambling old man guiltily drop a white carnation on the casket, already loaded with flowers.

Justice Hope and his daughter attracted my attention. The pretty *débutante* was ghastly, and during a half pause her slender form swayed and

trembled. Had there been an engagement, I wondered, or was it only a young girl's romantic attachment?

Tom loved Washington, and it was his wish to be buried at Rock Creek. In his methodical way he had written directions concerning this and other things. Dr. Stillwater and myself had been made executors to his will; and a curious document was Tom Smith's will.

First he had provided for his old servant. Other bequests were democratically assigned.

To the Speaker of the House he had left a seal ring, and next in order was a carefully guarded thousand for the education of the little son of a shiftless, irresponsible individual, whom he had tried to befriend.

To President — he left a few choice volumes which the two loved. Tom had but little money, but that little had been carefully distributed. I was to have his watch and chain and the locket attached, which I opened hastily. The face was that of his sister, who had died several years before, leaving Tom quite alone.

I remembered it well—the wistfulness of it had always appealed to me. There was that in the eyes one could never associate with death or age. I had called her my sweetheart through our college days, but after Tom came to Washington her name had not been mentioned. Evidently he had not meant to inspire Helen Hope's affections, for his own face still occupied the opposite space in the locket; but, after all, this was no proof. It would have been like him to leave his own picture for me.

Just a year after Tom's death I received a sealed package from a bank in Washington, addressed to me in Tom Smith's handwriting, which I did not immediately recognize, except as something I had once known well.

I turned it over and looked at the three heavy seals and back again, when the individuality of the writing identified it. Picking up a pair of shears I

cut carefully the end of the large envelope, and, as I pulled out the letter, my fingers trembled.

This is what I read:

WASHINGTON, June 7, 1897.

DEAR JONATHAN:

My people have all died with what is known as quick consumption. We are well, then ailing a little, and the next thing you know we are dead. So it has been out of a family of eight, of which I am the only one left. All the rest have died much younger than I.

I have been feeling a little under the weather for the last few weeks and that is why I write this. In the event of my death, it will be put in your hands.

I am a woman. Your friend Tom Smith's twin sister. You knew that he had one, because I saw the letter you wrote Tom after you had been apprised of her death, which was supposed to have occurred in a little Florida village, where Tom had gone to pull through the winter.

Fate appears to have planned the deception I have practised, down to the minutest detail. As I sat beside my dead brother, the scheme presented itself so suddenly and so forcefully that I had no choice but obey. I was thinking how gladly I would exchange places with Tom. We had just passed our twenty-seventh birthday. My first youth, which means so much to a woman, was passed. I only lived for my brother.

My love-affair was a closed incident. That I was immune from another such experience was a source of gratitude. But there was quite a sprinkling of gray in my dark hair. Tom's life was just beginning. You know how easily he made friends, how people were at once impressed with the genuineness of the man; his modesty and courage was a rare combination.

Since my earliest recollection my ambition had been to keep up with Tom. It had been a nose to nose race, until he decided to study law. The morning he left for Harvard, I said:

"It will be awfully lonesome without you, Tom, here with just Margaret, so I've made up my mind to study law."

"Bully for you, Tilly," said Tom delightedly; "how are you going to manage it?"

"Judge Barton"; and I nodded my head toward our next-door neighbor.

When Tom came home for his vacation Judge Barton had much to say about my progress. He thought it a pity that I was a woman, and Tom thought so, too.

That summer we planned a great deal. We seldom thought of our family malady, unless we happened to catch a cold. Like people living in an earthquake region, who live without fear until they hear a rumble. We decided that when we had finished our law studies we would go back to the place in one of the middle States, from which we had been transplanted, and open a law office.

We had not been back since we were twelve years of age, and enjoyed, in advance, the surprise we would spring on the friends of our parents when they knew that Tom's law partner was his sister. I think Tom talked much of this to console me for being a woman.

When Tom carried off the honors at his graduation, one of my father's old friends offered him a junior partnership in the very town where we had decided to locate. Tom accepted it at once. Later I was to follow him and we would carry out our plans.

From the moment this decision was made, destiny marched events, at a double quick.

In six months after Tom had entered on his new duties Judge Gray died, bequeathing to Tom his immense law library, law office, and ten thousand dollars. Tom wrote gratefully of his good fortune, but I could see that his loyal heart was grieved at the loss of so good a friend.

I was preparing to join him when he wrote that he had taken a "mulish cold," and the doctor wanted him to go to Florida for the months of January and February. Could I join him the next week at Atlanta? He added a postscript saying, "Tillie, old girl, I'm mighty glad now that you are a woman."

In reply to my anxious look, when we met, Tom said: "I'm just tired, Tillie. I'll soon be O. K."

For a week he appeared to be gaining strength. Then an unlooked for and unheard of cold snap came—a freeze which the Floridans were totally unprepared for, and which killed the orange-trees and ruined people right and left.

Tom took a severe cold. I sent to St. Augustine for a physician who told me that he was suffering from tubercular pneumonia, and to be prepared for the worst. It came the next day, but I was not prepared.

"Go away," I said harshly to the good woman of the house, who tried to persuade me to leave the dead body of my brother and take a little rest, and she turned and left me. I counted the striking of the clock until two in the morning. I was holding Tom's cold hand, occasionally talking to him of our childhood days, asking him to forgive some petty wrong that I had done him, pleading with him to speak just one word.

All at once the thought of taking up Tom's life presented itself to me. It seemed as if the proposal had been made by another rather than myself, and I argued that it would be impossible. Each obstacle was disposed of with lightninglike rapidity. But I could not carry out the deception. Why not? We had never talked of our plans except to each other. No one knew that Tom was seriously sick. We were here in this remote village, total strangers.

We were both exactly five feet nine, with our shoes on. I had always known how I had lost out in my love-affair. My shoulders were too broad for a woman, my forehead too massive, my chin too strong, and my hips too narrow. I had always known this when kind people said that I was willowy and graceful, my eyes fine, and my teeth beautiful.

I had never been called beautiful by my friends; "handsome and clever" were the terms they used, until I was heartily sick of the words, especially after I had been supplanted by a silly little woman, four feet two, with china-blue eyes, a deflecting chin, a rose-leaf complexion, and a blond pompadour.

How could I take up the business of the office, though my knowledge of law, backed by Tom's diplomas, might enable me to do so, if I did not have to provide against detection of hypocrisy? What about the people whom I did not know? Look at the politicians who feign knowledge of persons whose names they could not speak to save their souls.

Besides, there was Tom's diary. I would find names and outlines of everything that had taken place every day since he had entered the office. His letters were also full of information. It really seemed as if some one was disposing of every objection I raised.

We had long ago decided that wherever either of us died, there would we be buried.

We had come to that decision once when we had gone to California. The churchyard where our parents and brothers and sisters were buried was filled. Yes, I would bury Tom, and appear in C—— as Thomas Smith, attorney.

From this moment I proceeded with the courage of a fatalist. I knelt by Tom and prayed for guidance in the duties which I was about to assume, prayed earnestly that I might be able to cope with the responsibilities which would naturally fall on my shoulders. I would write no letters except to Tom's doctor, until I had assumed my brother's duties.

From Florida I went to New Orleans. There I had my hair shingled and donned man's apparel. My resemblance to Tom was a great comfort.

I could scarcely realize when I looked at myself that it was not Tom who smiled at me from the mirror.

You may now wonder how you could have been so completely deceived? How it was that my clean-shaven face always showed the roots of a black beard? This dainty job was done by an old Frenchman, skilled in the art of India ink.

No one who knew Tom could have possibly failed to recognize him in me after this had been done; and when I appeared in C—— it was without the least tremor of guilt or fear of detection. People remarked about my improved appearance in health, greeted me warmly, and so I began my life as a man.

I had always been called a womanly woman, and I determined to be a manly man. My one effort would be to do as nearly as possible the thing that Tom would have done in business; and I completely lost my own identity through business hours. Everything favored me from the first. But one person knew and that was Margaret—now another knows; the doctor who will attend me in my last illness and help Margaret with the final deception. He is entirely trustworthy—besides, I have made it worth his while.

To be regarded as a manly man of the world is worth living for, and I have no regrets. I have liked every bit of the work—even the drudgery. But it was when I won my spurs, in the famous Barton and Preston suit, that I began to taste power. It was like the taste of blood to a lion. It was after this that the politicians began to cultivate me; I liked this, too, but I had no

thought of what happened, when Senator B—— died, until it had happened.

I have never experienced indecision for a moment and when the Governor's proposal was made to me I accepted without even a proviso. I stood for reelection, because I did not believe that Tom would have made himself the stepping-stone for any one.

The dignity of my position has, of course, been a protection to me as a woman. I have had great opportunities for doing the work of a good citizen, and I feel that I have done it well. Occasionally, I take myself very seriously; and if I looked as I felt I would be six feet, slightly stooped, bald-headed and bushy-eyebrowed.

I know men as other women can never know them: Their loyalty, their friendships. "As man to man," said the speaker to me once, and I thrilled from head to foot. "I can trust you with this," said the President. And you, Jonathan, with your big, strong, tender heart, I wonder if you would have cared about your friend's sister?

June 24, 1907.

Such a perfect day!

No one knows that I am in the city, except Margaret—just us two and the doctor. Dying is beautiful. I am not suffering, and I have such glorious dreams. My hair, which I never wore very short, has grown long enough to put up, and it appears womanish enough, for I always wear a flower in it; and I use cold cream on my face and powder it, until I can scarcely perceive the old Frenchman's work.

I wear white, pale pink and blue kimonos, my eyes are large and bright, and there is a soft light in their depths which I have noticed in the eyes of women on the threshold of a great happiness.

I am conscious of a delicious exhilaration as I sit by my southwest window and watch the golden sunsets and the twilight deepen into night. A row of aspen-trees are near me, and their quivering, whispering leaves tell of God's holiest secrets, and the stars beckon to me with their same old sorcery. Deeper and deeper I drift into dreamland. From somewhere comes the sound of falling water over great gray rocks, a whippoorwill's call, and the scent of wild grape blooms.

One evening not long ago I seemed to drift from this dreamland into reality. Nearer and nearer came the patter of child-

ish feet, until a little head touched my knee and my hand rested on the soft curls. Two other children, a boy and girl, touched heads over a picture-book, which was quickly discarded when some one entered the room. There was a gleeful shout of "Uncle Tom! Uncle Tom!" And there he was with his good, glad smile. *You* crossed the room and I noted the close grasp of your hands.

Last night—it was very early (for the two who had touched heads over the picture-book were playing hide and seek among the lilac-bushes in the yard below), he came again. *You* had been reading to me out of a book I had heard of—you called it by a strange name, which I cannot remember, and I did not know the language—but your voice was mellow and musical, and even the little soft thing in my arms was soothed and lay quite still against my bosom, when I heard the quick step on the stairs—and there he was!

But slowly the dream faded and the bulky form of Margaret, gently waving a palm-leaf fan, knelt beside me.

"The Master's done come—done come an' I didn't 'spect Him 'fore the leaves turned," she was murmuring, the tears streaming from her faithful eyes.

I smiled and asked her if she had seen Tom, and then told her I had been dreaming.

She pretended to be perspiring and wiping her face with her apron, complained about the milkman having called with his bill. I feigned to be deceived by her good guile, while she talked about the gift she wanted most "next Christmas," which was my picture in a frame, and the following summer she wanted us to "go down home." She artfully planned for many years, ignoring her own age, and scorning the shadow of the coming event.

If it were not for the horrible notoriety, I should like to be buried in a soft, white dress. I never cared much for dress when I was a young girl. But now my woman's attire cuddles close to me. I never imagined it could mean so much. I see now that even God may be in league with the color and texture of a woman's gown.

June 27.

I have your dear letter of June 15, posted in London.

You say that you have never been in love, except with the "picture of Tom Smith's

sister." The one in the locket Tom wore was taken when we were twenty-one.

Oh, my dear, some day we will reweave the subtle scheme nearer to our heart's desire.

June 28.

The rider on the pale horse is almost here. I am—

I could not decipher the few words which followed.

I opened the locket and looked long into those fearless eyes which had ever been beyond my ken, until now.

My friends regret that I am a confirmed bachelor and generally believe that I prize my liberty too much to jeopardize it by matrimony.

CASTING BREAD UPON WATERS

A SHORT STORY

BY FRANK CONDON

PERHAPS you know something about a slowly dying race of New Yorkers that regard all other New Yorkers as a bogus and interloping growth—a race that once had money, position, carriages, and wealthy homes; that went to church each Sunday and used snuff; that lived in the lower part of the city and regarded Twenty-Third Street as a country community?

There are not many representatives of the old clans left, but some warm afternoon, when you are wandering along Fourth Avenue in the neighborhood of Seventeenth Street, you may observe the stooping figure of an elderly gentleman, in a black coat and patent-leather shoes.

If you see him come from the three-story red brick building on the corner of these streets, carefully adjusting his silk hat, you may be almost certain that you are looking upon Mr. Archibald Lockwood, one of the old-timers.

Mr. Lockwood was sixty, aristocratic, and exceedingly poor.

He occupied two rooms on the third floor of the red brick building and a slatternly servant brought him his meals.

During the daylight hours he spent his time in a great library near his home, searching through dusty books for things that have no interest for busy New Yorkers, and at night he sat beneath his reading-lamp and thought of the glories and triumphs that were long since ended; of the times when the Lockwoods were high in the social scale and there were many things to do of an evening.

Fifteen years before he had buried Sarah Lockwood, his wife, but not one day passed in those fifteen years that he did not think of her, and as he leaned forward in his aged chair on a certain evening, staring into the fireplace, he recalled that the week before him was an important one. Wednesday would mark the fortieth anniversary of their marriage.

Sarah Lockwood's picture hung

above the fireplace. If she had lived, perhaps things might have been different. The little old man glanced up at the picture and reflected that if the Lockwoods were doomed to comparative poverty, then it was as well that Sarah escaped it.

Once each week the remaining member of the family performed a generous deed. That was an absolutely inviolable paragraph in the Lockwood code, and while the act might involve no great outlay of money, it was still a whole-hearted effort to help humanity. Archibald Lockwood had performed one good deed a week for twenty years or more.

Sometimes he rescued a lame dog and sent it to a hospital. Now and then he sent money to charitable institutions, where the officials smiled at the size of his offering. He might select a ragged newsboy and furnish him with new shoes, and on some occasions the good deed consisted only of preventing a truck driver from further belaboring his horse.

But always, each week, Archibald Lockwood did his good deed, and when he looked back over the many weeks he derived a great deal of genuine comfort from the recollections.

And now had come a week which would be doubly important. On the anniversary of his marriage to Sarah, Archibald decided that the sweet memory of the event should be commemorated by some extravagance of generosity or by a philanthropic excess of some sort, worthy of the day and occasion. He reflected.

He decided that upon Wednesday he would present a small gift to the Girls' Home in Brooklyn, and in addition to that, no request, no demand made upon Archibald Lockwood would be denied. Whoever, on Wednesday, asked him for something must receive that for which he asked. There would be no exception to the rule. If it were within Archibald's power to give, the one who asked would receive.

The idea struck Mr. Lockwood as original and worthy. He stroked his lean cheek and smiled into the fire. He would, he mused, present himself in many quarters, where people were likely to ask him for various things, and he would refuse nothing. If Sarah could know of his kindly thought it would surely please her.

And so it came about that on Wednesday morning of the momentous week Mr. Archibald Lockwood walked slowly forth from his humble lodgings and wondered at the beauty of nature.

Spring had come suddenly upon an unsuspecting world and showered it with bits of green. The sparrows hopped about joyously in the parks and the crocuses peeped forth inquiringly.

Maguire took off the storm doors of his saloon and put in their stead the half-portion swing affairs under which despairing wives look for their renegade husbands' legs. Workmen daubed the benches in the park with fresh paint. The man from the water works department turned on the fountains and small boys hunted in dark closets for last year's marbles.

Each day the sun struck upon one's back with a warmer touch. Shop-girls began to wear low shoes and near-silk stockings, and the windows in the street cars jammed shut firmer than ever, thus indicating beyond the peradventure of a doubt that glorious spring had again returned.

Mr. Lockwood strolled leisurely. His gray wisp of a beard fluttered in the spring breeze. The gift to the Girls' Home had been duly despatched and now he confronted the world, waiting for those who would ask of him anything they pleased. Mr. Lockwood's ancient silk hat was polished, but a close survey would have revealed the bare and ragged spots.

His frock coat fitted him perfectly, but in places the somber black had given way to green. The patent-leather shoes were cracked slightly and

there were buttons missing from the spats. In Mr. Lockwood's pocket there was little money. In his rooms there was none. But whatever he had, that another human being asked for, on that eventful spring day, was to become the other's property.

There are bums and bums! Some bums abide for a time in the city of iron and stone and then disappear. Other bums continue on forever and in the course of time become widely and unfavorably known. Some bums present a fairly decent appearance and others revel in a riot of rags.

Of the latter type was Sam Waters. Sam had been a bum since he was thirteen years old, and he intended to follow that care-free existence until somebody lighted candles about his inert form. Sam wore a derby hat that had blown from the head of an irate truck driver and which was three sizes too large for him.

His clothes were shabby beyond human description. His face was dirty and his beard was long and unexplored. Sam never had money and never expected to have any. He was content with one drink every day and one meal every two. The park was his home; the bench his bed. The police were his enemies, because they disturbed him with heavy clubs.

Mr. Waters yawned into the face of the spring sun, stretched his arms, and brushed a lump of dirt from his hat. A new day had begun and it occurred to Sam that he had not partaken of food for thirty-six hours.

There were many places where he could snatch a bite—a very small bite, to be sure—but still sufficient to allay the pains of hunger. Sam walked from the park thoughtfully, rubbing his eyes and blinking.

At a clump of bushes at the northernmost boundary of his kingdom Sam stopped abruptly and looked down. He doubled the energy with which he was rubbing his eyes and his blinking increased amazingly. At his

feet, hidden partly by the bushes, lay an arrogant, shining billfold, with its two yellow faces turned to the morning sun, and from the shelter of one flap protruded something of a most astounding character.

Sam stooped and picked up the billfold. He drew forth its contents and rubbed his fingers over two one-thousand-dollar bills in a sort of dumb, stricken manner.

"Well, well," said Sam, after a long period of stunnedness.

He brought the two bills close to his eyes and read the engraved characters. There was no doubt about it. He gazed upon the one and the three o's as though he suspected a game. He twisted the bills in his fingers, smelled them and reexamined them with minute care.

After some time, during which he had walked from the park, the importance and significance of the event dawned slowly upon him. The possession of two one-thousand-dollar bills was a situation that had never before been met in Sam's life. What would he do with them? Where would he go? The feeling of hunger within him gave way to mightier sensations.

"Ain't ut the limit?" said Sam slowly, looking about him. He began to feel strange.

Taking the two yellow bills, he folded them into a compact wad and thrust them deep into his vest pocket. The shiny billfold he flung into an ash-can. He felt that it would be better to be rid of the fold. The money was sufficient.

For the next three hours Sam's mind whirled without stop. He walked to the east, reached a bridge and crossed it to Brooklyn. He walked through strange streets until he came to a thinly settled neighborhood. His desire was to get as far away from New York as possible, and when he finally reached a deserted road he sat beneath a tree and took out the bills.

Late in the afternoon he returned to the city. During the hours of his absence he had gone over the situation thoroughly and had concluded that he was no better off than he had been a day before.

He was worth two one-thousand-dollar bills—not two thousand dollars!

He could get them changed no place. If he stepped into a store, a bank, or a saloon and offered a thousand-dollar bill he would be arrested on the spot. His appearance and his possession of such a bill would easily warrant arrest.

Exalted ecstasy in Sam's mind was succeeded by blank despair. His body was starving for food and he needed a drink. He desired to converse with his fellow man and tell him about finding the huge sum of money, yet he was barred from everything.

"I've had a good many things happen to me," he said resentfully, "but this is the limit. Here I am, worth two thousand dollars in reg'lar money and I can't even buy a glass o' beer; I can't even get myself a—"

Mr. Waters paused in the middle of his complaint. He was walking south on Madison Avenue toward the park. His appearance was doleful and melancholy. Even at a distance an observer would know that Sam was hungry, that he sought consolation and kind words; that his life had been a failure; that he was a bum and in a bad way.

Sam paused in his speech because of a small, elderly gentleman in a frock coat, wearing a silk hat and cracked patent-leather shoes, who had come to a stop in front of him.

"Good afternoon," said the stranger.

"Howdy?" replied Sam.

"My name is Archibald Lockwood," continued the little old man. "I am free to admit that I have performed my usual weekly deed, but your appearance halted me. I am no investigator and I do not care to know

who you are or how you have come to such a state. You look gaunt and hungry. Would you care to come to my rooms and eat a wholesome meal?"

Sam regarded Mr. Lockwood with deep suspicion.

"You ain't from a society and you ain't a professional charity-thrower?" he inquired.

"I am acting solely for myself," replied Mr. Lockwood. "It will please me to have you accept my hospitality."

"Food?" said Sam.

"Yes," replied Archibald.

"Lead me from here to it," Sam answered.

Mr. Lockwood stepped briskly away and Sam fell into pace beside him.

They dined together. Mr. Lockwood's slatternly servant brought food and Sam ate ravenously. From some mysterious quarter the girl procured a bottle of wine and Mr. Waters warmed the cockles of his heart with it. He became talkative. His gratitude overflowed. Mr. Lockwood sat back, with his hands clasped, and hugely enjoyed the visible effects of his good deed.

"That," said Sam eventually, wiping the back of his hand across his mouth, "was one of the swellest feeds I ever had."

"I am glad you enjoyed it," replied Mr. Lockwood in his queer voice. "You looked hungry when I first saw you and I judge that you were."

"And now," Sam said, pushing his chair away from the table, "it may strike you funny, but I want you to do me a favor. I'm sure thankful for the grub. What I now ask you is this: Will you stake me to a suit of clothes and a hat—something decent-looking?"

Archibald stared at Sam. The request had come, but it had come from such an unexpected source and it involved many things. Furthermore, Archibald possessed but one suit of

clothes and one hat, and they were important in his attire.

"I need a hull outfit," Sam went on cheerfully. "I'll admit that I'm rushin' you, but I gotta have a suit of clothes. These is awful. And, also, I'd like to borry your razor and a piece of soap. Am I on?"

Mr. Lockwood smiled.

"You shall certainly have what you ask, Mr. Sam," he said. "It will be no trouble at all to fit you out."

It being no trouble at all, Archibald retired. The servant brought word soon after, saying that Mr. Lockwood had suddenly been taken ill and must not be disturbed. Would Mr. Sam accept the clothes for which he asked, and the razor and the hat of shining silk? Mr. Sam would—and did.

The truth of the thing, of course, is that Archibald took off his clothes and went to bed, where he lay in deep thought, thinking that this was the anniversary of his marriage, and that Sarah might be pleased if she could know of this sacrifice.

Some time thereafter Mr. Waters emerged from the residence of Archibald Lockwood. He was clad like Solomon!

With Archibald's razor he had hewed away the beard; had washed his countenance; had fitted himself into Archibald's black trousers and frock coat; had selected a cane and a pair of gloves, and upon his head the ancient Lockwood hat glistened in the rays of the lamps now being lighted.

"Well, kid," he said to his reflection in a saloon window, "you look like somethin'."

With his cane tapping the sidewalk pertly, he sauntered toward that section of the city marked by lights and action during the evening hours. In front of a famous and rich hotel Mr. Waters walked casually among the waiting automobiles, inspecting them with the weary and skilful eye of a connoisseur.

They were of high and low degree, large and small, open and covered.

Sam selected a dark - brown touring-car, held up an arrogant finger, and the driver appeared. He opened the door obsequiously. Sam entered.

"The Galldorf," he said.

Liveried attendants assisted him from the machine and escorted him through revolving doors into the midst of plenty. Beautifully gowned ladies brushed Sam's elbow and men of millions walked beside him. Mr. Waters continued in a leisurely way to the dining-room, in spite of the fact that he was fairly well occupied with Mr. Archibald Lockwood's edibles.

A waiter took his silk hat reverently and suspended it on a peg. Another one relieved him of his cane. Another brought him a newspaper, and another urged him gently into a chair.

"Bring me," said Sam languidly, "something that costs a great deal of money. My appetite is jaded. Ordinary food palls on me. I seek something unusual and costly. Bring me a quart of your best and most expensive wine to start with, and if you have any broiled ducks at about ten dollars per duck, I'll take a couple of them."

The waiter listened with a quiet smile. He had frequently served eccentric old gentlemen in the past, and he knew exactly what to do. Mr. Waters looked about him cheerfully. He nibbled at the immense quantities of food that eventually came to him. In the end he looked at his bill. It was a mere forty-three dollars. Sam handed the waiter a thousand-dollar bill and lighted a dollar cigar.

And now we will leave Sam Waters for the moment, sitting in a halo of cigar-smoke and surveying the world through dreamy eyes. The waiter returned with a small armful of money, which he deposited before Sam, and received a tip that paid his flat-rent for a month.

We return to the modest domicil of Archibald Lockwood, humanitarian, and find that gentleman in his

underclothes, looking ruefully about his bedroom and wondering what to do without his outer garments. He felt pleased with himself, but one cannot long remain pleased if one has nothing but underclothes. Archibald investigated his rooms.

He found in a corner of the bathroom a little heap of fearfully ragged garments—Sam's discarded outfit. Archibald picked up the tattered coat gingerly. Something was pinned to its collar, and the next moment Archibald came nearer to having heart trouble than is good for an elderly aristocratic New Yorker.

A thousand-dollar bill fluttered before the dazed eyes of Mr. Lockwood!

Not since the year before the Philadelphia Exposition had the Lockwood family possessed such a sum of money. With trembling fingers the old New Yorker placed the bill reverently in his shabby pocketbook. He retired to his wicker chair before the fireplace and indulged in troubled thought.

"The man meant to give me this money," he said, "but it is wrong to accept it. I cannot accept it. His appearance is proof that he did not come by it honestly. It belongs to some one else, and I cannot accept it. But he had a good heart. Such gratitude, in these days, is wonderful and unbelievable."

When Archibald finally secured other garments and again was able to walk abroad, he began to search.

One thought constantly held him. He must find Sam Waters and return the thousand-dollar bill—he must urge Sam to restore it to its rightful owner. To this end Mr. Lockwood began to walk the streets, peering closely into the faces of strange tramps.

The days of spring grew warmer still and summer came on apace. In the park the grass took on deeper shades of green, and citizens removed their vests for the heated term. On the park benches the paint curled up like shavings, and the flies annoyed those who attempted to slumber.

Mr. Sam Waters lounged in his old place. On his head was the remnant of a silk hat, now in a state of disrepair horrible to contemplate. In spite of the season he wore a tattered frock-coat, and one might have observed the shadows of two spats above his cracked patent-leather shoes. Again his whiskers bloomed and his face was dirtier than ever.

Mr. Archibald Lockwood approached Sam's bench. Perhaps something in the cut of the frock-coat attracted his attention. He walked quickly to Sam and laid a hand on his shoulder, smiling with pleasure and surprise.

"At last I have found you," Mr. Lockwood said, holding out his hand. "I am indeed glad. I have looked for you for many weeks."

Sam looked into the face of his former patron with bleary and blinking eyes. For a moment or two he failed to recognize Archibald.

"Who are you?" he demanded truculently.

"I am Archibald Lockwood. You gave me the pleasure of taking dinner with me some time ago. Do you remember?"

"Oh, yes!" Sam answered without emotion.

"There is something I wish to discuss with you," Archibald continued. "When you went away from my house you left your clothes and a thousand-dollar bill. I appreciate the kindness of your spirit, but I can never accept the money. I have come to you now after a long search, and I urge you to help me restore the bill to its rightful owner."

"Have you got that bill yet?" Sam demanded.

"I have never touched it," Mr. Lockwood said quietly.

"Mama!" Sam ejaculated.

"We must return it to its owner," Archibald persisted. "I will give it to you. It belongs in your hands, at least. You will try to find the person to whom it belongs."

Sam said nothing. For a minute or two he remained in deep thought. He pulled the tattered frock-coat more closely about him and brushed the remains of the hat.

"Say," he said finally, "you go on away from here and forget it. You won't give me any thousand-dollar bill at all. I had one, didn't I? What good did it do me? Here I am back on my bench, ain't I? That's where I belong. It don't make any difference to me how many big bills I get. I come back here, anyhow. But it's different with you. That yellow boy will keep you the rest of your life. So beat it and think no more about it. Don't you worry about the owner. Any guy that goes around sheddin' thousand-dollar bills has got a couple

of banks somewhere and maybe a mint or two. The feller that lost them bills probably owns that office-building behind you."

"But—" Archibald began in perplexity.

"Go home," said Sam. "You're a good old guy, and I want to see you get along. I feel sleepy, and you wouldn't disturb a fellow's rest—would you? So-long. I had a good time while that other one lasted—you becher life!"


Sam closed his eyes in imitation of slumber. Archibald looked at him with worried eyes.

Then he walked slowly down the path, removing his shabby pocket-book and fingering the yellow bill with the single x and the three o's.

YELLOW MOON

A SHORT STORY

BY KING KELLEY

HE evening was clear and starlight above the Indian village on the Kootenai.

There were no lights in any of the teepees, nor yet in the winter huts ranged promiscuously about on the river-bank.

Figures of men and blanketed squaws moved slowly and aimlessly to and fro or squatted in groups upon the close-cropped sod. Papooses played in subdued tones, dogs whined low, and a general feeling of expectancy pervaded the village.

Soon Charley David came from his mother's teepee, crossed to the center of the yard, and struck a match to the dry limbs which had been piled there.

As it flamed up men, squaws, and papooses with deliberation gathered around, squatting on their haunches in a wide circle.

With bowed heads they began to chant. It was a long prayer, the weird intonations sometimes swelling high above the howls of a horde of dogs and again sinking in volume until completely drowned by the wail of the malemutes.

It ended, the dogs crept off a distance into the deeper shadows, a few moments of silence, and then Charley David arose to speak.

"To-morrow I go away on the train to the Colville country," he began in the Chinook tongue of his tribe. "They have a school there for Indian

boys, and I wish to know more that is in the books, that I may help my people to live better and to be treated better by the white man. I have been to school at Fort Steele, where I learned to read and write; but I would learn more than they have in the books at Fort Steele. I would learn much, that I may help my people.

"As you know, I sold my ten head of cattle to the butcher at the town. I had my long hair cut by the barber, for I shall dress same as the white man, that I may not be looked at so much when I go into big stores and theaters.

"My mother has plenty hay for her three cows and one pony. I have seen to that. I have also hauled up many dead trees for her, that she may not suffer for wood when it is cold this winter and the snow deep on the ground. You, Eneas Pe-el, shall give her from the deer which you bring out of the hills this winter, and I will pay you for it. You, Dominick, shall give her beef when you kill a steer this winter. She has plenty potatoes, and you shall all see that she has flour and baking-powder in her house.

"To you, Harry Sam, I give my gray horse to ride till I come back. Ta-ha Mon-ne-na is to have the black one, as she is also to have my traps and the marsh which has always been mine to trap. I shall write to her, and Sam Pe-el, who went with me to Fort Steele to school, shall read the letters to her.

"I think it is well that I go. I would be your chief some day, but I would first see all the books, that I may rule wisely. My father, Simon David, who, as you know, was killed at Port-hill in the battle with the white man fifteen snows ago, was then chief. He did not know the books, and you had only fur to sell. He say to white man who buy his fur, 'You cheat me.' White man knock him down with his fist. Then my father go bring canoe-loads of Indians, and they have a battle. I know, for you, Dominick, have told me about it many times.

"It is because of this and many

things that I would learn. For, as you know, the deer in the hills are less every winter. We must raise more cattle. The geese and ducks on their way south do not stop on the marshes in such numbers as they once did, and we must raise chickens.

"There are less muskrat-houses all the time, and we must raise bigger gardens and cut more hay on the land which the government has given to us. When I learn all that is in the books I can tell you how to do these things better. I shall then know all that the white man knows, and he cannot cheat us.

"Father Benveneau has told me much about this Colville country, where the Indians have schools and ride in carriages. You, my people, work much, but you have no such things. Every morning many of our men and squaws go up river to the town to do the white man's washing or to cut his wood. And often when I am there have I seen squaws gathering old clothes out of back yards for their children to wear and picking up garbage for their dinner. This is not good. It is because of this that I would learn. It is because I am the son of a chief who died for his people that I am proud, and would know the books, that I may show my people how to live better."

More he said, but Ta-ha Mon-ne-na—in English, Yellow Moon—did not wait to hear. Her heart was too heavy with his going. Noiselessly she stole away to the river-bank and sat by the path which led down to the water and the canvas-covered canoes upturned on the narrow bar.

His voice, coming to her through the still night, caused strange pains to circle her heart. It was quiet presently. And after what seemed a very great length of time her ears strained to catch every sound, she heard his soft, moccasined tread close behind her, and he knelt without a word at her side.

The still, frosty night, its stillness accentuated by the far bark of some

house-dog or the mutter of a night-bird, was sad. The faint purl of the river below was sad, and the stars, mirrored in the running water, were big, bright tears on the face of nature. The whole world was sad to Yellow Moon as she sat by her lover in the clear, cold dark, his guttural voice, droning yet musical, filling her with hope, then dread. For from somewhere out of the experiences of ancestors came a fear undefinable.

"I shall learn what the law is, so that our people may never violate it," he was saying to her; then startled her by telling her that he had often wondered if he had not some white blood in him—not much, just a little from a long way back; that it made him want to live like and be like the white man.

And she, who had so far only replied in some short throat sounds or a shake of the head, said to him, near as translation can get it:

"You will not learn the bad the white man knows? I have heard it said that they steal each other's wives—take them as a thief does a horse."

"I shall only learn what is good for my people to know," he replied proudly.

She drew the blanket tighter about her shoulders and they walked back through the open grove to the cluster of huts and teepees. Facing the frame church whose cross lifted high and distinct in the starlight, he said to her:

"When I have learned all the white man knows, I shall be a chief. We shall go into the church and Father Benveneau will make Yellow Moon the wife of a chief."

Together they made the sign of the cross. He kissed her, then went his way to his mother's teepee, she through the sad night to the bed on the ground in her own. Lifting the woven tule flap, she crept past a dog just within the entrance, past two young brothers doubled up side by side in their sleep, and on to her bough-mattressed portion of the circle.

Drawing blankets tight about her,

she looked up past the rows of dried fish hanging on cross-poles, and on through the smoke-holes in the peak of the teepee at a spot in the sky centered by a star.

This look became a fixed, unreasoning stare. There was peace in the mystery of the unknown, and the pain of the known became less. For in her way she contemplated the wonders of moving stars much as those who know the laws thereof.

When this star moved slowly until lost to view she watched the spot intently till another one came. So she found sleep. And so for many nights, after Charley David had gone away on the train to learn all the white man knows, she watched the stars pass until one came which brought her sleep.

This, of course, was before the cold and snow came. For when the ice had nearly met in the center of the river the Indians moved into their winter huts, which were supplied with stoves and had no roof-holes to look out through.

Also, it was before the marshes had frozen hard enough to walk upon, for then Yellow Moon took the traps Charley David had left to her and with her ax cut holes in the muskrat-houses to set them in. Over much snow and ice she traveled each day, and at night was more tired than lonesome.

She knew many sly ways to take the muskrats that built in the marsh, and she learned many more. Every day her catch doubled that of the best trapper in the village. Her family had more canned goods from the stores to eat than the other Indians. Her mother had less need to sit on the cold ice and fish through a hole for the wary char, and her father grew lazy because of it. And as she saw the proceeds of her work going into the stomachs of her family, and no new blanket was forthcoming for her, she connived with Charley David's mother, who hid a few skins each day until Yellow Moon was wearing a

blanket of the most curious design and flaming colors.

There was forethought in her zeal. As the wife to be of a chief, she must set an example of industry. These were not clearly outlined ideas, but the impression she felt just the same. She was out to the marsh early in the cold morning, and, when the muskrats on her own ground became few and cunning, she invaded other territory which was not her own.

The fame of Yellow Moon grew, for it could be seen by all that her family had the most to eat. Young men of the village lingered about the door of her father's hut in the evenings to speak soft words to her.

Eneas Pe-el was among these, but he was more shrewd in his designs than the others. He was the great hunter of the tribe, and when he brought a deer out of the hills there was always a ham of it hanging on the nail outside the door for her mother to cut steaks from. In this manner he grew in favor with her father, who became more lazy still.

Eneas earned the freedom of their hut; and one evening, as Yellow Moon knelt by a dim lamp working beads on a pair of moccasins, he told her of his love, which was mostly an account of his skill as a hunter, and how, with the fur she would catch and the meat he would bring in, they would always have warm blankets and much to eat. But she only laughed at him, and he sulked for a while, then went away.

Letters came at long intervals from Charley David. They made her very proud, for no Indian of her village had ever received anything through the mail. Sam Pe-el brought them from the office and read them to her. They were made up of short, printed words, and told in brief Siwash manner of the school which Indian girls as well as boys attended, of the games they played, the good houses the Indians lived in, and the fine horses they rode.

The letters were short, but always

in them were a few words that made her heart flutter; and always when Sam Pe-el finished reading one of them she took it and stole away alone among the cottonwoods or ran out across the ice on the marsh.

So winter passed until one day a warm wind came gently down the valley. Yellow Moon knew it for the Chinook, and her heart was glad. Harder and harder it blew its warm breath on the ice. It brought rain, which softened the snow. The snow grew less and less until one morning the valley and lower hills were bare as the floor of her father's hut.

Soon the days and nights were noisy with the screams of water-fowl stopping to feed ere they journeyed on again to northern haunts. Came the bluebird to frolic on the warm slopes, the robin to hop and pick in the yard, and the wren to twitter in the thickets. The sap crept up the trees, the grass showed green in favored spots, and the huts were deserted for the teepees.

To all this warmth and song and returning life Yellow Moon responded with a great quickening of the intellect. There was a new meaning in the bird-notes, more colors in the renewed foliage, and deeper mysteries in the lights and shadows that played across the valley.

Opening flowers held a strange beauty for her. She felt herself growing. Some process she could not define was going on in her brain. Strange longings came, and she, too, wondered if there might not be a few drops of white blood in her veins to cause it.

The river swelled with the snow-water from the mountains, ran out through the sloughs onto the marshes, leaving but a narrow, tree-fringed bank on each side of the stream, and no way to travel but in a canoe. Birds nested, wild roses bloomed everywhere, and one day Charley David came home to the village of his people.

He was dressed like a white man, even to a pair of shoes. Long before

the fire in the yard that night he told them of the things he had seen and learned; the machines the Colville Indians had to cut and thrash their grain, the wagons they drove in, and the beds they slept in. They played many games at the school, and he had become the swiftest runner among them.

Next year tribes from all over would come to the Colville country. There would be great races. They would run twenty-five miles, which was as far as the village was from Porthill, he told them, and if he beat he might then travel to other places to race and earn the money. To-morrow at the white man's celebration up at the town he would prove that he was a runner. And he did prove it, running the two miles the next day, an easy winner.

Yellow Moon's breast heaved with pride as she heard the crowd cheer, and Charley David, tall and strong, resumed his place at her side. Of the iced stuff and the candies at the refreshment-booths they feasted often, and with as much relish as the whites.

And when they were gluttoned with the excitement and sweets everywhere for sale they went home in the sunset. Not with swift strokes of the paddle did they speed, but allowed the canoe to laze along the bank under the overhanging foliage while he chanted the songs of the Colville tribe.

Then Charley David sold his two horses and went away again, leaving her alone with a new fear—the fear of Eneas Pe-el, for Eneas had renewed his suit with frenzied zeal. She had spurned him from the hut, and since there had been a dark scowl on his ugly face which boded evil.

She had intended to tell Charley David about it, but his stay had been short; there were so many other and pleasanter things to say, so she had not told him.

No more letters came for Yellow Moon. When she spoke to Sam Pe-el about it he grinned and turned away.

So to make the days, which seemed so long, pass more quickly, and to be away from Eneas Pe-el, she went out after the first ripe service-berries.

It was good to be alone with the mystery of things, which she felt like an awakening; and so, when the huckleberries on the lower slopes turned black, she went day after day to bring them down, nor feared the bear as other maidens and squaws of the village did. Charley David's mother was remembered when she staggered home each night, and the roof of her father's hut was covered with drying berries.

Also many basketfuls were sold at the town, and her family profited in the way of store goods. Then there were fish to catch and dry, which took her away by herself and from the sight of Eneas Pe-el or his brother.

Yellow Moon dreamed big dreams and made great plans as the canoe drifted idly about the mouth of sloughs where the char came to feed. Mostly she dreamed of the big potlatch to be held in the Colville country the next summer and planned how to get there. She would wear the most curiously ornamented moccasins and have the brightest blankets on the grounds. Charley David would discover her and in pride show her to the Colville maidens.

So when the first heavy frosts came which made the fur prime, Yellow Moon took her traps and hastened to the marsh back of the village.

No day was too stormy to deter her, for ever in her mind was the picture she had conjured up—waving flags, hundreds of horses, crowds cheering the winner, and the winner was Charley David, who would come back to the valley with her and they would have a teepee of their own which she would pitch on the cleanest spot on the river-bank.

She had to wade until the ice came, but she did not mind that, though it wore out moccasins fast. The rain did not stop her, for she was wise in the

knowledge that muskrats move about more freely in rainy weather. Also, she learned a cunning trick of taking them that had never been known by any of her tribe. There were miles of shallow water through which the rats swam and played, but still too deep to set a trap on the bottom.

With a hoe she raked up mounds, and on the sloping edge of these mounds set traps, staking the end of the chain out in the hole she had dug. The rats visited these mounds out of curiosity, were caught and drowned in the holes, and Yellow Moon, guarding her secret well, carried many loads of them home each day; the meat from which fed those who had no meat and every dog in the village.

When the ice became strong enough to walk upon, and her trick of making mounds no longer possible, she went far as daylight would permit, trapping out every rat-house which had not by some one else been visited.

Her catch was large, but the wants and appetites of her family seemed to grow in proportion. Only by the help of Charley David's mother did she contrive to get some clothes like the white girls wore, and a new blanket.

Yellow Moon was tired, and the Colville country seemed to get farther off, when one day in midwinter, while standing quietly on her snow-shoes in a cluster of cottonwoods a mile from the village, she saw a black fox sneaking along.

She had seen one's hide a long time before, and knew this for the greatest catch a trapper can hope to make. The air was moving toward her, and the animal came close, its silvery coat fairly throwing off sparks as it ran away.

Yellow Moon dreamed afresh and craftily set about to snare this much-sought prize. She killed a rabbit, froze it into lifelike shape, and placed it on the snow where she had seen the fox, setting large lynx-traps all about it. The jaws of these she hid with thin, white paper, made the snow natural as possible, and waited.

The fox circled the rabbit several times the first night, but the second morning when Yellow Moon went early to look the snow was torn up and a trail showed where the animal was dragging the brush fastened to the end of the chain.

Ax in hand, and heart thumping wildly, she ran along its trail. Mile after mile, in and out of timber and brush, she followed until she came in sight of it lying down, apparently exhausted.

She stepped cautiously toward it, ax poised above her shoulder, while her brain burned with a great new anticipation. She would secrete the hide till some day in the spring, when she would take it to the town and sell it to the fur buyer. Charley David's mother would dry the skin in her hut, and no one else would know about it.

Six, seven, eight hundred, perhaps a thousand dollars it would bring, for so she had heard that black foxes sometimes sold for that much. With all this money she would secretly take the train for the Colville country. There she would show Charley David the money and tell him about Eneas Pe-el.

Close almost enough to strike she came, then the fox sprang up and bounded away, dragging heavily at the brush on the chain. She followed in haste lest it get away from her, and in fear that some hunter might see it, and after killing it, claim it from her. Toward the foothill and back to the river-bank, into thickets and out onto the open marsh she pursued, but seemed unable to ever again get close enough to strike.

But the fox wearied at last, and while crawling under some limbs the chain caught and held. Yellow Moon dropped the blanket from her shoulders and crept close, her eyes fastened exultingly on the fiery coat of the struggling animal. She would get it now, sure.

Charley David and the cheering crowd at the big potlatch swam before her eyes. She raised the ax to deal the

fox a blow on the head, but it snapped at her and she sprang back. As she advanced again she saw that only the toes of a front foot were held by the jaws of the trap. She had no time to lose, for the animal was struggling hard to pull its foot out.

She poised the ax, struck, missed its head, and hit the spring of the trap, releasing the fox, which scampered away on three legs to the tules of the marsh.

Yellow Moon sat in the snow by the empty trap for a long time. She was of a race whose emotions are slow but deep. The disappointment did not throw her into a fit of weeping. Instead, it pressed harder and harder until it seemed like hands on her shoulders holding her down and a weight on her chest that grew so heavy it choked her.

New snow was falling, and dully she watched the large flakes cling to her garments, wondering how it would seem to let the cold numb her to sleep and the snow to lay white blankets over her. Then, as she felt her wet moccasins freezing, she arose, cut the trap loose, secured her shoulder blanket, and, drawing it tightly about her slim form, set off slowly for the village; there to pass the remainder of the winter catching fish through the river ice.

Eneas Pe-el watched her come and go, yet said nothing. But when the Chinook breathed over the valley, rotting the ice and drinking up the snow in almost a night, when the air was filled with the cries of birds and the sun was warm on the river bank and nature turned green and new, Eneas spoke again.

To no avail he recounted to her his wealth in cattle and horses, spoke with pride of the number of deer he had killed the winter before, and of the lynx hides and buckskin he had sold at the town.

"You kill so many deer, why you no give any meat to Charley David's mother?" Yellow Moon taunted him.

"Charley David not my friend," Eneas replied sulkily.

He wooed earnestly, but in vain. Yellow Moon scorned his proposal and waited—waited through the blooming of wild roses, the high water, the feathering of young birds, the ripening of the berries, and the frosts which picked the leaves.

Winter came with its snow and cold, but Charley David did not. Rumor reached her that he had forsaken his tribe and married a Colville maiden who had much land.

Yellow Moon did not believe it. He would return to be a chief, and they would live in a new hut in the winter and have a teepee on the greenest spot in summer. He would be wise like the white man and talk much of what was in the books.

Indians from down river would come to ask his wisdom on many things, and he would talk for his tribe when they had dealings with the whites. He would be great as his father before him, and she would be the mother of chiefs to come. There would be plenty to eat in the tribe and no old squaws begging the waste at the white man's slaughter house.

So she believed as she harried the muskrat on the marshes another winter, her senses alert for the tracks or sight of another black fox. So she believed when the Chinook came to drive the snow back up the mountainsides and the days grew long and lazy and full of the many sounds of nesting things.

But Eneas Pe-el spoke to her again, and this time he would not be put off. He pleaded first, then threatened much. And seeing that he had become a great power in the tribe, had bought the consent of her father with a cow and could take her when he chose, she hid away from him.

Through the day she whiled the time among the cottonwoods on the bank below the village and at night crept to her part of the circle in the teepee. When this no longer served to

avoid Eneas Pe-el, she took her canoe and best blanket one night and ran away.

Yellow Moon knew a part of the river and the sloughs which drained into it well. Paddling down around many bends she pulled up to the bank when streaks of dawn began to show, lifted the light canoe ashore into the seclusion of dense bushes, and trembled all day in her hiding-place for the bold thing she had done. Every noise startled her; every fish that splashed the water she took for a canoe in pursuit.

But when the long summer twilight at last gave way to darkness and no captors came to seek her out, Yellow Moon grew brave again. Placing her canoe in the water, she drifted on down the dark, slow current, now coming close to the black shore with its ghostly dead trees and again shying to the center of the river.

The air was warm, laden with odor of blossoming things on shore, and this, together with strange night sounds near and far, charmed yet frightened her with its weirdness.

By day Yellow Moon lived on the bank, roasting the fish she caught for food. Then there was the wild strawberry and soon the black-cap and sarvice-berry to eat upon. There were many things to be had in the summer and she fared well. In the cool shade of the willows or cottonwoods she slept and dreamed strange, unconnected dreams.

Often on open spots, where the wild daisies bloomed in all their colors, she lay and wondered, in her own way, at the mystery of things as she watched the movements of birds and squirrels about her.

And ever in her mind was the memory of Charley David, who had gone away to learn the wisdom of white men. Many times she looked at the mountains, wondering how long it would take her to cross them to the Colville country, and if she would find plenty of berries along the way.

She knew the direction, but was afraid she would not find berries and be forced to turn back. If she had a rifle she would try it, for there must be plenty of pheasants up in the mountains, she thought.

So she dreamed and fancied, while ever upon her grew the desire to run wild in strange places, far from the sight of other human beings. Nights she paddled her canvas-covered canoe on the river, turning back up-stream when the lake was reached. For the lake grew rough at every gust of wind and no canoe might venture upon it. When the river overflowed and made an islanded lake of the valley, she paddled out over the marshes to the foothills, where there were orchards in the white's man's clearing.

The spirit of the night grew upon her. She chanted low to herself as she glided along over the waters in the summer starlight like a lone swan. The sounds that echoed and faintly re-echoed, filled her with a queer rapture. She seemed to be dwelling in an Indian fairyland.

But this could not last always in a country where the snow falls deep. Winter was a long way off yet, but it would come, and she must make her peace with some family that would, perhaps, let her hide in their hut.

So, at Jerome Slough, she ventured one day to the teepee of a family belonging to her tribe. Her swan life ended. They made her a prisoner and took her back to the village of her people, where, because she had no other choice, she said yes to Eneas Pe-el, and set to stitching buckskin, to be worn at the wedding feast.

And Eneas Pe-el, exulting over the other young men of the village because he was to have the fairest maiden of the tribe to gather his wood and smoke his winter fish, prepared a potlatch for all the Indians along the river. Three steers he sold at the town and brought back loads of store-goods.

He forgot that she had run away from him, spoke kindly to her, and,

in the overgladness of his coming wedding, gave Charley David's mother a pig's-head which he bought at the butcher-shop.

To the general rejoicing Yellow Moon said nothing as she worked away on the things Eneas had brought for her to wear on the eventful night. She felt very tired, and this tiredness grew as time went on.

She noticed no one, talked with no one, but at night, when the village slumbered, stole out to the river and sat by the path which led down to the sand-bar, hearing in her fancy the soft tread of moccasins close behind her.

Then came the day!

Father Benveneau arrived, and visiting Indians pitched their teepees on the vacant spots about. As darkness fell the fire in the yard lit up groups of faces laughing and hungering for the feast, while over in the church the tapers burned dimly for the ceremony.

Yellow Moon, in the gorgeous raiment of an Indian bride, looked at the scene in the yard, then drew back into the shadows and passed around unseen

to the path that led down to the sand-bar.

She was very tired and there was a heavy weight on her chest.

She heard a step!

It echoed through her primitive mind, and she visualized Charley David walking down the main street in Colville, wearing a pair of white man's shoes, his shortened locks combed back from his Chinook brow, and the light of worldly wisdom in his eyes. Was the chief's son returning?

No, it was only a bird fluttering to regain its roost. She walked down to the water's edge. Yellow Moon was very tired.

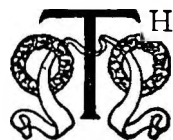
Slowly she made the sign of the cross, drew the blanket tight about her, and waded in. Deeper and deeper the water became, then the current lifted her off of her feet and rolled her over, gasping, gulping water, but clinging tightly to her blanket. Sinking, she touched bottom.

And as Yellow Moon lay on the soft sand of the river bed she felt a great rest and peace steal over her!

THE BRAVE AND THE FAIR

A SHORT STORY

BY REDFIELD INGALLS

HE buggy turned out of the smooth, oil-soaked road into a rutty field, the horse breathing hard and flecked with foam, and jounced across it to a lonely tree where it stopped.

The young man got out to offer assistance to his companion, but the girl, who had been biting her lips, eyes over-bright, ignored his hand and sprang to the ground. Then she faced him.

"Dick Illsley, you almost let that horse run away with me!" she flashed, her little hands clenched.

Richard was used to her impulsive exaggeration of incidents, but just now he was very much ashamed of himself.

"Don't be too hard on me, Bessie," he pleaded. "You know I'm not used to horses—he *would* have bolted if it hadn't been for you. You certainly are a wonder to stop him the way you did."

"You needn't 'Bessie' me," she retorted, somewhat mollified nevertheless. "I like a man to have plenty of nerve."

He winced, and the girl saw it. As they started toward the well she took his arm quickly in amends.

The two had met in New York some months before and a prompt friendship had been renewed when he came to her little Pennsylvania town to try his luck with the only asset left him at his father's death—an oil lease.

They had driven out to it this bright morning among the dreary black hills that looked like a drove of disreputable porcupines, bringing a basket of food for a picnic.

The eighty-foot derrick might have been the wooden skeleton of a Cleopatra's needle. Close by were the shanty for the stationary engine that furnished the motive power for bull-wheel and walking beam, and a big tank. The driller, busy with his assistant, the tool-dresser, cleaning out the debris from the twelve-hundred-foot hole, straightened up and touched his cap.

"Mornin', sir; mornin', miss," he greeted them. "Come to see her shot? The shooter ain't got here yet, but I guess maybe that's him now."

He pointed off across the fields.

"Goodness!" Bessie gasped in something like admiration. "Isn't he reckless!"

"He is bumpin' some, ain't he, miss?" grinned the man. "Never knew a shooter yet that lived to be sixty."

A light wagon with a team of horses was coming toward them at a brisk trot, and presently Richard could make out the huge "Danger!" sign on it. He stared, horrified.

"What's he doing that for?" the girl puzzled, turning her attention to the assistant, who was busy pouring water on the forge and boiler fires.

"In case we strike gas, miss. It 'ud catch sure."

"We'd better go back to the buggy

before he gets here," suggested Dick, nervously watching the approaching wagon.

"No, I want to see what he's going to do," she answered with just a trace of emphasis.

The vehicle, with bundles of six-foot tin tubes strapped to the sides, drew up at a little distance and the solitary driver, a handsome young giant, jumped out.

"All ready, Mr. Illsley?" he asked, coming up. "Why, howdy, Bess! Didn't expect to see you here."

"Good morning, Peter," she answered, coloring a trifle and shaking hands. And in answer to Richard's surprised look, she explained, "Oh, Mr. McLaughlin and I are old friends."

"Sure," agreed the man, eying the New Yorker with aggressiveness.

"How do you shoot a well?" the girl asked, to cover a rather awkward pause.

"Lower the torpedoes to the bottom and drop a go-devil on top of 'em," said McLaughlin briefly. He was evidently trying to adjust his mind to an unexpected situation.

"A what?" she exclaimed.

The shooter picked up a two-foot iron spike from the ground and she took it from his hands.

"Why, it isn't so very heavy, is it?" she asked. "You hold it over the—the casing—"

"—and let it drop. Then you run like—well, you run fast. In about a minute it hits the glycerin and there you are!"

The driller and his assistant came up with a can in each hand and set them down by the derrick with extravagant gentleness. Realizing what those cans contained, Dick hurried the girl away in an agony of apprehension.

From beside the buggy they watched the three men as they busied themselves about the derrick. Presently the driller and tool-dresser carried the cans well out in the field and stacked them up, retreating expectantly.

"What did they do that for?" the girl wondered.

McLaughlin came toward them with a rifle under his arm.

"Want to see some pretty fireworks?" he asked. "Are you a good shot, Illsley?"

"I never fired a gun in my life," was the short reply.

"I can shoot," said the girl rather scornfully.

She took the rifle and, at McLaughlin's direction, aimed at the little pile of cans. The first shot missed, but at the second came a spume of flame, followed instantly by a terrific explosion. Where the cans had been was nothing but a hole in the torn ground.

"Good way to get rid of the empties," McLaughlin grinned. "Awkward things to have kickin' around."

He returned to the well and the other men joined the couple by the buggy.

In a few moments the shooter burst from the derrick at a dead run, and Bessie clutched the young man's arm. A few seconds later there was a faint report like that of a firecracker and the ground trembled slightly. This was followed by a noise like a very hoarse fog-horn, a crash of woodwork and a rattling of small stones all about them.

"Is that all?" the girl remarked disappointedly.

They returned to the well to find everything splattered with sand and clay. But there was no sign of oil.

"Clean it out," ordered Richard after a little silence, and started back toward the buggy.

Perversely the girl invited McLaughlin to join them at luncheon, and it proved to be a gloomy affair to the New Yorker. The well-shooter was quick to see how the land lay. He regaled them in consequence with tales of his own and others' daring in making and using the explosives employed in the oil business; for many shooters manufacture nitroglycerin and dynamite for personal use. Bessie drank it all in with admiring comments and

Dick threw pebbles into a neighboring brook.

"You can't never tell what glycerin'll do," McLaughlin observed as he finished a marvelous tale of a leaky can that dripped all along a road and an unlucky tramp who passed that way. "Nor, for that matter, how a well'll come out. Maybe you'll sink one in the middle of a bunch of payin' leases, and not get a smell of oil; or maybe you'll go plunk into a reservoir and have a gusher where there never was oil known before. It's all a gamble—that's the fun of it."

"Why, there's Coal-Oil Johnny. Just a farmer's boy; struck it so rich he made a dozen fortunes; spent the money like a prince—"

"What did he do with it?" the girl demanded.

"What didn't he do?" chuckled the man. "I seen him with my own eyes give a hundred-dollar bill to a negro who blacked his boots, and then light a five-cent cigar with another. One time he took a likin' to a hotel clerk in a little town where he stayed over night, so he bought out the whole place, lock, stock, and good-will, and made the clerk a present of it. Another time he saw an old woman goin' along the street with a big basket of potatoes, and he stopped her and bought every potato at ten dollars each, and then made her a present of the basketful. Why—"

Richard sprang to his feet as the driller came up.

"Well, Sam?"

"She's clean, Mr. Illsley," the man announced, "and she's a duster. There ain't sight nor smell of oil."

"Don't give up so easily!" flashed the girl before he had spoken. She had arisen, watching his face.

"What more is there to do?" he asked with a wry little smile.

"Might try another shot," suggested McLaughlin, grinning. "Make it a full charge of fifteen torpedoes, a hundred and fifty quarts. That ought to fetch something."

"Yes, do," urged the girl. "It's a chance. And"—a sudden thought brought a sparkle to her eyes—"and I'll fire it!" she cried. "Maybe that will bring you luck!"

Both men started a horrified remonstrance, but the girl stamped her foot.

"Yes, I will," she vowed. "And you needn't try to stop me."

The sparkle was still there as she addressed the New Yorker, but its quality had changed. He paled a trifle, but said nothing. McLaughlin scowled and shrugged his shoulders. The two men glanced at each other interrogatively, and again the shooter gestured expressively.

"All right," he said somewhat flatly. "I'll have to get some more glycerin. See you later," and he strode away.

The girl cut a switch from a low-hanging branch, found a piece of string, improvised a hook from a pin with her even teeth, caught a grasshopper and went fishing in the little stream, ignoring Richard completely. The latter lit his pipe and sat watching her, and mulling over his rather bitter thoughts.

An hour or so later they returned silently to the well, to find McLaughlin back and everything in readiness.

The shooter canted an empty torpedo into the casing, a huge iron pipe that projected a couple of feet above the floor of the derrick.

"You can go back to the buggy if you're—afraid," remarked Bessie in an impersonal tone as the men began bringing up the nitroglycerin.

Dick stirred, but for all answer he walked closer and watched quietly while can after can of the horrible, yellowish fluid was emptied gently into the long tin tube. Blessed with an imagination, it was agony to stand his ground as he thought of what would happen should a single drop splash to the boards beneath their feet.

The girl stood on the opposite side of the casing, and her presence multiplied his agony many fold.

McLaughlin hitched a light wire rope to the torpedo and began lowering it slowly into the well. The driller and his helper went back for another torpedo and more of the explosive.

Suddenly Dick noticed that the rope was no longer taut, but was bulged sidewise—was rising swiftly. His mouth was open for a question when McLaughlin, too, saw it.

"Run for your lives!" he screamed, flinging himself from the bull-wheel. "*She's started to flow!*"

For an instant Dick was paralyzed. He saw in his mind's eye the gush of black oil, bearing with it a long case; he saw that case pitch over with its ten quarts—

In a blind panic of terror he leaped away, and had run a dozen yards before he thought of the girl. He stopped, plowing up the gravel like a skater on slushy ice, and turned.

She had stumbled and fallen in the mud, almost at the sill of the derrick.

Just as the whole life of a drowning man passes before his mind in the instant of his losing consciousness, so the frightful danger seemed to make time stop for the young man.

Bright and still as a picture in the afternoon sunlight was the tall, black derrick with its background of bristling hills. Near the wagon the two men were lying, face down. McLaughlin was pressed back against an upright, mouth and eyes stretched to their utmost, too utterly frightened to attempt to save himself.

The girl struggled to her knees, then abandoned herself with a hopeless gesture, crouching down and hiding her face in her arms.

All this Richard saw; then very leisurely, as it seemed to him, he ran back to the well and bent over the casing.

A blast of air caught him in the face and shot his hat away. Far below he saw something black rising in the great pipe. He leaned back and waited quietly. McLaughlin's stertorous breathing sounded quite loud over the roar.

Then, with a giant cough, a mighty geyser shot up. The young man even noted that, seen thus, it was not black, but a translucent amber. In the midst was a silvery gleam, like that of a salmon leaping up a waterfall.

Swiftly and surely his hands closed on it through the oil, the force of which nearly tore it from his grasp. An instant later, drenched from head to foot, he gave the deadly thing into McLaughlin's nerveless hands and gently collapsed, just beyond the sill, in a dead faint.

The blackness could have lasted only a few seconds, for, as he opened his eyes, Bessie was crying hysterically:

"Oh, it didn't explode—it didn't explode, after all!"

The sharp stinging of the oil under his lids brought him completely to himself, and he arose, dripping and rubbing his eyes. The geyser was no more, but the oil was leaping strongly from the casing, and was forming an ever-widening pool around the derrick.

Bessie got shakily to her feet, splashed and spattered by the sudden rain of petroleum. McLaughlin, nearly as wet as Richard himself, stood stupidly holding the torpedo, afraid to lay it down lest some of the nitroglycerin should spill. And she stared at him, wide-eyed.

"Why, *Peter!* Did you *catch* it? Oh, you've saved all our lives!" she cried, her voice breaking. "That was the splndidest thing I ever heard of!" and, disregarding his condition and the flowing oil underfoot, she ran to him and grasped his hand in both of hers. "It was just m-magnificent, Peter," she sobbed with shining eyes.

The man swallowed hard and leaned toward her.

"*Now* will you marry me, Bess?" he asked hoarsely.

She eyed him with heightened color for a moment, then drew back.

"Oh, don't ask me now, Pete!" she entreated. "Don't—please! Besides, y-you'll get me all dirty."

She released her hand and skirted

the pool to where Richard was standing. In the second of frozen horror before trying to save her own life she had seen him run, and she was too much overwrought to notice either how near he was or his condition—a statue of greasy black.

"I congratulate you on the success of your enterprise—coward!" she blazed, spots of red burning in her cheeks.

He said nothing, being still a little dazed. She eyed him straightly and strangely for a moment, her bosom rising and falling. Then: "Take me home, please," she said icily, at last. And over her shoulder to McLaughlin, who still stood where he was, staring at her as in a trance: "You may come and see me this evening, Peter."

Without a word the young man led the way back to the buggy, walking with a new step and carriage. Under the tree he wiped face and hands as best he could on a newspaper. Unnerved as she was, the girl was quick to notice this, and a little question began struggling for form in the back of her mind.

Then, too, a new masterfulness in the way he handled the horse forced itself upon her attention. Still without word he drove back to town. She sat perforce beside him—her dress was ruined anyhow—and was equally silent.

But she stole several glances at his face, or as much of it as was visible, and its expression was oddly different from what she expected.

That evening Richard, nearly clean once more, sat smoking on the veranda of the hotel. He had been visited by three or four oil men already, but had declined to talk business. He wanted to think. And the thoughts were none of the pleasantest.

A panting urchin trotted up to the railing and handed him a note. He tore it open hastily, uttered an exclamation, and, dropping his pipe, set off with all speed for Bessie's home.

"Oh, Dick!" cried the girl meeting

him at the gate flushed and tearful. "I just couldn't wait to take back that awful thing I said to you! Can you ever forgive me?"

"But—but it was true," he stammered.

"It was *not!*" she cried vehemently. "Mr. McLaughlin is the most contemptible—oh, I don't want to

speak of him. But he—I made him confess who was the real hero. He came here drunk—ugh!"

"I used to think that nerve and courage were the same thing," she went on shyly, as he followed her into the moonlight and shadows of the orchard. "But now I know better. Oh, dear, I *am* so proud of you, Dick!"

DOUBTING THOMAS

A SHORT STORY

BY SOPHY FLORENCE GOULD AND PURNELL PRATT

THE Charity Ball was at its height, when out of the chaos of color emerged a woman in a black gown of rarest simplicity. She walked with a patrician grace that pleasantly offset the gentle dignity of the distinguished-looking man at her side.

"I'm afraid I've been horribly selfish in asking you to stop dancing," he whispered in her ear.

"Not at all," she replied. "I would much rather talk to you than dance, for one meets so few really intelligent men."

He smilingly thanked her, then taking her arm led her in and out through the maze of whirling couples until, finding a stairway, they ascended to his box.

Seated, Marjory Brewster looked inquiringly at her companion, waiting for him to speak.

"I'm not a ladies' man, Miss Brewster," he said finally in a half apologetic manner, "and so I'm likely to disappoint you, for I can't even give a lucid reason for wanting to meet you. Unless," he smiled appraisingly at her, "I

found something in your face that is lacking in other women, or it may have been the touch of gray in your hair that made you seem different, or —"

"Your gray hair is premature also?" she interrupted as she looked at the narrow line of white hair that came from under the black, circling his head from temple to temple.

"It was premature," he laughed, "but I'm afraid it is quite natural now."

There was silence for a moment, then some one entered the box, her next partner. She sighed regretfully, rose and held out her hand.

"It's been nice to meet you, Mr. Wilkes. I wish"—she spoke a trifle wistfully—"we might see each other again. Perhaps you will come to call?" For a second her hand remained in his. "You'll find my address in the telephone book. Good night." She looked back once and smiled, then disappeared in the crowd.

Wilkes leaned over the box, watching for the black-gowned figure. He waited for an hour, but Miss Brewster did not again appear. An almost infinitesimal feeling of loneliness came to

him as he made his way to the coat-room, and it grew persistently until he reached his home.

Two weeks later Thomas Wilkes asked Marjory Brewster to be his wife. And despite his forty years he came to Marjory with all the ardor of youth passionately pleading for love.

Marjory Brewster was thirty years old, and had never been married, yet when Wilkes asked her to marry him she refused, not lightly but understandingly. She realized that at no other time in her life would the world seem quite so wonderful, for back of her was the folly of youth, ahead the fulness of life. That the fulness had surely burst upon her with Wilkes's love, she knew.

While she declined to become his wife Marjory held tightly to the proffered love, fearing to taste even a little of the sweetness lest it suddenly be taken wholly from her.

Mentally starving for the happiness that he meant to her, for two weeks Marjory refused to listen to Wilkes's pleading, to all his entreaties turning deaf ears.

"If you won't marry me, Marjory," he said one day in desperation, "then I beg you will give your reason for declining me, for surely you must have one."

"Yes, there is an important one," she replied. "You know nothing of me. We met at a public ball, and have no mutual friends, except the man who introduced us. Suppose there is something in my past life that I don't want you to know, because the knowledge might change you."

"Nothing could ever do that," he answered reassuringly, "unless I was sure that you didn't love me. Marjory, men of my age know a woman when they see her, and they also know what they want. They don't love lightly, they haven't years enough left to take the awful chance of unhappiness. I love you, and to a real man the past, whatever it may be, makes no difference. It's only when he doubts his love

that he doubts the woman. I'm satisfied."

"But will you always be?" She came close to him, looking deeply into his eyes.

He put his arms protectingly around her, and for a second, glancing over her head, he seemed to see into the dimness of the future, and she was there beside him. Unhesitatingly he answered:

"Yes!"

"Then I will be your wife," she said slowly, "and for both of us the past must be as though it had never been."

"And you are quite sure of your love for me?" he questioned, as he held her to him.

She laid her cheek caressingly against his and answered:

"Quite. And for myself I have no fear."

About two months after their marriage Wilkes was playing bridge one afternoon at his club when a conversation between two men attracted his attention.

"Oh, by the way, Charlie, did you know the Brewster girl was married?"

"You don't mean it!" His companion's tone was skeptical. "Still, I haven't been to Indianapolis for a long time, and I suppose I've missed a lot of news: Marjory must be pretty old!"

"Sure, she's old enough to be a wise girl. She married this one!"

The conversation ceased, Wilkes laid down his hand and looked at the two men. Neither face was familiar.

"Who are those men at the next table?" he asked his partner.

"Charlie Saunders is the chap with his back to you. Never saw the other one before."

"Does Saunders come from Indianapolis?" Wilkes asked, trying to keep the anxiety out of his voice.

"Yes," Mr. Monson, who was one of Wilkes's opponents, answered. "And the man facing you is Clement Brown, his cousin."

"Much obliged." Wilkes leaned forward hoping to catch the continued conversation.

"I tell you Charlie, I feel quite hurt to loose the Brewster —"

"Why, she was never anything to you, Clem, was she?" interrupted Saunders.

"No-o," Brown shrugged his shoulders significantly.

Wilkes rose angrily and glared at unsuspecting Brown, then in a deadly calm manner laid his cards on the table.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen," his voice was husky with suppressed emotion, "to break up this little game so unceremoniously, but I feel a sudden illness."

He staggered slightly, then regaining his composure he hurried from the room.

A blind rage enveloped him as he drove to his home, a rage of loathing for the man who dared to speak lightly of his wife, a horrible suspicion of the woman thus spoken of, and a dread fear lest the suspicion be true.

"Marjory, I saw two friends of yours to-day," he began.

Wilkes had kept the suspicion to himself until it had become a horror.

"Did you?" She laid the paper she had been reading on the table and came to Wilkes. "Who were they?" she added. She put her hands on his shoulders and leaned toward him.

"One was Charlie Saunders, the other his cousin" — he paused to watch her closely. Marjory smiled inquiringly.

"The other, the cousin, was Clement Brown, of Indianapolis."

"Yes?" Not even by the flutter of an eyelid did she betray a sudden start, nor was the serenity of her perfect repose disturbed. She remained quiet for some minutes, then asked:

"What did they say?"

"Oh, nothing!" he answered.

Then rising suddenly he took her in his arms, passionately kissing her. A subtle something having entirely eradicated the first suspicion.

"Marjory," he said unsteadily, momentarily shaken by the strength of the doubt that had passed. "Marjory, I love you!"

"I know you do, dear." She patted his face understandingly. "But something has made you different to-night; I don't know what it is, but are you being quite fair?"

"No, and I'm sorry."

Long after her husband slept Marjory Wilkes lay awake. A hideous demon like shadow seemed to hover over her, the demon of misunderstanding; and a thought recurrent, persistent, vital as a live thing that has teeth, that gnaws, had come upon her. It was this: how to get her husband where he would not again see the man from Indianapolis.

On Friday, two days later, she had decided, and by noon all the arrangements were made, except the telling of her husband. In fear and trepidation she called Wilkes on the phone.

"Tom, dear?" her voice was very anxious.

"Yes," he replied. A certain joy from hearing her voice that he had not grown used to, seemed to vibrate in his own. "Yes, dear?"

"Tom" — she hesitated, uncertain how to proceed. "I have some news for you. We—we sail to-morrow."

"We do what?" he shouted.

"We—we sail on the Franconia for Naples."

"You can't be serious, Marjory? It's a joke, isn't it?" Surprise was in every word.

"It isn't a joke at all, for I've everything ready. If you will come home to lunch, dear, I can explain very easily."

"I declare I don't understand at all. Are you feeling quite well?" he asked anxiously. "If you're not, I'll surely come home."

"I'm all right, but I want you just the same. And, Tom?"

"Yes?"

"You—you won't stop at the club, will you?" Suddenly the live thing was again upon her.

He promised, then hanging up the receiver he turned to the work in front of him.

He paused in his work, for like a flash he saw the card-room at the club, heard the man speaking of his wife, felt the same unreasoning jealousy. Then again he heard her cool acceptance of the story, felt the quick disarming of his doubt, and the delightful quiescent state.

Then came her restlessness, that he had felt subconsciously, rather than known, and now the sudden determination to leave America.

It could all mean only one thing—the man Brown knew the secret she was guarding from him, and of Brown she was afraid.

He laid the brief he had been reading in a drawer, sent for his junior partner, gave him a few necessary instructions, then in a very nervous state left the office.

Marjory met him at the door, her face pale, but her whole body apparently radiating happiness.

"Everything is absolutely settled, Tom," she said as she kissed him.

"You're not serious, are you?" He looked at her closely. "You know I can't go away so suddenly."

"Of course you can. Haven't you frequently boasted that the affairs at the office were in such perfect accord that you could always turn them over to your partner, at a few hours' notice, and remain away indefinitely. And so you see," she laughed lightly, "you can't refuse. And," coaxingly, "think what a little while we've been married."

"I know all about that, sweetheart!"

With an intensity that she scarcely realized he was capable of, he crushed her to him.

"In such a little time your happiness has become the most real thing in my life. And if it depends upon our sailing to-morrow—well, we must try to sail—I think," he added, "it is possible to leave the business with my partner."

"I'm not worthy of such love." She pushed him gently from her. "I don't think any woman is. Come, help me

lock this." She jumped upon a trunk and leaned toward him, smiling.

"I think Rome fascinates me more at nightfall than at any other time." Marjory took her husband's hand, and together they turned toward the sea. The breeze freshened over the Campagna, and blew directly in their faces. He drew in a deep breath of the pure sea air.

"What memories the Campagna is peopled with!" Wilkes looked tenderly at his wife. "And speaking of memories, whom do you suppose I saw to-day?"

"I haven't an idea." With rapture in her eyes she turned to him.

"The man from Indianapolis."

"What man?" she started violently.

"Mr. Brown. You know I saw him at the club a few days before we sailed. He's also stopping at the Excelsior."

"Did—did you talk to him?" She trembled slightly as she took his arm. "I'm cold!" she shivered, quickly drawing him toward the road and the waiting taxi.

After breakfast the following morning Wilkes came into their room, his face clouded by a new suspicion. He sat down opposite Marjory, watching her intently.

"Marjory," he said at length, "how well did you know that man from Indianapolis?"

"If you mean Mr. Brown, I don't know him at all." She rocked idly, and continued her sewing.

"You say you don't know him?" he questioned deliberately.

Marjory nodded.

Her coolness enraged Wilkes. Suddenly he strode across the room and leaned over her chair threateningly. His voice was cold and hard when he sneered at her.

"If you don't know him, then why is he here? Can you explain that?"

"No." She bit her lip to keep back the tears. "Do you honestly doubt me when I say I don't know him?" she asked incredulously.

"Of course I do! Why did you hustle me away from New York if you weren't afraid he might tell me something? And why has he followed you to Rome?"

Marjory put her hand on his arm and tried to rise, but he pushed her into the chair again.

"You *will explain* to me *now!*" he hissed through tightly closed teeth, "or by—"

"I *will not* explain."

With an effort Marjory pushed him from her, rose, and faced him proudly.

"You've broken your word, your promise. You said you loved me, and that nothing else mattered, and now—now you're doubting me."

She walked to the window and stood, sadly looking out over the city, and beyond to where the spire of St. Peter's seemed to stand out against the sky as a symbol of the peace of God.

Wilkes remained where Marjory left him, a deep humility in his heart. Presently he went contritely to her.

"Can you, will you forgive me?" He put his arm longingly around her. "God knows I don't truly doubt you, and I wouldn't willingly cause you a second's unhappiness; but something horrible, that isn't myself, seems to take possession of me whenever I see that man, and I love you so much that—oh, I don't understand it—" He paused helplessly.

"Forgive?" she turned her face to him. "Why, I love you; and love loves on until death—unchanging, forgiving and, if need be, forgetting."

"What a woman you are?" He drew her closer to him as he spoke. "And oh, to be worthy!" he added brokenly.

"How wonderful to be in Paris! Oh, how I love it!" Marjory turned happily to Wilkes. Together they paused at the entrance to their hotel and looked up the Champs Elysées to the Arc shining triumphantly in the distance against the background of green trees and clear, blue sky.

"I think—" she hesitated, arrested in her speech by the expression in her husband's eyes. "What is it, Tom?" She followed the direction of his glance.

"What!" he fairly hissed. "He's here!"

"Who?" she asked.

"The inevitable," he answered harshly.

"What inevitable?"

Wilkes pointed menacingly to a taxi at the curb in which a man had just taken his seat.

"I never saw *him* before." Then seeing the expression of distrust in his eyes, Marjory turned listlessly and walked slowly up the step, and into the hotel, going at once to their apartment, where he followed her.

"Tom!" she choked half convulsively, "I can't stand the strain of your doubt any better than you can." The tears trickled slowly down her cheeks. "The time has come when I must loose my illusions to restore your trust."

Then suddenly, with the knowledge that he was at fault, came the woman's instinct to shield the loved one by shouldering the blame. She stooped and kissed his hand, then still holding tightly to it she knelt at his feet while sobs shook her whole body.

"Tom, Tom, forgive me!" she cried. "I have been wrong, all wrong, but oh, if only you could know how I longed to be loved just for myself, and when you came to me offering what my heart craved, how could I tell you; how could I loose the chance of happiness! When you told me you didn't care for my name, good or bad; that you loved my mind, my heart, my soul, everything that was good or noble in me went out to you. I gave you all, all! Oh, how big, how wonderful your love became in my sight. Can't you realize what it means to a woman to be loved for herself alone? Not for anything she may possess apart from her own being, but just because she is a woman and therefore to be loved. Can't you see how she will blossom into perfect woman—"

hood under such a love? Can't you see?"

"Dear God, forgive me!" He stooped and raised her to her feet, and took her into his arms; his tears unheeded mingling with hers.

"Marjory, sweetheart, what can I do to atone? I love you, just you, my wife."

"Nothing. I only am to blame. I should have told you long ago. Other men knew, and they were not sincere, and the ones who didn't know, and had to be told, after I had confessed, they always changed. I simply couldn't tell you—you were my idol, and if your feet were clay I prayed I might never know it. 'Try—try dear,' she pleaded, 'not to let the knowledge make you different.'"

"Don't tell me, please, dear one. Give me one more chance." He implored. "Trust me again. Let me prove that I can be big, big enough to be your husband. I realize only too well what a cad I've been. I promised to love and cherish you, and by my rottenness I've made your life a hell. Say you'll give me one more chance?" He held her very tight. "Look at me! Look at me!" He put his hand under her chin and raised her head.

"You must prove what you are after I've told you." She looked into his eyes, "for I've decided that you must know now. I—I—"

"No!" he gently put his hand over her mouth.

"You must listen! The wonders of Rome were lost by doubt, the beauties of Paris will pass unnoticed because doubt accompanies us wherever we go."

She tried to push him from her, but he only drew her closer.

"Tom," she looked at him earnestly, "I never saw or heard of that man from Indianapolis. You do believe that?"

"Yes."

"But I suppose he knew me, because nearly every one in Indiana does, either by sight or reputation."

Wilkes gasped, staring dumbly at Marjory.

"And how could I know that Mr. Brown might not mention it casually to you, as he probably has to a hundred men—men talk so—and I didn't want you to hear until I was a little more sure of your lasting affection. Tom, if only you had kept your word regarding the past, some day I could have quietly told you, and then it—but, you doubted!"

"My father," she continued, "was James Brewster, the richest man in the middle West. I was his only child, and his sole heir, and the estate is entirely in my hands. He died four years ago, and left me—" She buried her face on his shoulder, and for a long, tense minute seemed to hold her breath, then raising her head suddenly she looked again into his eyes, in hers all the passionate love of a great hungry heart. She looked pleadingly into his, and there she found the answer to her own.

"He left me—" she faltered, then swallowed several times. "He left me—twenty million dollars!"

Still looking into her eyes he seemed not to hear, for he said nothing, only held her tighter to him, and after a while he kissed her.

"My sweetheart," he said slowly, "just my sweetheart. And I thank God you didn't tell me before, for I, too, *might* have shown the clay."



You can join THE CAVALIER LEGION and receive the red button with the green star free of charge by sending your name and address to the editor of THE CAVALIER, 175 Fifth Ave., N.Y.



THE INQUEST

A SHORT STORY

BY ELLIOT BALESTIER



IT was hot! Some one, it seemed, had juggled the calendar and slipped a mid-August day into the first week of June.

Even in Brookhaven, whose main street ended—after a sharp dip between the low dunes—in clean, ankle-deep, white sand at the ridge of seaweed and drift left by the last high tide, the sun beat down pitilessly from a cloudless sky, and the glassy surface of the sea, unrippled by the softest catpaw, collected the scorching rays and rolled them back upon the town in torrid waves of heat.

But if it was hot upon the beach, back in the village, in Coroner—better known as “Judge”—Leventrit’s office, where the inquest was in progress, it was stifling, despite open windows and busy fans.

In the stuffy room the flies droned loudly, monotonously, maddeningly, until the room hummed like a hive of sullen bees, almost drowning the soft rhythmic, beat and slither, of the shrunken breakers upon the beach.

The jury—four fishermen, two tradesmen, and the village hotel-keeper, all in various stages of negligee—leaned languidly back in their wooden armchairs, fanning, fidgeting, and fighting flies.

The assembled populace did likewise; that portion of it that stood around the doors and outside the windows, as well as the privileged contingent—among them a few early birds of that strange clan, the despised but profitable “city folks” that annually

descended upon the quiet village—who occupied seats in the sweltering room.

Even the judge—lean, leather-faced, shrewd-eyed—who usually bore himself with a sort of rough native dignity, leaned back in the chair at his battered desk, coatless and collarless, and fanned and fidgeted, and fought flies with the rest.

Indeed the only ones that were quite motionless were the prisoner—a slight, tattered, white-faced youth—who sat beside the big sheriff, staring with dull, frightened eyes at his manacled hands; and the small, grim form of Silas Gootch, the taxidermist, with the ugly bruise upon the temple, that lay in the rough pine temporary coffin on the judge’s table.

The doctor had given his testimony. Death, he said, had been caused—instantaneously—by a powerful blow delivered by some blunt instrument, undoubtedly one of the round, smooth stones that abounded on the beach.

It might have been thrown or it might have been used as a bludgeon, but a mighty stiff crack was given either way; for, while the wound was at a particularly vital point, where even a slight blow might be fatal, in this case the bone had been badly splintered and the brain beneath crushed.

The judge, roused a little as the doctor left the chair that had been placed for witnesses, faced the crowd, and looked about the room speculatively.

“Well, I guess we’ll hear you next, Mr. Wetherell,” he said at last, signaling a pallid and rather effeminate young man, with a nervous manner

and shifty, shallow eyes—one of the city folks plainly, for he wore white flannels and a shirt of violent pink. "You an' Miss Carlton bein' the principal witnesses, just come over here to this chair."

But before Wetherell could obey another young man rose. He also was evidently a city man, but of a rather different type. He was tall and well built, and there was a humorous gleam in his frank, brown eyes as he addressed the judge.

"If your honor pleases," he began briskly, "I should like to ask if there would be any objection to my appearing on behalf of the prisoner. Not as his counsel, of course—I am not a lawyer, in fact—but merely as—say his friend and adviser, since he has no other. I believe these proceedings are more or less informal, the main object being to get at the truth. Is there any objection?"

The judge hesitated for a moment and looked the young man over critically.

"Well, I don't know," he said at last. "It ain't just exactly regular, I guess, but I don't see as it can do no great harm. Let's see, you're Mr. Sidney Courtlandt, ain't you—th' feller that wrote them detective stories about Branford Grant and then turned detective yourself?"

Courtlandt smiled.

"Well, I haven't exactly turned detective," he replied, "though a number of my friends have roped me into cases, on the theory that having created a detective in fiction I should be able to enact the part in life, I suppose. As a rule I avoid doing so, when I can, but there are some points in this case that interest me."

"Well," returned the judge, "I guess it'll be all right. What did you want to do?"

"Only ask a few questions of the witnesses," answered Courtlandt. "The doctor to begin with. Now, doctor," he went on quickly as the judge signified his consent, "you say the

wound was caused 'undoubtedly' by a stone. Might it not have been caused by something else—*anything* else hard and blunt?"

"Well, yes," replied the doctor a trifle ironically, "it *might* have been a small bowling-ball, or maybe the end of a dumbell, but they ain't either of 'um very plentiful on the beach. No, sir! In *my* opinion it was a *stone*!"

"Um! All right, doctor; that's all."

The audience, which had brightened considerably at the prospect of something out of the ordinary, looked somewhat disappointed, but it listened to Wetherell's testimony with interest.

He was inclined, like many witnesses, to dwell on unimportant details and ignore the main issue; but by the aid of a question it was finally learned that, at three o'clock the previous afternoon, he and Miss Carlton had been sitting upon the sand in the shadow of the dunes, at a point where the beach curved sharply; that he had seen a tramp—identified as the prisoner—pass them, walking along the water edge; had heard him utter a sudden cry, seen him run forward, pick up a stone and hurl it at something that was concealed by the curve in the beach.

Out of idle curiosity he—the witness—had followed, accompanied by Miss Carlton, and had seen the man on his knees by the body of a man—the deceased—apparently going through his pockets. The witness called to some fishermen, who were mending nets near by, but not in sight of the body, and they captured the man, who made no attempt to escape.

Miss Carlton corroborated this evidence; and the three fishermen, who had been summoned by Wetherell, did likewise so far as their knowledge went, but Courtlandt had no questions to ask of any of them.

Then the housekeeper of the murdered man was called. The prisoner, she said, had stopped at the Gootch house the morning of the murder and asked for something to eat, and offered to work for it.

There was no work for him; but, seeing he looked sick and half starved, and believing Mr. Gootch, who had gone out, would not be back for a while, she had got some milk and cold food for the poor fellow. But just then the taxidermist came in. He was very angry, snatching the food from her hands and throwing it upon the ground, and driving the tramp out of the yard with harsh words and blows of his cane, and finally setting the dog on him.

That was all she knew of the matter, her testimony being taken merely to establish a motive other than robbery, and she was about to retire when Courtlandt rose.

"You have testified, Mrs. Ray," he said, "that, 'believing Mr. Gootch would not be back for a time,' you prepared food for the beggar. I judge by that that Mr. Gootch was not—er—charitably inclined—that he was, in fact, somewhat—close."

"Charitably inclined," repeated the little old woman with a sniff. "My land, I guess you *are* stranger to Brookhaven. Silas Gootch and charity mixed like milk and lemon-juice, and he was th' lemon-juice. But 'tain't b'cause he was near exactly—he warn't no miser so far as that goes, though he warn't no 'tarnal spendthrift, neither—but he just naturally hated everybody, an' thought everybody was layin' to do him some meanness. He didn't allow no good in *nobody*."

"Ah! Well, that being so, he couldn't have been very popular?"

Mrs. Ray's sniff was an ironical laugh toned down to fit the solemnity of the occasion.

"No, he warn't," she said decidedly. "Lord knows I don't want to speak no ill of the dead, but every one knows as well as me—and Lem Leventrit will tell you th' same—that 'Old Grouch,' as folks called him, was th' most unpopularist man in the State. He were always quarrelin' an' spattin' with th' neighbors, an' I guess if there'd been any one else within fifty miles to stuff

their birds an' animals fer 'em th' city folks would have let him alone, too.

"Why, only last week," she went on suddenly, pointing a lean finger at the embarrassed Wetherell, "he had a row with that young feller there over a old mud-hen he had shot in some way, an' thought was a canvasback or some-thin', an' wanted Si to mount for him. Si chased him out of the house and threatened to have him lawed fer shootin' out of season."

"Ah," said Courtlandt, "I see! Now, can you tell me if Mr. Gootch was in the habit of walking on the beach?"

"Well, not walkin', as you might say," replied the housekeeper. "He used to go there an' *set*. Take a book and lay down on the warm sand back in the shade of the dunes an' read an' sleep half th' afternoon. Why—"

"Thank you, that is all, I think, Mrs. Ray," interrupted Courtlandt hastily as the flood of information was about to resume. "Eh! I should like to talk further with you after we are through here, but I think the judge wants to question the prisoner now."

The prisoner's testimony was not very enlightening. His name was Philip Hopkins, he said, and he was a printer. He had lost his job on account of ill health, his union had dropped him for non-payment of dues, and he had taken to tramping because he could find nothing else to do.

The afternoon before he had been wandering along the beach, had noticed Wetherell and the young lady, and had approached them, intending to beg a little money for food; but just as he came opposite to them he had seen a body lying upon the beach, and a big bird—a vulture, he thought at the time, though he had since been told there were no such things about New England, and that probably it was a sea-gull—on or almost on the head.

He had cried out, naturally, and hurled a stone at the bird, which had flapped away, and then he had ran forward.

He was unfastening the vest to feel

the man's heart, when he was captured. He had no intention of robbing the body; nor had he recognized him as the man who had assaulted him that morning until after the others had come up.

Courtlandt had no questions to ask, and the prisoner was taken back to his seat by the sheriff; and the two fishermen who had captured the man were called, but their evidence was uninteresting repetition entirely corroborative of Miss Carlton and Wetherell.

The first one Courtlandt let go without a question, and the audience was visibly disappointed. The "city feller" wasn't living up to his reputation at all, they thought. He'd "bitten off more than he could chew" this time if he expected to get the tramp off.

Of course, it was plain to any one with any gumption at all that Hopkins had seen Gootch on the beach, and, enraged at the way he had been treated, had hurled a stone at him. The story of the gull was ridiculous! Gulls didn't attack people—even dead ones—and, after all, Courtlandt was wise to give up in the face of the evidence.

But when the last fisherman finished his story the creator of Branford Grant rose again.

"What was the position of the body when you saw it?" he asked.

"Well," returned the man slowly, "it was a lying stretched out flat on its back, with th' feet too-wards th' water; the left arm was kinder bent up close to th' body, with th' hand restin' on a book, an' th' right was sorter flung out."

"You say the left hand rested on a book. Please describe the exact position of the book."

"Wa - ll," drawled the witness, frowning in the effort of memory, "it was kind 'of a big book—an' it was open in about th' middle an' kinder propped up against three others that lay in a pile on top of a handkerchief."

Courtlandt's eyes brightened perceptibly.

"Thank you," he said quietly. "One more question and I am through:

You are certain the body was lying with the feet straight toward the water; that is, at direct right angles to the sea—so that the side of the head, the temple, would be visible to one standing in the position in which the prisoner admits he stood when he threw the stone—at the bird, as he says?"

"That's right," replied the witness. "I guess there ain't no doubt of that. Is there, Jim?" he added, appealing to the other fisherman.

"Not a mite, Tom," agreed the other promptly. "That's jest th' way Si was p'inted."

The judge frowned and dropped his hand heavily upon the desk, suppressing the half-hysterical titter that even the gruesome surroundings could not prevent.

"Thank you," said Courtlandt; "that's all. Are there any more witnesses, your honor?"

"I guess no more is needed," replied the judge grimly; "so far as I can see, the case is pretty complete."

Courtlandt smiled slightly.

"Yes," he said quietly, "I think so, too—at least so far as the prisoner is concerned. So far as I can see, the evidence pretty conclusively exonerates him."

The judge sat staring at the young man in blank surprise, an expression which was reflected upon the faces of the jury and every person present.

"Yes," went on Courtlandt coolly, "it seems to me quite plain that Hopkins has told the truth; that he not only did not commit the crime, but could not have done so."

Judge Leventrit settled slowly back in his chair, looking decidedly puzzled and wholly skeptical.

"Huh!" he said dryly. "Maybe you'll tell us just how you make that out, young man?"

"Certainly," returned Courtlandt suavely. "I was about to ask your permission to do so."

He stepped slightly forward, and stood leaning upon the back of the empty witness-chair.

"In the first place," he went on easily, "it was evident that Mrs. Ray's testimony was introduced to prove a motive—revenge—the element of intended robbery being conjectural at the best; but it was also shown that Hopkins was not the only one, by any manner of means, with a grudge. Almost every one, according to the dead man's housekeeper, had quarreled with him. Wetherell, for instance, had a decided grievance."

At this sudden and unexpected mention of his name in terms so like an accusation, the pink-shirted young man gasped, turned pale, and half rose from his seat, but Courtlandt interrupted his stuttering and indignant protest.

"My dear sir," he said coolly, "no one would think of suggesting that you had a hand in the matter. I merely stated a fact. I assure you, aside from the fact that Miss Carlton was with you, the other evidence would clear you quite as much as it has Hopkins."

"Now, if your honor please, I will call your attention to one or two facts testified to by the last witness. In the first place, the position of the books—one open, propped against the three upon a handkerchief—of course indicates that he had arranged them for reading. It would be absurd to suggest that they had fallen in that way."

"Now then, taking into consideration the position of the body in connection with the books, he must have settled himself beside them, his body supported upon his left elbow; now we are to remember that Hopkins approached him from the side upon which the books rested—therefore, his forehead or the top of his head would have been presented to the tramp."

"Huh!" exclaimed the judge, a little tartly. "That don't follow. He might have been looking up—out to sea—then his temple would have been exposed clear enough."

"Precisely," snapped Courtlandt quickly; "his *left* temple. It seems to have escaped every one that the wound is in the right."

There was a sharp rustle in the room as every one sat forward, and an audible gasp of surprise.

"Jumpin' Joseph, that's so!" exclaimed the judge, a trifle blankly; then, quickly recovering himself, he added: "But we don't know he was lyin' down at all, do we? Suppose he was standing up, facing inland?"

"In which case he must have turned completely around," answered Courtlandt, "after he was dead—for the doctor has testified that death was instantaneous—and quietly settled into place beside his books, which is rather far-fetched. No, had he been standing, as you suggest, he would either have fallen forward on his face or backward with his head toward the sea, or what is more likely, considering the force of the blow, sidewise, either on his back or his face."

"But couldn't he have turned his face inland while lying down?" asked the judge, now decidedly interested.

"Not without breaking his neck," returned Courtlandt, "unless he turned his body also, in which case he would have been found lying upon his face."

"Ye-es, I suppose that's so," admitted the judge reluctantly; not that he entertained any particular animosity against the prisoner, but because eliminating him would leave the murder unexplained. "Then you think it came the other way—from the right? It couldn't well come from the shore side; th' top of th' dunes back of him were in plain sight of where Jim and Tom were mending their nets, an' of course it couldn't have come from out to sea."

"There is another direction from which is might have come," observed Courtlandt mildly.

The judge stared at him, puzzled.

"Another direction?" he repeated, frowning. "What other—Jumpin' Joseph, you ain't suggestin' it might have come *down*? Of course," he added ironically, "one of them a-e-ro-plains *might* have passed over Brookhaven in th' daytime without any one

seein' it; but it's kinder hard to believe there was an enemy of Si Gootch's in it, bent on murdering him with a stone."

"If your honor please," said Courtlandt blandly, "I did not intend to suggest an aeroplane; neither do I think an enemy of the unfortunate Mr. Gootch was concerned, and I am convinced it was not a stone that killed him—in fact, I do not believe it was murder at all."

"Not murder!" gasped the judge in amazement. "Look here, Mr. Courtlandt," he added sternly, "I have allowed you to take part in this case—which was irregular, an' I don't know but illegal—because I'd heard a lot about you through th' papers an' from folks I know, an', as you said, th' main duty of th' coroner is to get at th' truth. But if you're tryin' to make fun of this court—"

"Your honor," interrupted Courtlandt earnestly, "I assure you such a thought never entered my head. The conclusions I reached were so unusual—so bizarre, in fact—that I was trying to lead up to them gradually, so that you might see and follow in a measure the steps that lead to them. However, with your permission I will explain at once."

Somewhat mollified, Judge Leventrit nodded with dignity.

"I was in Boston yesterday, your honor," Courtlandt went on, "and did not return until an hour or so after the body was found; then, however, I talked with the several witnesses and learned the facts I have brought out before you to-day. Their testimony predisposed me in favor of the prisoner, and I visited the scene."

"At first I was inclined to believe that the missile had been thrown by some other enemy of Gootch from the other direction, but two things caused me to abandon that theory. First, the terrific force of the blow, and, secondly, the fact that no stone that might have caused such a wound was found anywhere near the body."

"Now, in my clipping cabinet, your honor, I have one drawer devoted to the various strange and extraordinary accidents that cause injury or death—and there are many more than you would suppose—and last night I telegraphed my friend, Charlie Wilcox, who shares my apartments with me, to bring up the contents of that drawer on the first train that he could get. He arrived early this morning."

"There are several hundred of the clippings, your honor—queer cases—one tells of a man who received a fracture of the skull from a small marble dropped by a careless office-boy from a twenty-third-story window. The marble cut through the victim's derby hat like a bullet, for the velocity and force obtained by even a tiny object falling from a height is tremendous."

"If a marble weighing a fraction of an ounce could do that, how much more an object weighing four or five ounces, say—a *clam*!"

For a moment there was an amazed silence; then, in spite of the judge, who, red-faced and angry, had almost leaped from his chair, in spite of the heat, and the droning flies, and the gruesome object on the table, a gust of laughter swept over the crowd, but it was quickly silenced by the outraged judge.

Before he could speak, however, Courtlandt continued.

"One moment," he said gravely; "I am quite in earnest, your honor. Among those clippings I found this."

He drew a scrap of newspaper from his pocket, and read:

Asbury Park, New Jersey.—Tom Dunham, a Belmar clammer, has a lump on his head the size of an egg to-day. Clams started to migrate, as the clammers say, and the movement of the bivalves, as is usual, was accompanied by the arrival of scores of seagulls, who swoop down upon the clams, carry them aloft, and break them on the rocks or anything else that may be handy. Whether by accident or design, a gull dropped a big clam from a considerable height and it struck the clammer on the top of the head. He has a painful swelling on his head, but is in-

clined to congratulate himself, for had he not been wearing a heavy sou'wester, it is probable he would have been killed.

"When I read this and remembered the 'vulture' Hopkins had told me of," continued Courtlandt quietly, "I again visited the beach, and close to where the body had lain I found this."

As he spoke he laid upon the desk a big clam, the shell badly shattered, but still held together by the muscle within.

"It was trampled into the sand," he went on, "but if you examine it closely you will see traces of blood upon it."

"By gosh!" cried the fisherman Tom excitedly, "I'll bet th' young feller's right. It's a bit late in th' season, but th' pesky critters *does* fish clams that way. You know that as well as me, Lem, an' if Si was a lyin' still like as not th' gull'd take him fer a rock."

"Or maybe they done it a purpose," put in Jim, with a touch of awe, the superstition of the sailor cropping out despite his hard Yankee sense. "Si used to kill hundreds of 'em fer their breast feathers."

Oddly enough no one laughed, and the jury nodded their heads gravely. They were not too sure Jim wasn't right.

"I guess I'll have to apologize, Mr. Courtlandt," said the judge when he had suppressed the two fishermen. "It looks like you'd got th' right of th' case." He turned to the prisoner. "You're only held as a vagrant," he declared, "an' I'll discharge you on that. Come an' see me after court adjourns, an' I'll see if I can't find a job for you. You've had trouble enough for a spell. Announce your verdict, gentlemen," he added to the jury, who had been whispering and nodding to each other animatedly.

"We find," began the spokesman, "that Si Gootch was killed by a blow on th' head from a cl—"

"Hold on!" interrupted the judge hurriedly. "Consarn it, that won't do! Jumpin' Joseph—"

"Your honor, why not make it by a party unknown?" suggested Courtlandt.

And so it was rendered!

LOVE'S FLIGHT

By K. D. Daugherty

DEAR heart, another year of love
For thee and me;

Ah, say the summer hath not waned

For me and thee!

The south wind sang an am'rous tune,

And wondrous sweet in the month of June

Was an apple bough and a thrush's note!

The thrush is gone—no more will sing

For thee and me;

Another land—another mate—

Ah me! and thee!

The apple bough is bare and gray,

And love hath gone his lonely way

With June and the thrush's note!



You can join THE CAVALIER LEGION and receive the red button with the green star free of charge by sending your name and address to the editor of THE CAVALIER, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Everybody's reading it now.



HEART TO HEART TALKS

BY THE EDITOR

"IS it true," asked a friend of a doctor, "that you once treated a patient for appendicitis and he died of lockjaw?"

"It is a deliberate lie," sputtered the medical man. "When I treat a man for a disease, you can bet that's the disease he dies of."

It is well to know just what you are doing all the time. A man who starts out with one idea and ends up with another is a vacillator and ought to be restrained.

The men who write the best serials in THE CAVALIER plan their stories before they begin. There is a directness and a precision about them. That is why they hold the reader's interest. That is why a novelist who has found an audience through this magazine can cater to them again and hold their good will.

There is great pleasure in store for you next week in

JESS OF THE RIVER

BY THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

who contributed to THE CAVALIER some time ago the now famous serial "TWO SHALL BE BORN."

In "JESS OF THE RIVER" he deals with the same great universal themes, love and adventure.

Jess is not a sprite of the stream or a water witch. She is a flesh-and-blood woman of the North woods, with more courage and stamina than nine-tenths of the men about her.

Roberts, in his hero, has given us a

man so full of virility and strength that it is quite impossible for any normal human being to refrain from loving him, although it took some time for him to win Jess. During this transaction in courtship Archie MacElroy showed the kind of timber he was made of and proved his right to fight any man who questioned his purposes and his principles.

In "JESS OF THE RIVER" you will feel the bigness of nature, hear the song of the wind in the spruce, feel the warm breath of spring, and understand why romance is immortal.

"JESS OF THE RIVER" will run through four numbers of THE CAVALIER.

If you believe in the supernatural, that dumb brutes understand, that there is a link between the animal and the man, read "HALVOR GUNDERSON'S DOG," by John C. Wade.

It is unfair for me to even intimate the plot. It would deprive you of a series of rather eerie sensations which you are entitled to receive with all their original power.

I can say this: It is a weird story exceedingly well done.

George Allan England, in "A PAS-SAGE AT ARMS," introduces again the celebrated characters *Pod Slattery* and *Dr. Bender*, two of the most eminent crooks of their time, both of whom, like all book scoundrels, are a good deal more dexterous than the real thing.

There is nothing vicious about *Pod* and *Doc*. They are just a couple of ir-

responsible renegades with a rare sense of humor and a capacity for escaping all sorts of terrible disasters when there seems to be no possible way out.

In "A PASSAGE AT ARMS" they run foul of some other gentlemen who ought to be swinging from Tyburn Tree or occupying burglar-proof rooms in the tombs. Still, it takes all sorts to make a world, and I recommend that you have a look at *Pod Slattery* and *Doc Bender*.



There is a rather delicate point in "THE IMPOSSIBLE," by Paul West, to wit: The question of forgiveness of a wife at the hands of her husband.

Mr. West sets his story on the stage and has an actor play the rôle of a forgiving husband, a rôle which the Thespian pronounced utterly ridiculous and impossible in real life. All the same, he plays the part—plays it two ways; once as an actor, once as a husband.

Really, it is a good story. Read it.



More Barnegat from the Bourkes, entitled "CLUTCHES OF THE SEA," a story that has to do with a ship that hits the awful gridiron down on the Jersey coast and goes to the bottom with the captain cooped up like a rat in a cage. Enter a life-saver in a diving-suit seeking the brave seaman. The captain is finally brought up; the life-saver is

abandoned as lost. But the sea gives up mysteries every hour, none more attractive than the Bourkes story.



Suppose you were a nice young cleric and found a gold purse in the church and returned it to the girl you discovered had lost it—and her father wanted to know what became of the fifteen dollars it contained originally, none of which was evident when you picked up the trifle—well, what do you know about that!

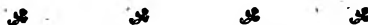
But it doesn't even stop there. It kept getting worse and worse, and the young gentleman in orders began to wish he was out West, joining the Mexican army or working on the Panama Canal or engaged in some other light occupation where he could get plenty of fresh air.

Agnes Brogan wrote the story, and the title of it is "THE GOLD PURSE GIRL."



Read "BESS OF THE HILL CASTLE," by Florence Brooks. It is a ghost story. You will have to solve it to suit yourself. It isn't my habit to print ghost stories without an explanation, but I let this one go through because it is well done and quite as satisfactory in its present form as though it were explained to the last period.

There are some ghost stories that do not require a solution. This is one of them.



FURTHER PARTICULARS FROM AFAR

The thing I like most about CAVALIER readers is that they never do anything by halves. If they like an author, they like him tremendously, and if they do not like an author, that settles it. I think it is just this particular directness in my correspondents that enables me to get a quick line on grouped desirability. From time to time the things that have been disapproved in THE CAVALIER have been eliminated.

Always there has been a wide call for a certain type of fiction, and for that reason I have made it my business to get a large stock of those contributions on hand.

Here is an interesting letter from Long Island:

EDITOR, CAVALIER:

"Lizette," Jackson's masterpiece, is a living, breathing, throbbing, pulsing creature—the work of a genius. Where are the balance of the readers?

Second only to this realistic story, in my estimation, is Packard's "Greater Love Hath No Man," the most divine, ennobling novel ever written. When shall we hear from Mr. Packard again?

GEO. H. KÜCHLER.

King's Park, L. I., N. Y.

I GET YOU, BERTIE

Here is an epistle from up Norwich way as definite in its declaration as the preceding

letter. How can you stop a magazine backed by this kind of people?

EDITOR, CAVALIER:

No kidding, Fred Jackson is *some* guy when it comes to passing out the classy romance junk. "The Masked Bride"—well, there isn't anything to it. There are a lot of good magazines on the market, but, to tell the real truth, I myself don't want anything better than THE CAVALIER. And I'm fussy, too.

Say, a week is a long time to wait for good reading. Remember, I said *good* reading. Get me? Notice how I came out strong on the word "good."

Well, editor, speed up your printing machines, for your constant readers are waiting for the best, and that is THE CAVALIER.

BERTIE OEKREY.

P. S.—I want to join THE CAVALIER LEGION.

B. O.

Box 364, Norwich, Conn.

MAINLY ABOUT AUTHORS

In a long letter from Vancouver, British Columbia, I find much of a critical nature. I haven't room for all of it in this column, but, as a gentle hint to authors, I think some of it ought to be printed. For example:

I have no kick about the magazine, but I have about the authors.

Cut out the Greek tommyrot. It would make the hero more of a man worth noticing if he were not strong enough to smash everybody with a punch but got out of his difficulties by the use of his brains. Why not let the villains of the piece create the trouble and the hero have brains to circumvent them at every step, rather than a strong boob who is ever in trouble from his own asininity, whence he beats his way out of a "punch." Or, if there is a fight, why can't he kill his opponent cleanly with rapier or pistol instead of throwing his arms away in berserk rage and strangling his enemy or breaking his back like an atavistic gorilla?

Cut out the "golden," the "bronze," the "copper," and other word-disguising tints of red. I never knew a live man (out of a story) though he were a brunette and, therefore, partial to blondes, who ever said one word in admiration of any tint of red hair. Red hair goes with a temper and disposition that make the possessor *impossible* as a candidate to pose as the heroine of any one's dreams or story.

CAVALIER button gladly received and pinned on in ten seconds.

As I cannot afford to buy several magazines, I am glad to feel that THE CAVALIER somehow contains the cream of the Munsey Company stories. It must be the favored son, or our beloved editor is like Rastus—"a natural-born reacher"—and beats the others to the good things.

E. HARTWELL.

536 Cambie Street,
Vancouver, B. C.

HAIL TO THE CAVALIER LEGION

The membership of THE CAVALIER LEGION is now nearly fifty thousand. It is your duty to join the procession. Send your name and address to this office and I will send you the badge and a certificate.

I had intended publishing a list of the members of THE LEGION, but it is too long and would require too much space. A list of names is not very exciting literature. Also, as the boy said about the dictionary, "the plot changes too often."

Read this:

EDITOR, CAVALIER:

Kindly send me my CAVALIER LEGION button.

I have been reading your publication about nine months and, believe me, if it is a day late I feel lost. Every Wednesday evening, upon arriving home, my first question is, "Has THE CAVALIER come yet?"

JACK GREINER.

442 Vandervoort Ave.,
Brooklyn, New York.

EDITOR, CAVALIER:

I wish to express my approval of your magazine. Having read a good many, I have dropped them all for your little publication.

My sister and I wish you would send us two CAVALIER LEGION buttons. We will be proud to wear them.

WALT. LARSON.

2204 So. 10th Street,
Omaha, Nebraska.

EDITOR, CAVALIER:

I do not suppose I would ever have read THE CAVALIER if I hadn't picked one up and scanned through the pages.

The stories "Greater Love Hath No Man" and "The Golden Gate" just struck me. I cannot praise them too highly.

How about a button?

L. M. TUTTLE.

758 E. 91st Street,
Cleveland, Ohio.

EDITOR, CAVALIER:

I must say that any one who cannot find pretty nearly everything he wants in the fiction line in THE CAVALIER is a whole lot harder to please than I am.

I should like to have a LEGION button.

C. W. A.

Phoenix, Arizona.

As for the CAVALIER LEGION buttons, the demand being greater than the supply caused them to be bid for at a premium.

Please see if you can choke another story.

from Frank L. Packard like "Greater Love Hath No Man."

Yours for good fiction,

S. M. HYMAN.

Baltimore, Md.

Note:—All right, Mr. Hyman. You're on for some more Packard fiction. He is at work on his next story.

You cannot give us too much of Fred Jackson after all the praise you have had for him.

I was a reader of *THE CAVALIER* long before it became a weekly, and I will say that I like it better and better every issue.

You can count on one reader in North Carolina if you never have another.

C. D. MAIGATTER.

North Charlotte, N. C.

I consider your magazine one of the best I have ever read either on this continent or in Europe. Left off reading it on four different occasions, but each time came back to *THE CAVALIER* on the run, so, for my own peace of mind, I am now a constant reader.

E. E. WHEATLEY.

307 Jarvis Street,
Toronto, Canada.

I am a steady reader of your magazine and have enticed many of my friends to read it. They declare, like myself, that it is the best magazine they have ever read.

JOHN COONEY.

3 Lamont Avenue,
Cambridge, Mass.

SUITS THEM BOTH

EDITOR, *CAVALIER*:

My wife and I have read hundreds of books from the public library. We have, for years, been partial to magazines. This before our marriage in 1911. One day I saw your advertisement directing particular attention to "The Destroying Angel," on sale that week. I then purchased my first copy of *THE CAVALIER*, doing so because of our mutual admiration for Louis Joseph Vance. Since then we have bought *THE CAVALIER* to the exclusion of all other fiction magazines, and you positively do not have two other readers who admire this magazine more than we do. I really cannot, in a short letter, express just how great an admiration we have for it.

We think the arrangement of serials, novelettes, and short stories obtaining for some time past to be very nearly ideal. We are not particular about the covers—we want the stories.

With best wishes,

PERCY HOUCK.

111 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue,
Atlantic City, N. J.

Was much pleased to see at a recent performance of "Within the Law" a copy of *THE CAVALIER* on the desk table in one of the acts. How fitting a combination: a very strong play and an excellent magazine.

Fred Jackson's stories are fine; but please track James Oliver Curwood north, south, east, or west, or, if he goes up, charter an aeroplane at once.

H. F. Low.

I have been reading *THE CAVALIER* since early in June, and my only regrets are that I did not know of it sooner.

S. S. FELDMAN.

54 Perham Street,
Nashua, N. H.

There are ten readers of your magazine in this house. We admire it so much that we wear them out.

We would be obliged if you would send us ten buttons.

GEO. KINERT.

Home for Incurables,
5535 Ellis Avenue,
Chicago, Illinois.

We have cut out all magazines except those of the Frank A. Munsey Company, as we cannot find anything in fiction that satisfies us as they do. We like *THE CAVALIER* best of all.

Hurry along those *CAVALIER* LEGION buttons, as we are both anxious for a life membership in this order of "good fiction and good fellowship."

E. A. POLING.

Lock Box 207,
Spencer, West Virginia.

If this letter escapes the waste-basket, I wish to thank you for the great live stories which appear in your magazine.

I should like to wear one of your buttons.

H. C. BOLCHARD.

14 Toronto Street,
Toronto, Canada.



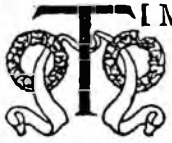
CAVALIER clubs already formed will receive buttons for their entire membership upon application to the editor of *THE CAVALIER*, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Join the procession.



ONE TIN EAR

A SHORT STORY

BY JOHN BARTON OXFORD



TIM MULVEY looked sharply at the very thin and very well-dressed young man, who swayed to and fro in the rocker by the little front room window, sending out great clouds of cigarette smoke from the depths of his lungs.

"Yer know why I sent for yer to come down, don't yer, Skinny?" said Mulvey.

"Oh, I could make it in four or five guesses," Skinny Conroy chuckled. "Yer might be gettin' nervous about this fight that Poucher's got on. Maybe yer'd like a line or so on how this Australian, Langley, is shapin' up."

"Ye're on, Skinny," Tim verified the surmise. "Here's the fight comin' off in less'n three weeks now; and it means a whole lot, this fight does. Snipe Phelan, the lightweight champeen o' the world, has promised to take on the winner. Seein' as we'll have a hack at the lightweight champeenhip if Poucher wins out, I'd naturally like to know a little somethin' about this Australian dark horse that Al Bermer has went and picked up.

"They're keepin' terrible secret about him over to his trainin' quarters at Lakewood. Three fellys I've sent over at diff'rent times, but all the points they comes back wit' is that Langley has got tow hair and a bum left ear; all of which I was well aware of before they went.

"So I says to myself, 'They's just one felly that can bust into this little secret session and cop the dope, and

that felly is Skinny Conroy.' So"—Tim pulled out a thick wad of bills, peeled off several of the outer ones and tossed them into Skinny's lap—"go get me somethin' definite, like a good felly. I don't care how yer work it, only get it!"

"All right," said Skinny, getting out of the rocker and pocketing the bills. "I'll run over and dig yer up a little somethin', Tim. How's Poucher comin' on?"

"Fine as silk," said Tim. "Down to weight already and faster'n shiftier'n he ever was in his life. If the lad only had a real good stiff kick in his mitt I wouldn't do no worryin' about no one. But Poucher McGee never did have the punch he'd oughter."

"Aw, he makes up for it wit' his speed and his cleverness," said Skinny. "See you later, Tim. Soon's I get anything, I'll either hike back here or let yer know."

Three evenings later the pair again sat in the little front room of Poucher McGee's training quarters.

"Holy smoke!" said Tim, turning up the light and catching his first good glimpse of the altered Skinny.

Instead of his usual immaculate attire, Skinny was clad in a flannel shirt of faded gray, a shabby coat, and baggy trousers, the lower legs of which were thrust into the tops of cowhide boots. In his hand he carried a worn, felt hat.

"I come down in my regimentals to show yer what I was sufferin' for the cause," Skinny grinned. "I blew

over to Lakewood and to be on the safe side I gets a job wit' a' old geezer that runs a truck-farm right next to the trainin'-quarters that Al has hired for his Australian marvel. Yep, I've actually been weedin' onions on my hands and knees for three days, but when the old gink ain't round I take a sneak over the fence and watch the mills in the ring they've pitched in the shed."

"How's this Langley look to yer?" Tim inquired anxiously.

Skinny's face became grave.

"Yer got some cause to worry, Tim," he confided.

"Fast?"

"Naw, he ain't so fast to look at, nor he ain't uncovered no amazin' speed while I've been there lookin' on," said Skinny, "but leave me tell yer, Tim, that gink's got all kinds of it, if he gets to goin'. Yer can tell by the way he moves. He acts sorter dopey and sleepy, like he didn't care a cuss; but let him get woke up and he'd sure be a bad one. He can take a whole lot of maulin', too, and say, he's got a kick wit' his right that's like a mule's."

Mulvey wrinkled his brow. Also he nervously bit at the end of a cigar in his fingers.

"But I think Poucher's lots faster'n him, at that. I think Poucher can hold him off, and, if he can't put the guy out, I believe he'll get the bout on points. But he's gotter keep outer the way of the mule-kick right."

Mulvey's face lightened somewhat.

"Leave Poucher alone when it comes to footwork," said he. "He's got the best of 'em skun to death on that trick."

"They're considerable worried up there, too," Skinny went on. "They think Poucher's goin' to be too fast for Langley. They keep at him all the time to show speed, but he just grins and keeps agoin' along at his lazy pace. But he's got speed in him somewheres. I'm goin' to try to be around sometime when he uncorks it. I'll hike back there now. Old man thinks I just

run into town to git some tobacco. I'll keep yer posted."

Skinny's observation that there was worry in the Australian's camp over Langley's lack of speed might have been verified the next morning, had any one been listening to the pessimistic remarks which Matt Carney shot Al Berner as the pair sat on the front steps of the little cottage.

"Yer've sure went and picked a lemon wit' this Langley person, Al," Matt was declaring. "Yep, I know he can take a whale of a dose of punishment and that he's got the devil's own punch in that right of his; but he ain't got no speed. He's a reg'lar ice-wagon. Poucher McGee'll dance all round him and laugh at him till the ref'ree gives Poucher the bout on points, yer mark me. He—"

At that moment Art Dolan, one of the stable of try-outs, came round the house, his eyes snapping and blood on his nose and cheek.

"Say, come out to the shed wit' me, quick," he said, seizing Matt by the sleeve and all but lifting him to his feet in his eagerness. "Say, I've found out somethin', I have. Come on!"

Piloted by Dolan, with Berner lumbering fatly after them, Carney suffered himself to be led to the shed in which the ring was squared.

It being the hour of his regular morning bouts, Langley, short, tow-headed, pink-skinned, stood in the ring. But his usually placid face was distorted with a deep frown, and his gloved left hand was rubbing tenderly that mutilated left ear of his.

"Put on the gloves and get into the ring wit' him," Dolan said excitedly, as he pulled a pair of gloves onto Carney, who was by far the best boxer in the stable.

"And say," Dolan whispered in his ear, as he boosted Carney into the ring, "tap him a good one on his left ear and see what happens."

Thus instructed and not a little mystified, Carney pranced about the ring,

finding no particular difficulty in bringing his quick and by no means gentle blows through Langley's careless guard.

Blows which would have dropped another man Langley took with a grunt and a smile. Then Carney, seeing a good opportunity, sent his right heavily to Langley's left ear.

There was a sharp howl from Langley. He stepped toward Carney and his eyes narrowed to the merest slits. Even so they smoldered angrily. Never in his life had Carney experienced such a veritable whirlwind of blows which tore through his own guard and lifted him from his feet.

The next thing he knew he was being lifted up from the hard floor quite outside the ring. Art Dolan was sluicing him with a pail of water and in one corner of the ring Langley, his elbows on the ropes, was muttering thickly as he watched the proceeding:

"I'm sorry, but it gets me mad when I get hit on that ear. I sorter lose my head, and that's the second paste I've got on it this morning."

Art Dolan grinned meaningly.

"Aw, that's all right," said Carney. "Darned if it ain't worth it to know yer've got that much speed. Speed! Say, nothin' alive could stand against them pokes."

"Gee, if he done that to Poucher McGee!" said Carney as Dolan helped him round to the front steps.

"He would if Poucher tapped that ear," said Dolan. "Touch that and he don't seem to be human. Why, he ain't no more like himself when that ear's hurt than nothin' at all; and he ain't nothin' alarmin' till the ear does get a poke."

Al Berner had waddled back with them to the front steps.

"This fight is as good as over right now," said he sniting his knee. "All we gotter do is spill the dope round that Langley'll quit if any one hits his left ear. Let that get to Tim Mulvey's ear—and his ears is always peeled for things of that kind—and there won't

be nothin' to it. He'll tell Poucher to play for Langley's left ear, and when Poucher hits him there—"

Mr. Berner held his fat stomach and his booming laugh went crashing through the peaceful summer morning.

"And speakin' of spillin' the dope round," put in Art Dolan, "by gee, I know the very way to do it. Yer know that boob that's been hangin' round here mornin's, the one that's weedin' the onion bed across the fence most of the time? Well, he thinks I ain't on to him and that none of us is on to him. If I ain't a fat-head, that feller is Skinny Conroy, one of the spies Tim Mulvey always keeps hangin' round the other feller's camp. Say, I'll drop that bait for Skinny Conroy to swallow. Watch me!"

That evening after supper, when Skinny Conroy, feeling quite sure that he had not as yet been recognized by any of the training-camp next door, saw Art Dolan in the yard, he lounged up to the fence, placed his elbows on it, and inquired in the most forced of nasal drawls:

"Wa-all, haows yaour fighter comin' on?"

Dolan was instantly beside him at the fence.

"Fine, Bub, fine!" said he.

They talked together long and earnestly in the gathering dusk. Skinny drawling out absurd questions, which Dolan answered patiently. And rest assured that ere long Art, after swearing the supposed yokel to secrecy, had confided to him Langley's weak spot—that a tap on that mutilated ear, even a very moderate tap, so tender was the member in question, was quite enough to make Langley quit.

Art invited the other to see the boxing whenever the latter could find time, and next time he came, said Art, be sure and watch the way Langley guarded that ear. Yep, that was his weak spot. But never, never dare breathe it to a soul! It was a piece of confidence he expected the other to guard as he would his very life.

At ten that night Art Dolan was slapping his confrères joyfully on the shoulders and declaring that it was all over now; that he was going to dig up all the money he could get and place it on Langley in the forthcoming fight with Poucher McGee.

Also, in the little front room at Poucher's quarters, Skinny Conroy was saying to Tim Mulvey:

"Yep, he'll quit if he catches one on that bum left ear of his. Why, I had it to-night from Art Dolan himself. Yep, he leaned on the fence and told me, real confidential like, and he never for a minute suspected who I really was, neither."

Whereupon, Tim, as was his way, made no comment, but dug more bills off that wad and tossed them to Skinny.

But a few nights later Skinny was once more sitting with Tim in that front room, and Skinny's face was troubled.

"Say, I seen the goes over in the shed this mornin'," said he—"seen 'em without none of the bunch knowin' I was there. Yer see, the shed's got a floored cover loft right over the ring, and I crep' up there early, the old man bein' away in town all day, and I laid there peekin' down at the whole mornin' work-out. And say, twict Langley got clipped on the ear, and when he did—say!"

Skinny Conroy leaped out of his chair and made a few whirlwind swings of his arm.

"Biff, biff, biff! Just like that! Gee, I never see anything like it in my life! And both times he hollered at the man they picked up off'n the floor clean outside the ring where he'd fell—once it was Art Dolan and the other time Matt Carney—Langley, I say, hollered at 'em kinder sad and apologetic like: 'I told you dubs not to touch that ear! I ain't responsible when you hit that ear!' Just like that he says it."

"Well, whatter you make of it?" asked Tim. "Just a kid, was it?"

Skinny shook his head.

"I believe now," he said slowly, "that they knew who I was, after all, and that they handed me the wrong dope for me to pass along to Poucher. That feller ain't so awful much till he gets that ear hit, but when he does—"

Again Skinny shook his head and drew down his lips suggestively.

"Anyway," he added, rising, "I'll watch them mornin' bouts for a few days, and if what I think is so, yer tell Poucher to keep away from that left ear as he would from the devil himself."

The battle in the Parkway Arena had gone nine rounds. The gong clattered its strident summons for the beginning of the tenth. Art Dolan and Matt Carney, who were acting as seconds in Langley's corner, crawled through the ropes and knelt, each on one knee, just outside the ring. Art's face was far from cheerful, and Matt was nervously chewing his nails.

Langley, heavy, sleepy, awkward, even as he had been in his training bouts, had inflicted no damage at all on the more nimble Poucher McGee, who danced about him, bringing in quick, sharp blows seemingly at will. Langley took them with smiling grunts, apparently but little the worse for them; but to the veriest tyro among the spectators who rose from the ringside tier on tier to the dim recesses of the roof Langley was a sadly out-boxed and outpointed man.

So it had been the first round, but Carney had whispered to Dolan beside him: "Wait till Poucher cracks that ear."

Whereat Dolan had nodded briskly and grinned.

But the second round was even as the first, and so was the third, the fourth—each succeeding round. And now, at the beginning of the tenth, Art and Matt nervously watched the same thing being repeated. Langley was tiring. His breath was coming faster; doggedly he strove to block the blows

which Poucher, prancing in and out, placed when and where he would.

Already ominous sounds were coming from the crowd up under the roof.

"McGee's fight! Give it to McGee!" came the yells to the referee, and they were coming louder and more frequently.

Suddenly Art, whose eyes were glued to the two figures in the ring, clutched Carney's arm.

"He ain't tryin' for that ear," he whispered. "He's keepin' away from it. Our little scheme has went wrong. Skinny knows more of the true inwardness of this ear business than we give him credit for knowin'. We been crossed, Matt. Skinny's tipped Poucher to keep away from Langley's ear. Take a look at Skinny over there."

Matt looked across the ring to where, close to the ringside, Skinny Conroy sat beside Tim Mulvey. Skinny was grinning, and that grin told much.

"Wot's to be done?" asked Matt helplessly.

Art merely shut his teeth tight. They were still clenched as the gong struck for the end of the round, and Langley came lumbering heavily to his corner.

Into the ring Matt and Art Dolan scrambled. Matt, catching the sponge from the water-bucket, began swabbing Langley's hot face. Art, spreading out a towel, fanned his man vigorously, and as he plied the towel he voiced his disgust.

"Aw, wotter d'yer think yer are?" he demanded of the panting fighter in the chair. "Think yer just a punchin'-bag for Poucher to play wit', don't yer? Well, yer act as if that was yer idee. Wot for yer lettin' him beat yer up likes he's doin'—huh?"

"Aw, he ain't hurtin' me none," Langley grunted.

"Naw, he ain't hurtin' yer none at all," Dolan mocked. "He's jest pustin' yer whenever he feels like it and boxin' all round yer, and he's goin' to get this fight on points in about two

more rounds, like the crowd is yellin' for the referee to give it to him. Yer gotter *fight!* Yer gotter put him out—this round, too!"

"Well, I'm doin' my best," Langley panted complainingly. "I—"

"Yes, yer are—*not!*" Dolan hissed. "This time yer really fight. Go after him like yer meant business. Wake up like yer can when yer want. Go after him and—"

The gong sounded for the beginning of the eleventh. Carney shoved the bucket and the water-bottles and the chair through the ropes and himself crawled after them. Dolan crumpled up the towel and tossed it from him.

"Get after him," he repeated, hissing his words between his teeth, "and *win!*"

With the word he doubled his fist and drove it straight into Langley's left ear just as that worthy started from his corner. Then Art dove headlong through the ropes to the floor outside the ring.

There was a wild howl from Langley. Up went his gloved left hand to his ear.

He spun about, charged blindly in Art's direction and brought up with a "whoof!" against the ropes. Then he turned and saw Poucher dancing in the center of the ring. It was something tangible. He charged thither.

As he charged, his left hand came away from his ear, and he moved with the speed and the precision of a cat.

So fast moved Langley's arms that they made merely a lurid blur. Poucher strove to back away, covering up. He tried the sidestep and duck that had stood him in such good stead all the evening. He staggered under that terrific storm of blows.

The crowd was on its feet now, yelling like a pack of wild men. Poucher was against the ropes. He wavered, his body seemed to sag. He spread out his arms, groped wildly, and toppled head first to the mat and lay there

while, amid the din from the crowd, the referee counted him out.

Five minutes later, in one of the dressing-rooms under the tiers of seats, Al Berner and two of his friends who had dropped in to rejoice with him, held a struggling man in their combined grips and strove to force him back to a seat in the corner.

Across the little room Matt Carney was helping Art Dolan to his feet. Art's lip was split, and one of his eyes was already beginning to puff out.

"Yer big boob," Al Berner was yelling in Langley's ear as the three forced him back, "that's gratitude, ain't it—to go doin' anything like that when Art's won yer fight for yer. Yep, won it for yer, I said. Yer wouldn't never 'a' got woke up and done nothin' if Art hadn't done what he did. Aw, sit down and shut up! Yer gimme a pain!"

"Well, maybe he did get me woke up," Langley conceded, somewhat mollified, "but he needn't have pasted me so hard. That ear o' mine is awful tender, I keep tellin' and tellin' yer. It pains me like hell even now. There wa'n't no call to go whangin' it as hard as he could. One thing," he ended, as they finally succeeded in forcing him into the seat, "he ain't never goin' to be in my corner again when I fight."

Dolan had wobbled over to the water-bucket, and, catching up the sponge from it, was copiously laving his face.

"And that's all right, all right, too!" he muttered thickly. "I've done my part. I ain't hankerin' for the job again. I resign right now, voluntary. And so"—he took the wet sponge from his face to grin at Matt Carney—"it'll be up to you to pass him the jolt when he goes up for his championship fight wit' Snipe Phelan, Matt!"

THE WOMAN'S PICTURE

A SHORT STORY

BY GORDON RAY YOUNG



RAISED my hands.

There was no word spoken: the revolver, and behind it the masked face of the highwayman, was enough.

For the first time in my life I realized how people felt when they gazed at the muzzle of my gun and trembled before the black mask that I wore.

I remember that I wanted to laugh. The humorous side of the situation appealed to me. I was being held up!

I, Hugh Richmond, whose purse did not contain so much as the value of one

gold piece, but whose body, dead or alive, was worth five thousand dollars.

I know that I smiled, and I could see that my smile was disconcerting; therefore I knew that I was face to face with an amateur. I cared little for being held up; in fact, I rather enjoyed the situation.

"Pleasant day," I ventured.

The gun made a terrific report and the bullet whizzed dangerously close. After such an answer I kept my lips closed.

My highwayman did not seem to know what to do next, and we sat on

our horses at a bend in the mountain road and looked at each other. The first motion he made I knew that he wanted me to dismount, but I pretended not to understand, and wrinkled my brow as though puzzled.

"Climb off," came in a faint whisper.

Then I was puzzled. It was not the hoarse whisper of one who had lost his voice. Of a sudden I understood. My amateur highwayman was more frightened than his victim—he could not even manage his voice. I determined to take advantage of him.

In those days I was a good horseman, and I was mounted on the wisest little mare that ever kicked up dust in a sheriff's face.

Gently I touched Dolly's flank with a spur, and, keeping my hands aloft, made her plunge from side to side, guiding her with my knees until we were several yards away.

I lowered my hands, leaned forward, chirped in Dolly's ear, and away we flew.

Bang-bang-bang! All of his shots went wild.

An hour later I smiled to myself and tried to imagine the astonishment that would seize Mr. Amateur if he knew that his revolver had caused Hugh Richmond to lift his hands.

There wasn't a sheriff in Colorado that didn't want me. I was wanted on so many charges that I had lost track of them myself.

I only knew that no man—"no, nor woman either, though by your smile"—was my friend.

I sprawled in the sunshine, as I often did, and let my thoughts wander.

At such times I would think of the faces of men and women I had known long ago, and of all those faces there was but one I remembered with tenderness—and that dear, sweet little girl believed that I was dead.

I was worse. Society had driven me out.

Solitude is pleasant enough when you grow tired of the city and are

wearied by the restless clatter of industry, but I longed—I actually craved the company of a human being.

No wretch would have been too low for me not to offer a share of my blanket in return for his companionship.

But I could have no friends. I knew if I did that sooner or later I would be betrayed, and the horror of horrors that oppressed my mind was that I might be taken alive.

So it was that I was tempted to many reckless adventures for the mere delight of being among fellow creatures, and more than one stage I stopped on the highway for the pleasure of exchanging civilities with the passengers, rather than to collect their belongings.

The same desire had led me into towns, even into saloons where posters offering a small fortune for my capture were on the wall.

From where I was it was not far to Piñon, and in Piñon—well, there were people. A dance-hall, music, the clatter of voices, and the sound of oaths: a ghastly resemblance of a pleasurable life that I had known long ago, and in another section of the world.

It was quiet in the Silver Dollar when I rode up, casually glanced at the men in front of the saloon and entered. There were only two or three people in the place. To sit in that hot saloon, reeking with odors that at other times would have been offensive, was now a pleasure.

I enjoyed it—I really did; and with a bottle of whisky I placed myself at a table and prepared to spend the rest of the afternoon and get my fill of enjoyment from watching people come and go.

At such a place you meet and see many kinds of people: the vicious, and the good gone wrong, who, incidentally, make up the great percentage of the outcast element; the bad and would-like-to-be-bad; the braggart and the hero; faro dealers, rough-handed miners, and disjointed cowboys.

An hour after I sat down a young man with lily hands entered. I knew him for a gambler or a tenderfoot, and when he placed himself before the tinpan piano and began banging a selection from "Il Trovatore," I knew that he was a newcomer, and shifted my chair to get a good look at his face. He was a handsome lad, one of the poetic type.

"Hey," I shouted softly and in ridicule, "desist from such atrocities."

He looked at me in amazement.

"You know that piece—you—you!" and his last word had an altogether different inflection. He was startled, and from saucerlike eyes stared at me.

My first thought was that I had been trapped; that he recognized me as Hugh Richmond.

In a flash I had studied my chances of escape, half rose, glanced hurriedly about me to see if any others were watching. He made no outcry, gave no sign, and I dropped my hand from my holster. His face was blanched.

"What's the matter?" I demanded. No answer.

"Tell me—what is the matter?"

There was a ring in my voice that he did not disregard, and he answered in a whisper: "Nothing."

That whisper! He was the amateur highwayman.

We had met again, and I liked the boy. My impressions are not always correct, but they are positive, and if I take a dislike to a man at first sight I would distrust him though we were seated side by side in heaven.

But this lad, this mere youth, this unsophisticated child of the East who had no better sense than to attempt highway robbery, and three hours later inflict music on his victim, touched my sympathy.

"Well?" I spoke half defiantly because I wanted to make him talk.

"We never met before," he stammered, coming toward me with the reluctance of one approaching a judgment seat.

"Never!" I answered emphatically.

As he sat down I pushed the bottle toward him and he grasped it eagerly.

"Good stuff," he lied politely.

"Damnable," I rejoined.

"But I think it is good," he insisted, and took another glass of the liquid fire.

"How long?"

"Three weeks," he replied, embarrassed. "I am a tenderfoot. The rawest kind, and well blistered."

"How long?" I queried again.

"God knows," and as though he could not endure the thought of many long months of hardship in such a place, he attacked the bottle again. "I don't want to stay any longer than I can help."

His tongue had been loosened. Three large jolts of whisky—such whisky as comes over the bar of the Silver Dollar would have loosened the tongue of the Sphinx—and before I realized what was happening he was rapidly whispering into my ears his tale of sorrow.

I listened to the story with little interest. I was tolerant simply because he was a human being, and talking. It was such a story as is commonly told. A young man and a position of trust, a falling by the wayside, and a thousand heartaches. His sentences were jerky and often vague; the whisky had twisted his tongue.

"I was in a social set that was too high for my purse," he said. "My family was proud; my name was an open sesame to the exclusive set, but my income was small. My employer trusted me. There is a woman in the case—"

"My God, such a woman! I am not worthy of her. It was not her fault—and I wish that I could get a start over again, but I've hit the trail for hell, and yet she loves me. I couldn't let her know that I was poor, and I showered her with presents, just like the other fellows did that wanted her to love them; but she turned them away.

"She loved me, do you hear? I gave her everything that money could buy, and then the crash came.

"My own father turned me out of the house; my own mother wouldn't let me kiss her good-by. My employer—he was an old friend of the family—said he wouldn't prosecute, but I was disgraced—the papers had it.

"And then she—she of all women—said that she loved me and always would, and said that she was as much to blame as I because she had allowed me to spend money on flowers and take her to the theater—most of the money went for that—but of course there was a ring.

"She told me to go West; to go out where money was dug from the ground and fortunes made in a day, and to get enough to settle my accounts and then we would go to some place else and begin life all over again.

"And here I am. But what can I do; how can I dig gold out of the ground? I know nothing about it. There's nothing I can do; I'm bad—bad all the way through. My father told me I was; so what's the use? I don't care for myself, but for her—for her."

Tears rose in his eyes, and he cried: "My God, if I could only get a start again, for her! I'd slave my life away just to make her happy, for she loves me, even after all that!"

He drew a small picture from his pocket, kissed it again and again, then laid it on the table and gazed intently at the sweet, childish face.

I glanced at the picture casually, rose, gripped the table, then sank back, staring into the face of the boy, who failed to notice. I knew her—oh, how well I knew her! And all that he said was true. I glanced around the saloon. It was early; men were just beginning to drop in. There we sat, the boy and I, men from the far, far East, and each had been driven out; he as the result of a faithlessness to a trust, and I—no matter why I came.

There we sat together; he a youth,

and I a man; and before us lay the picture of a woman whom we both loved.

The boy had fallen across his arms on the table. At first he sighed, and then his heavy breathing told me that he was sleeping. I fell into a reverie.

A soft-footed Chinaman shuffled across the floor and lit the lamps. Here and there a voice rose in boisterous, good-natured argument, and then fell back into the low humming that filled the room. Presently I heard the rattle of chips, and I knew that some faro-dealer was starting a game.

She loved that boy—that boy who was not in prison solely because he had stolen from a friend. But what of that? Had some man set me aright years, years before, my life would not have been as it was. There was nothing evil in the boy, but now he was bound to go to the bad—and yet she loved him.

I had no money. All that I could get hold of went East, passed through the hands of a lawyer, and then to—But she never knew whence it came; she believed what the lawyer told her, and he didn't know the truth.

The noise increased. A thin-chested, unshaven individual, who seemed to draw all of his nourishment from cigarettes, began thumping the piano, and one or two cracked voices rose in imitation of a long-forgotten song. Still the boy slept.

I speculated on the amount he needed, and glanced about the room. I touched him on the shoulder. No answer. I shook him, and he raised his head drowsily.

"How much do you need?"

He was not fully awake.

"Come on; wake up," and I shook him again.

"What do you want?"

"Come on outside; the fresh air will do you good," I said.

We went out.

"Look here, laddie. I came out West several years ago and struck it rich. I like you, and I know that there

is not a streak of bad in you. Now, if I lend you the money, will you go back and be a man? When you get on your feet you can pay it back; no hurry, though."

"Would I—would I? Oh, Heavens! Then I could go back like a man and be a man. You must be an angel in disguise!"

"Have you a horse here?"

"No."

"Well, take mine—over there." I selected the best one in sight—that is, next to Dolly. Explanations at that stage of the game would have been embarrassing.

Then I gave him directions as to how to ride, and told him to make haste.

"I'll be along pretty soon—in about an hour—but I want you to go now. I will have to go back and find a couple of friends and borrow a few dollars to make up the amount. I could get it to-morrow, but I want to see you started back East to-morrow morning. It will be a long ride, but I guess you are good for it, even if you are a tenderfoot."

He wanted to wait and come with me, but I made him ride off.

Then I went back in. It was a risky proposition, and such a desperate chance that even now I have strange twitching about my heart when I think of it.

There was noise and laughter. The tin-pan piano was going its utmost; excited gamblers were plunging heavily at faro-bank, and several men were at the bar, when I placed my back to the wall, drew both guns instantly, and roared:

"Hands up!"

The confusion became silence.

Some turned to the door, bent on taking a chance, but thought better of it, and up went their hands. The bartender hesitated for a moment, debating whether or not to drop behind the bar; but he caught my eye, and obeyed.

In less time than it takes to tell I had plundered the faro-bank—and a

goodly roll it was—and asked the bartender to step aside while I emptied the till. He gave me a smile, and I knew by that smile that he was a dangerous man.

I backed to the door, knowing that the moment I stepped outside a fusillade of shots would be sent in my direction. I turned, made two jumps, and was astride of Dolly and pounding down the road while the wicked crack of a Winchester troubled my ears. I glanced over my shoulder, and could see the white apron about the shadowy form that stood in the doorway. The bartender was a dangerous man, but I had been born under a lucky star.

"What's all that shooting about?" the boy asked when I overtook him a couple of miles farther on.

"A little altercation over a poker game. Come on; we'll have to ride fast if we make that station in time to catch the morning train."

After pushing our horses hard and talking but little we arrived at the station the following morning just as the train whistled in the distance. Its faint roar grew nearer and nearer until, with a mighty rush, it was upon us and the brakes were grinding and creaking.

"If I only knew how I could repay you—I will, but I would like to express my thanks now, and words won't do it," he said earnestly as he gripped my hand.

"You can—and fully—for all time."

"How? Tell me how. I will do anything."

"Give me that picture of—" and I called the sweet-faced girl by name.

He reached in his pocket and handed it to me. Again we shook hands. He stepped on the train, and slowly it moved off, and then faster and faster, until it was out of sight.

I stood staring after the train and wondering what he would think when he remembered that he had never told me her name—for she was my daughter.

BOY VAGABOND

A SHORT STORY

BY BESSIE EMMETT

THE day was in April, frolicsome and warm—a surprising day, following close upon a prolonged winter and a spring of frosty nights and mornings.

All the world seemed suddenly to have blossomed forth in gay attire.

But Phyllis, walking from the village, felt cross and tired. Her heavy suit was not in accord with the glad weather.

Her shoes were too thick, and three times the ribbons had loosened and trailed their lengths in the dust. Three times she had stooped impatiently to retie them.

And three times impertinent, loud-voiced motor-cars had swung by her, each car glowing a bit redder than the one preceding it, each horn shrieking a louder defiance, and each cloud of dust seeming a little more spiteful.

While she was sending thoughts of vengeance pursuing the last broad back, close in her ear sounded the glad-some melody of a blackbird.

In gay response she laughed aloud, and back along the way a merry whistle completed the joyous trio, and mingling with the whistle, with the laughter and the trilling was the clatter of milk-cans swayed by rhythmic motion.

She looked around, and looked into the careless, merry eyes of him who drove the milk-cart.

"Have a lift?" he asked in a careless friendliness.

Now, many times had Phyllis been assisted over the way by friendly neighbors passing in their automobiles,

or by the more sober method of horse and carriage, but never before had the driver of a milk-cart offered her a lift.

Delightfully cool it looked within; disagreeably hot and dusty without, and yon long hill was a tiresome climb to one whose temper had been ruffled.

With a friendliness that matched his own for gaiety and carelessness she received the invitation and accepted with a smile.

It was two steps up, and a sigh of restfulness as she found herself on a comfortable seat. The whistle and the clatter of cans kept time to the jogging of the old white mare.

The careless friendliness deepened into comradeship as joyous May-time came along, and before the month of roses waned Phyllis was disgracing a family, poor but proud, by rambling and scrambling over hill and over dale with farmer Jetson's hired man!

"A man with no claim to looks or manners," sniffed Aunt Mildred.

"His looks suit me," flashed Phyllis. And we already know she thought his manners delightful.

"One might think he had but one suit of clothes to his name," in open derision stormed brother Ned, to whom the frayed blue serge of the hired man was an eyesore.

"Self-respect alone should keep him better groomed. Why doesn't he get him another suit?"

"I've never happened to ask him. I'm sure I should resent it if any one dared to be aware of the fact that I am wearing the same old muslin of last summer."

Gentle-eyed mother bent lower over the tiresome mending, and the needle pricked her finger unheedingly.

"I'm sorry, Phyllie dear, about the muslin, but I have done the best I could. You know what our income is, and it doesn't go far against the high prices."

All remorse for her thoughtless words, Phyllis, with impetuous steps, crossed to the side of the one she had hurt.

"Why, mumsie love, I don't care. You know I just adore old things, and a second year's dress is like an old friend. Nothing stiff or uncomfortable or untried about that old muslin."

She was on her knees now beside the old rocker that never had time to rock with mother, and the tiresome old mending must perforce be laid aside while the soft, wavy hair, liberally sprinkled with silver, was stroked by fingers that seemed made especially for caressing tired people.

The gentle eyes brightened and softened, as they must always when resting upon the dear girl, and the logic, that was comforting if not convincing, brought a smile to her face.

Ned's frown also gave way to a more pleasing expression. Phyllis was a dear little girl, if only she did not have such disconcerting ideas of the free and equal rights of men. To her a beggar was as much a man as was a king.

"You're far too nice a girlie to waste your time on a no-account stranger," he said with all a brother's rashness.

"He's no stranger to me; I've known him three months."

She was on her feet again, ready to do battle with Ned, but she was assailed from another quarter.

"Who is he, then, if you know so much about him?"

She wheeled to meet the challenge of her father's eyes across the lowered paper.

"He answers to the name of Dave—David Kerwin, to be exact."

The little curtsy that accompanied the words was more mocking than respectful, and she refused to heed the pleading gesture of gentle-eyed mother.

"Well, who are his people, and where was he born?" snapped the iron jaws.

"I never heard him say anything about his people, and I don't think he ever mentioned the fact that he was born anywhere. Perhaps he just happened."

"And perhaps it would be better for him if he happened to keep away from here. I don't welcome loafers around my front door."

"He's not a loafer!" Indignation choked Phyllis for a space, and she rolled her handkerchief in a tight little wad until the hot, stinging sensation in her throat should pass.

"Six days out of the week and a part of Sunday he works as hard as any man can work."

"A common farm laborer!" sneered brother Ned.

"What of that? He earns an honest living, and asks no favor of any one. That is more than many men in the world are doing. You are unjust, all of you, and I'll listen no more."

With head thrown back she passed from the room, and a silence of disapproval settled behind her.

Ned followed her into the yard and called to her, not unkindly, but she sped away and hurried out upon the road that led to the line of rocks heaped in rough confusion on the hill that overlooked the sea.

No one ever came there but herself and Dave. It was too rough a climb.

On the warm, rough earth she stretched herself, staring listlessly across the water to where the two blues met. The day lingered, retreating slowly before the advent of evening, and Phyllis lingered. Not even the supper hour could call her back to the house.

But gradually her mood changed and softened. Gentle-eyed mother's sorrowful look rose up to reproach her.

Carefully considered in the light of impartial judgment, father's irritability seemed just. Even Ned's interference was but the natural solicitude of a brother.

And she had waged war against all she loved for the sake of one Dave Kerwin, unknown, unrecommended, and unapproved.

It was an inauspicious moment for him to appear, and at his startled calling of her name she sprang hastily to her feet, and faced him with unfriendly eyes.

"What is it, Phil?" he questioned, reaching to take her hand in his, but angrily she pushed him away.

He half laughed at her fierceness. Storms and tempests were natural to her, and he waited for her mood to clear.

"What's wrong with the world?" he asked after a while, leaning against the ledge of rocks and regarding her amusedly. Never before had he met any one who took life quite as seriously as Phyllis, and who yet could be the merriest comrade in the world.

He was already familiar with the wrathful little gesture that accompanied her brief reply.

"There's nothing wrong with the world. It's the people."

"Oh, now, Phil, don't begin trying to make us over. You can't do it."

"I am beginning to think that too. If a person is trifling by nature it is useless to expect anything better of him. He always will be content to merely exist, rather than live; content to trifle with everything."

"Meaning any one in particular?" he asked smilingly.

"Yes, one Dave Kerwin, so called, who comes from no one knows where, whose past life is unknown, and who refuses to tell anything of himself or his people."

"My past life is my own, and need bother no one. As for what my people are, and who they are—you mustn't judge a man by his people."

He still slouched lazily against the

rock, still smiled openly into her eyes, while Phyllis continued stormily:

"You trifle with friendship, you trifle with every one and everything. What have you ever done that is worthy of mention?"

"I have not killed, I have not stolen, and I have not coveted my neighbor's wife. Aren't the things a man leaves undone sometimes more worthy of mention than the things he does?"

Phyllis frowned. She did not know whether he was in earnest or laughing at her. He reached for her hand again.

"And I remember the Sabbath day, for it is the only day I am at liberty for a few hours to come to you for confession."

He was openly laughing now, and she impatiently flattened a tiny mound of earth with the toe of her shoe.

"What else?" she asked, drawing her hand just beyond his reach.

"That's all about myself. Now for you. What do you do?"

"Why"—surprise cut short the words for a minute—"why, I do lots of things."

"Yes?"

"Yes. I help about the house, and I sew some, and—oh, lots of things."

"And how much do you earn?"

"Why, I don't get paid for it. There is no need for me to work, you know."

"I do not know." Phyllis had not known he could speak so crisply. "Your little mother works, and works all the time. Do you think I don't know what those weary lines on her face mean, and that tired droop to her shoulders?"

"She's dead beat out, and still she keeps a going. And what do you do? Brush a few specks of dust off the piano, probably, and pick a few flowers for the table. Get to work, Phil, and earn your salt, and then you'll be in a position where you can afford to talk."

Phyllis was speechless. No one had ever spoken to her like this, and long sentences were foreign to Dave's nature.

"And what does Ned do?" He was drawing the words now, but there was an unpleasant sting of sarcasm about them.

"Ned's a lawyer, as you well know," she flashed.

"Oh, I know that's what he's tacked up under his name, but has he ever proved that he's a lawyer? Does he earn a living as a lawyer?"

"He doesn't earn much," she admitted, indignant to find herself yielding to his questioning. "He only completed his course last year, and you know it takes time to get started."

She thought his smile particularly irritating, and added cuttingly:

"At least he is ambitious. He would not be content to milk cows all his life."

"But somebody's got to see that Neddie has his milk while he's getting started. Let's see, he's twenty-four, isn't he? Well, tell him from me that I got started when I was thirteen, and I've been going ever since."

"If he wants a job while he's getting started, and is really willing to work, perhaps I could break him in on the farm, though there's quite a knack in milking cows."

He shook his head thoughtfully. Phyllis knew that he was laughing at her, and she liked above all things to be taken seriously.

"I don't like you," she said emphatically.

"No?" His tone implied that he was not greatly concerned.

"You mean that, Phil?" His voice was quiet, and with pretended indifference he drew out a cigar and busied himself with its lighting; but she had whipped the smile from his lips at last.

"Every word," she made answer, and hurried away before she should have time to repent her hasty words and recall them.

Safe in her room, she drew back the cream scrim from the window and watched for his figure to cross the white patch of moonlight on the road.

And long after his shadow had fallen across the winding way she lay with her head pillowed on the sill and wished him back again.

"Boy vagabond—oh, boy vagabond," she grieved, "come back to-morrow and you will find me very glad to see you!"

But he of the vagabond heart went quietly on his way, and bothered her no more with his presence, though his words and reasoning haunted her persistently.

In searching her mind for something for her two hands to do, whereby she might "earn her salt," she was startled to find herself hindered by the same limitations for which she had assailed him.

She had no special talents. She could not teach, for her education had not been directed along that special line. A governess? That meant at least French or German, and to conjugate a verb in any language but her own was a soul-racking performance.

She was not even competent to be a "hired girl," for that required a knowledge of plain cooking, and her concoctions were chiefly of the order of the chafing-dish. Dave's mocking words came back to her again:

"There's quite a knack in milking cows."

It was at this discouraging point of her reflections that the ever-waiting opportunity presented itself. The mother of two children—two terribly troublesome children—was pouring into the ears of the gentle-eyed mother the tale of her inability to secure a capable girl to take charge of them.

Ever impulsive, Phyllis promptly offered her services, and they were promptly accepted as soon as she made it clear that she was not joking.

Thereafter she felt convinced that she earned her salt, her daily bread, and a great deal more than she was actually paid for. Oftentimes her courage lagged and faltered, but she whipped herself to fresh efforts with Dave's words:

"There's quite a knack in milking cows."

Though the family, one and all, had protested against this last whim of hers, yet she noticed that the gentle eyes of mother were not so troubled when the monthly bills came in. Phil's mite went quite a way toward satisfying tradespeople.

And Phil herself grew womanly and more self-controlled. How could she hope to govern the children if she could not govern herself?

But when necessity urged a journey to the village she waited until her work was over, lest by going in the morning when the milk-carts rattle by she should seem to concede to her desire to see a certain merry, reckless driver.

She was returning home one afternoon in early August, when all the world was dusty, burnt, and brown.

Where two winding roads branched from the long, straight way she loitered, uncertain which to choose, the longer or the shorter of the homeward routes. Not far behind a heavy load of hay proclaimed its coming by protesting creak of wheels.

She would wait and wish upon it as it passed. A foolish whim, of course, she told herself; but then, if not relieved by whims and fancies, life would be dryer than the mustiest book upon the dustiest shelf.

Invitingly near a cardinal flower had strayed from the wayside wood, and she slipped down the bank to gather it; then, hurriedly retracing her steps, she stumbled, stepped on her linen skirt and tore an ugly rent.

In quick dismay she stooped, absently fitting the frayed edges together, and searching for some means to hold them thus. But hastily she raised her head at sound of a merry voice above her.

"Have a lift?" he called from the top of the load of hay.

Still clasping tightly the crumpled folds of the pale-blue dress, mutely she stood, blushing as red as the cardinal flower discarded at her feet.

Neither had she a word to say when he slipped from the load and knelt on the ground beside her, carefully joining the ugly tear with pins drawn from the edge of his coat.

"What a handy man!" said she then in mock admiration.

"Would the little girl in the tattered dress like a ride with the handy man?" he asked teasingly.

He led the way to the side of the cart, and helped her find a footing on the broad shaft. Not particularly tall was he and not particularly broad; but his arms were strong, and he swung her easily to the top of the load, took his place beside her, and slipped the reins from the stake.

Over the road then they went their way, the sweet-smelling hay quieting them with every breath. He fell into easy talk; and she lightly joined; but her eyes, though seeming to look over meadow and fields, saw only his hair as it lay in bright waves on his forehead, and her hands, though quietly clasped in her lap, were quivering with eager desire to stray through the warm, moist curls.

When they came to the home of Phyllis he lifted her down from the load and detained her a minute.

"To-morrow is Sunday," he said suggestively; and then, as she smiled: "I have the afternoon free. Shall I come or not?"

"Come," she whispered softly, and slipped hastily away.

But when he came they both were strangely silent. The voice of the sea in the distance led them without questioning as to their destination; and they quickened their steps at sight of the low-browed sand-dunes.

Up the beach to the bend and back again they walked, and then on the warm, live sand found a comfortable place to rest. Bits of wreckage and ridges of seaweed lay spread out before them, and they talked fitfully, random questions and half-finished answers, while the sun slipped nearer and nearer the border-line of the west.

The rose light lay over all the earth, deep and warm in the western sky, paling and thinning as it spread itself to cover each object. It shimmered across the waters of the bay, shone on the windows of the cottages like lights from within, and came creeping, creeping down the sand to the feet of the two by the pile of drift-wood.

She caught her breath at the beauty of it, and turned questioning eyes to his face. Was he touched at all by such things?

"Yes, it is very beautiful," he said simply, as if he had heard her unspoken question.

He moved his hand in the sand so that it rested against hers, and smilingly she slipped her fingers into his waiting clasp. Then, slowly, ready to release her at any movement of remonstrance, he moved closer to her and wrapped her close in his arms. And all unresisting she allowed him to draw her head down on his shoulder and raised her lips to his own.

As she moved in his arms and raised eyes to his, he spoke quickly:

"You will marry me, Phil?"

"Yes, yes!" she said happily.

"When?"

"Whenever you say."

"Next week?"

"This week, if you like."

His eyes followed the course of light that gleamed from the beacon across the fast-darkening waters. And her eyes were fastened upon his face. The first flush of glad exultation had faded, and a look that was wholly tender stamped itself upon his features.

"It is getting late," he said at last, "and time you were home."

The light and the glory had passed from the skies, but she did not notice. She was trying to understand something of what was passing in his mind. A great quietness, almost a fear, had settled upon him, and silently, side by side, they followed the winding road.

But when they paused by the gate

his tongue suddenly was loosened, and he told her things he never before would disclose, told her something of his life and of his people.

"I could have stayed, Phil," he ended, "and I could have let them feed me, but, as you say, it takes a long time to get started. When I put the letters under my name, I'm going to stand back of them."

Phil drew a sharp, rather exultant breath, then turned to search his face.

"You mean—"

"I mean, little girl, that it takes some grit to milk cows, but I wanted to see the summer through and save what little I had. When a man knows law he doesn't know much else, yet he can learn—to milk cows."

"By going slow I've kept what I had and added a little to the pile. I'll be ready now to back up the little gold letters, and not ask dad to keep them polished. And when you go in, Phil, just ask Neddie if he's heard of Judge Kerwin, will you dear?"

Again Phil uttered the little gasping, exultant laugh and crept closer. "You mean Judge Kerwin who—" Her voice broke off and trailed into a glad, defiant laugh. "And he is your father?"

Dave smiled and nodded. "He made himself the man he is without assistance from any one, and I will do the same. If I accomplish anything it shall be as Dave Kerwin, not as Judge Kerwin's son. That means that it will be a long time before I can take you into my life. You will come to me when I am ready?"

"To the end of the world!" she made answer, then hid her face in his coat, ashamed of her own boldness.

Over the bowed head he bent his own, to touch with his lips the soft tumbled hair. For a few minutes he held her, closely but tenderly—tenderly even as a mother might hold her child, then:

"Good-by, dear little girl, Phil," he said; "be happy until I can come for you."

THE ELOPEMENT

A SHORT STORY

BY MARIE B. SCHRADER

THE question is, are we doing the right thing?" The girl laid a gloved hand, detaining even in its miniature weight, on the arm of the man beside her who gazed into her eyes with a concentration which eloquently, though mutely, designated all other persons to the planet Oblivion.

It was a crucial moment for the two who stood there in the monster railway station, where are lived so many chapters of life's unpublished chronicles.

"Dora!" Campbell's voice conveyed apprehension. "You haven't been thinking again—you haven't changed your mind, have you?" He leaned far over in an effort to compel her to again raise her eyes, but her long, brown lashes shaded thoughtful, blue depths, and an unmistakable worry-pucker lingered at each corner of her rosebud mouth.

"I don't know, Hal," came the slow reply. "But I have been thinking. I couldn't help it."

"But, Dora—" Her companion seized her hand regardless of her protesting glance. "It's too late to think now. We talked all that over last night, and you promised—"

"I know I did, but"—the girl hesitated and looked up shyly at him—"somehow things seem easier to do at night."

"Nonsense, little girl, that is only nervous fancy."

"Maybe. I hope so." This latter wistfully. "While I was waiting for

you, a strange feeling came over me. It seemed a warning not to run away like this. Perhaps, if we were patient, conditions at home might be better."

She watched his face eagerly for some sign of approval, but Campbell merely brought his straight brows closer together.

A railway employee called out their train in a monotonous droning.

"Come!"

"Must we go this minute? Can't we take the next train?"

"Certainly, if you don't care enough for me to—"

"Oh, Hal, Hal! You know I do." A tender hand touched his sleeve.

"Then there is no time to be lost. There is not another express until tomorrow morning. Come!"

He motioned a porter to take the two suit-cases, and silently led her past the iron gate down into the waiting train.

Once the city had been left behind, Dora's spirits appeared to return. "You didn't see any one?" she ventured.

"Not a soul," replied Campbell cheerily. "And now, let us forget the past and all unhappiness, and think only of our future."

His words brought an expression of hopefulness to the girl's face. "Oh, yes. Let us think only of that," she assented. "And we are going to be happy, aren't we?"

Just then she called his attention to an old man and woman who sat contentedly on a rustic bench in a tiny garden.

"We will grow old together like that," she observed, while a soft, dreamy look filled her eyes. Campbell with difficulty refrained from taking her in his arms there before every one.

"Dora, I—" She read in his face the adoration which he would have put into words and she shrank before it and turned her head from him.

"Look!" she cried. "The sun—how beautiful! It is going down. In another moment—there!"

"To-day is gone," said Campbell thoughtfully. "Now for to-morrow." As he spoke he reached over and held her hands for an instant. Then the lights were lit.

Suddenly there came a terrific shock and they were extinguished. Strange sounds were heard—sounds of grinding, crunching—sounds as if some monster had begun to crack the bones of its victim before devouring it. Cars crashed into each other, piled onto roofs and crushed into interiors. Above all rose the piteous cries of the unfortunate passengers, who lay stunned, maimed, dying in the blackness of the night.

When the first terror had passed, and a full realization of each one's condition came to him—in some cases with rejoicing, in others with despair—the survivors set about lending assistance prior to the arrival of aid from Roseville, the nearest town.

It was not, however, until the doctors and nurses reached the scene that some degree of order was brought out of the confusion. The desperately injured welcomed their coming with that last gleam of appreciation with which a dying man views the object he values most when he becomes resigned to the inevitable. They blessed the hands that administered the merciful opiates. Deft fingers bound up wounds, while kindly voices gave comfort. The long lines of dead and dying were prepared for the transfer from the hillside to the waiting cars which were to convey them with all possible speed to Roseville.

The newspapers the next day were full of the horrifying details of the accident, which was head-lined as one of the worst in the history of railroad-ing.

In the list of the fatally injured was the name Harold Campbell.

One morning, two months later, when the foliage had reached mid-summer luxuriance and the flowers outvied each other in brilliancy of bloom, a man, who lay on a snowy cot in a shaded corner of a veranda, opened his eyes and gazed dully about.

His head was swathed in bandages, turban fashion, and his face was pale and thin. His eyes seemed set in deep hollows and the hand which he attempted to raise to his brow was fleshless.

From a steady contemplation of the roof above him, his attention was drawn to a bed of flaming geraniums just below the railing at his side.

He made an effort to raise himself on his elbow, then sank back on the pillow.

This movement brought an instantaneous response in the person of a graceful young woman in the conventional trained nurse's cap and gown. She had been discreetly lurking in the protection of the porch vines. Now she laid a soft, white hand on the man's forehead, then gently smoothed his pillow. In her eyes there shone tender pity and kindly sympathy.

Silently she seated herself beside the cot and waited for the sick man to open his eyes again. When he did so, they fastened themselves on her face.

She took his wasted hand and held it, while she returned his gaze but said nothing.

The sunken, brown eyes studied her. "Where am I?" their owner inquired in a puzzled manner. "Why am I here?"

The nurse was evidently prepared for the questions, for she answered readily: "You are in a nice, cool corner of the porch. This is the Rose-

ville Hospital. You've been ill, you see, but I am going to take care of you until you get well and strong again."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, but made no comment. "Who are you?" he asked at last.

"I am your nurse," she replied as she stroked his hand with a gentle movement.

"My nurse? But what's your name?"

"Elizabeth," she said with lowered eyes, as she busied herself in arranging some medicine vials on the table.

"Elizabeth," he repeated mechanically. "That's a pretty name. I think I have heard it somewhere before—only I can't remember where. What's your last name?"

"Gilroy."

The patient shook his head. "No; I don't know your name, but I like you, Elizabeth."

"Do you? I am glad of that. But you mustn't talk any more to-day."

He closed his eyes and remained obediently silent. Suddenly he opened them, and asked with the simplicity of a child:

"Tell me, Elizabeth, what's my name?"

"Don't you know?"

"No. How strange! I can't think, somehow."

"Never mind," she said. "It doesn't matter. Suppose I call you Harold?"

"Harold? Yes, call me that. Harold—Harold—Hal." Suddenly a flash of intelligence came into his eyes. "I believe Harold is my name," he said. Again he tried to raise himself, only to rest his head against the nurse's ready shoulder. "That is it—Hal. But Hal—what?"

"Don't worry about the rest of it to-day," advised the nurse. "There's plenty of time for that. Everything will come out right."

Slowly he repeated the words as if he were learning a lesson. Then he slept.

The physician in charge of his case

appeared, glanced hastily at the patient, and called Elizabeth to one side.

"Well, how is he?"

"Some encouragement at last," she answered with a pleased expression. He wanted to know where he is and why he is here; also he asked me my name and his own."

"And did you follow out my instructions?"

"Yes. He said he liked the name Elizabeth. When I suggested that I call him Harold, it came to him that that was his real name. What do you think, doctor? Has he a chance?"

"Decidedly—with good nursing. He is doing as well as might be expected after such a severe cerebral operation."

"You may depend on me."

"But do you feel equal to the added strain? It has been a long and trying case. Not many nurses could have held up so well."

"Oh, doctor!" Elizabeth's face flushed with appreciation of his praise. She glanced in the direction of the patient. "Poor fellow," she said pityingly. "It has been two months since the accident."

"Quite a while, but owing to his other injuries it was impossible to attempt the test before—it would have proved fatal. Do not tax his brain too much. I will look in again to-morrow."

The next morning Campbell awoke to find himself again on the porch, with Elizabeth beside him.

"It's Elizabeth," he said with an attempt at a smile.

"And how are you to-day?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm all right. Only I haven't been able to remember the rest of my name, and it worries me. Why can't I think of it? It's Harold—Hal—something. But what?"

He raised both hands to his head as if to disentangle his perplexity. Suddenly he removed them and asked, "What's the matter with me, Elizabeth?"

"There, there, now," advised Elizabeth soothingly. "There was a railway accident, and you were hurt. Something struck your head, but you are getting along splendidly."

"A railway accident," he said thoughtfully. "How strange. And you say that I was in the accident?"

"Yes, but you mustn't talk about it now."

He listened to her as a child might to the comforting voice of its mother.

"Wait until you are stronger. Then it won't hurt you to say everything you wish. It's only because you are so weak that you have difficulty in remembering things."

The girl's voice carried conviction with it, for neither the doctor nor any one else could predict what the mental result would be. All they could do was to hope and encourage.

"If I could remember the rest of my name—I am sure I wouldn't worry about anything else. Help me, Elizabeth."

The girl was lost in thought for a moment. She studied his face gravely, then said slowly: "There was a note-book found in your pocket. There were some names and addresses. One of them was Campbell—Harold Campbell. Is that your name?"

"Campbell doesn't sound familiar," he replied.

One morning, several days later, the nurse was sitting quietly on the veranda, reading, when a voice full of gladness caused her to look up in surprised expectancy. "Elizabeth!—oh, Elizabeth! I know who I am at last! My name is Campbell—Harold Campbell."

Elizabeth pressed his hand. "I am so glad you know," she said—"so glad."

"And, Elizabeth—" His was the eagerness of the schoolboy, sure of his lessons.

"Yes?" she inquired.

"I know more than that. I remember about the accident. I was on a train—going somewhere. It doesn't matter about that part of it, does it?"

"Why, no. It's splendid that you can recall that much."

"We were sitting quietly, going along at great speed when—"

"Why did you say 'we'?" asked Elizabeth. "Was some one with you?"

"Oh, no," replied Campbell, but with a puzzled look. "That is—I don't think so. I don't know why I said 'we.' Suddenly there came a crash and then—a blank."

"And when you came to your senses you found me taking care of you," said the nurse with a smile. She started toward the steps, intending to gather some fresh flowers for his table, when his voice stopped her.

"Elizabeth, where are you going?" he demanded in as strong a tone as he could employ. "I want you. Don't leave me."

She went to him, her face shining with pleasure.

He seized her hand, pleading in his eyes.

"I never seem so helpless when you are with me," he said pathetically.

Time passed and Campbell became more and more exacting in regard to Elizabeth's presence. He sulked whenever any other nurse took her place for a short while, and did not hesitate to display his indifference.

Then he was permitted to sit up a few hours each day.

"What soft, white hands you have, Elizabeth," he remarked admiringly one afternoon as she adjusted his chair so that he could have a view of the grounds. He took them as he spoke.

Their contact brought him a new thought.

"I used to hold some one's hands—just as I now do yours," he said frankly. "She was—" He hesitated and shook his head disconsolately. "It's no use. Who was she?"

Suddenly he leaned forward. "She was Dora, of course. Dora— Why, Dora was with me on the train when the accident occurred."

Elizabeth's face flushed and she

withdrew her hands. Campbell took them again, not heeding her annoyance. He fixed his eyes intently on space.

"Dora, Dora!" he said. "Why am I so dull witted?"

"Then you are sure you were not alone?"

"Quite sure. Dora was going somewhere with me. We were together. And I held her hands just before the crash came—just as I am holding yours now."

"Then," slowly suggested the nurse, "Dora must have been dear to you?"

"Perhaps," replied Campbell without emotion. "She has been blotted out completely. I couldn't have dreamed all this about her. It must have happened. Did you hear of anyone by that name in the wreck?"

"There were so many," Elizabeth answered evasively.

"Elizabeth!" exclaimed Campbell in excited tones, "the truth is—Dora and I were eloping. Strange that I didn't think of it sooner. Yes, we were eloping."

The nurse looked at him incredulously.

"Eloping! You?"

"Yes. You seem surprised." He waited for her to speak, but she maintained a thoughtful silence.

"I was only wondering," she said at last, "why you should have eloped."

"It was an odd thing to do, now that I think of it," replied Campbell.

"Both odd and romantic," suggested Elizabeth, "and very, very"—she hesitated for the proper word—"very daring."

"You must have cared a great deal for her to fly in the face of convention in such a manner."

A bewildered look came again into Harold's dark eyes.

"I suppose so," he replied indifferently. "I can't understand why I did such a foolish, boyish thing. There must have been a reason, of course. People don't run away from home without cause. There must have been

some family objection. I wish I could remember what it was."

His voice was becoming weak.

"Never mind," advised the nurse in her low, gentle tones; "don't think about it any more to-day."

He obeyed without protest.

Time passed, and Campbell continued to show marked improvement.

One evening, as twilight fell, he and Elizabeth were together on the porch.

"Tell me," he said, "do you really believe that some day I shall remember everything?"

"Yes. I do believe so. It is merely a question of time."

Campbell became lost in a deep study.

"I wonder if remembering would be worth while," he said seriously. "After all, what does it matter—the past?" He gazed earnestly at his companion. There was no mistaking his unspoken thought, and the girl blushed and withdrew her hand which had been resting lightly on the arm of his chair.

"Elizabeth," he begged, "don't do that. Give me your hand. Give me both your hands. Let me keep them forever. There." He took them in his own. "Do with me as you will," he continued. "It was you who have nursed me back to health. You have given me new life, new hopes, new beliefs, a new brain. You saint! You angel—Elizabeth! I love you."

He gazed into her eyes with an ardor which penetrated her inner being. She felt his dominance in every nerve. For a moment she made a shy attempt to resist him, then permitted herself the full enjoyment of his declaration. Her head sank against his breast and she put both arms about his neck, while a tear trickled down each cheek and splashed on his hand.

"Elizabeth!" cried Campbell in an excess of emotion as he gently touched her wet eyelids, "you love me."

"Yes," she replied. "I love you, Hal. And there has never been any one else."

"But why do you weep?"

"It's because I am so happy," she answered softly with a little laugh.

Suddenly a disturbing thought came to him.

"Elizabeth, you tell me that I am the only man you have ever loved. Are you quite sure that you don't mind about Dora? I must have cared for her—but that seems so long ago. Besides, that was before I knew you, although I feel somehow that I must have always known you. How could I ever have lived without you, Elizabeth."

She smiled contentedly. "I don't mind about Dora, Hal."

A look of relief crossed his face. "Then everything is all right," he said gratefully. And when I am myself again we will be married, won't we, dear?"

For answer she gave him her lips.

The evening passed in mutual happiness.

The next morning, just at dawn, Elizabeth was startled by an imperative summons from her patient's room. Hastily she obeyed, and, with sinking heart, fearing she knew not what, opened the door.

"You rang? What is it?"

As she spoke she started toward the window to raise the shade.

"Elizabeth, don't let in the light."

His voice frightened her. She started to go to him.

"Don't come near me," admonished the strained tones which ended in a half sob. "I am not fit to have you touch me."

Campbell groaned aloud and buried his face in the pillows.

Again the girl moved toward him.

"Please don't," he begged. "Wait. I have something to tell you here in the dark."

"What is it?" inquired Elizabeth in trembling words as, weak with apprehension, she held on to the foot of the bed for support.

"Elizabeth," he began, "I have done you a great wrong. Thank

Heaven I realized it before it was too late. Elizabeth, how can I say the words? Everything has come back to me—everything. It happened suddenly, a few moments ago. A cloud seemed to be lifted from my brain, and then—oh, how can I tell you?—I remembered that I am a married man."

"Oh!" exclaimed the nurse, as she pressed both hands to her throat to restrain her pent-up emotions.

"The horrible truth has just come to me about Dora and the accident. Elizabeth, I am a brute, a coward in every sense. I was married to as sweet a woman as God ever made, and"—he groaned and hid his face in his hands—"despise me now, when I confess to you that I, a married man, was eloping with another woman, Dora. I thought I cared for her, too. Oh, I can't imagine whatever possessed me. It has all been a dreadful muddle. And when I think of the wrong I nearly did you in asking you to marry me when I have a wife already, I can find no words in which to express my shame and utter contempt for myself."

He moaned aloud unrestrainedly. Elizabeth waited until he was quieter, then said gently, "You must control yourself. You are not strong enough as yet to give way to such emotion. Try and look facts squarely in the face."

Her even voice achieved the desired effect. In a few moments he inquired more calmly, "Can you ever forgive me, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, I forgive you," she replied sadly. "Now that your memory is fully restored you will do the right thing, right for all concerned, won't you?"

"Oh, yes. I must. I want to do so. I intend to begin life all over again with a clear brain and a clean conscience. As soon as I am able to travel I shall go back to my wife."

"Oh!" cried the nurse. "You are going back to your home—to her?"

"Yes."

"And you and I must part?"

"It is the only way," he said. "I am going back to make all the reparation possible."

"Then when you leave here, it will be good-by forever?"

"Yes, forever," he repeated firmly.

"I wish you much happiness," said the girl in a low voice.

"Oh, that is good of you, Elizabeth; so magnanimous."

"Not when a woman truly loves."

"Oh!" The words went deep into his heart, for he realized the strength of this woman's affection.

"It has all been like a dream."

"But are you really awake at last?" asked Elizabeth. "Suppose your wife were to come to you, do you think you have sufficiently recovered your memory to know her when you see her?"

"Know her?" repeated Campbell. "Why, I could pick her out of a million. There isn't any one like her—only somehow I didn't appreciate that before the accident. I am sure of it now. I would know her anywhere—in the dark even—one touch of her hand—"

As he spoke, Elizabeth had stolen nearer and nearer until she knelt beside him and laid one soft, warm hand in his.

"Helen!" he cried with rapturous joy. "My wife! You!"

"Yes, it is I, Hal." Elizabeth's voice was vibrant with emotion as she clasped both arms about him and folded him to her breast. "My poor boy! And you do know me, at last. Thank God."

Campbell was too overcome to express himself in words. He merely kissed one hand after another in silent devotion. "And they were your hands all along, Helen," he said. "They

have saved me. I love them. I love you, Elizabeth—Helen."

"Yes, I am Elizabeth and Helen, too," said the girl happily. "And, now, may I let the sunshine in, so that you may be sure there is no mistake?"

"Yes. But tell me first how you happened to be here as a nurse."

"I read in the papers of the accident. Your name was among those fatally injured. I could not believe it possible, for you had said nothing about leaving town when you were with me at the seashore. I hastened home at once and frantically endeavored to locate you at your office and clubs. All in vain. No one could tell me anything. Then I took the first train for Roseville, where I found you. I begged the doctors to let me nurse you. They refused at first, but finally agreed to do so, after I had given my promise not to reveal my identity to you until you recognized me of your own accord—if ever you regained your memory. They were afraid of the shock."

Campbell kissed her tenderly.

"I never suspected that there was another woman—until you yourself told me about her. I always believed and trusted you, Hal, when you said that business detained you."

"Oh!" he exclaimed remorsefully. "What a brute I was. And can you forgive me? About Dora, I mean?"

"Yes. I forgive her, too. It is easy to do that now, poor girl. There was a Dora found—they say—"

"I understand," said Campbell with bowed head. "She had a premonition, too. It is better so. It has been an unexpected end to my journey, but the only one that could ever have brought me real happiness."



Wear THE CAVALIER LEGION red button with the green star. None but people of discrimination, good taste, and intelligence belong to the order. Better come in, stranger, and stay in.

