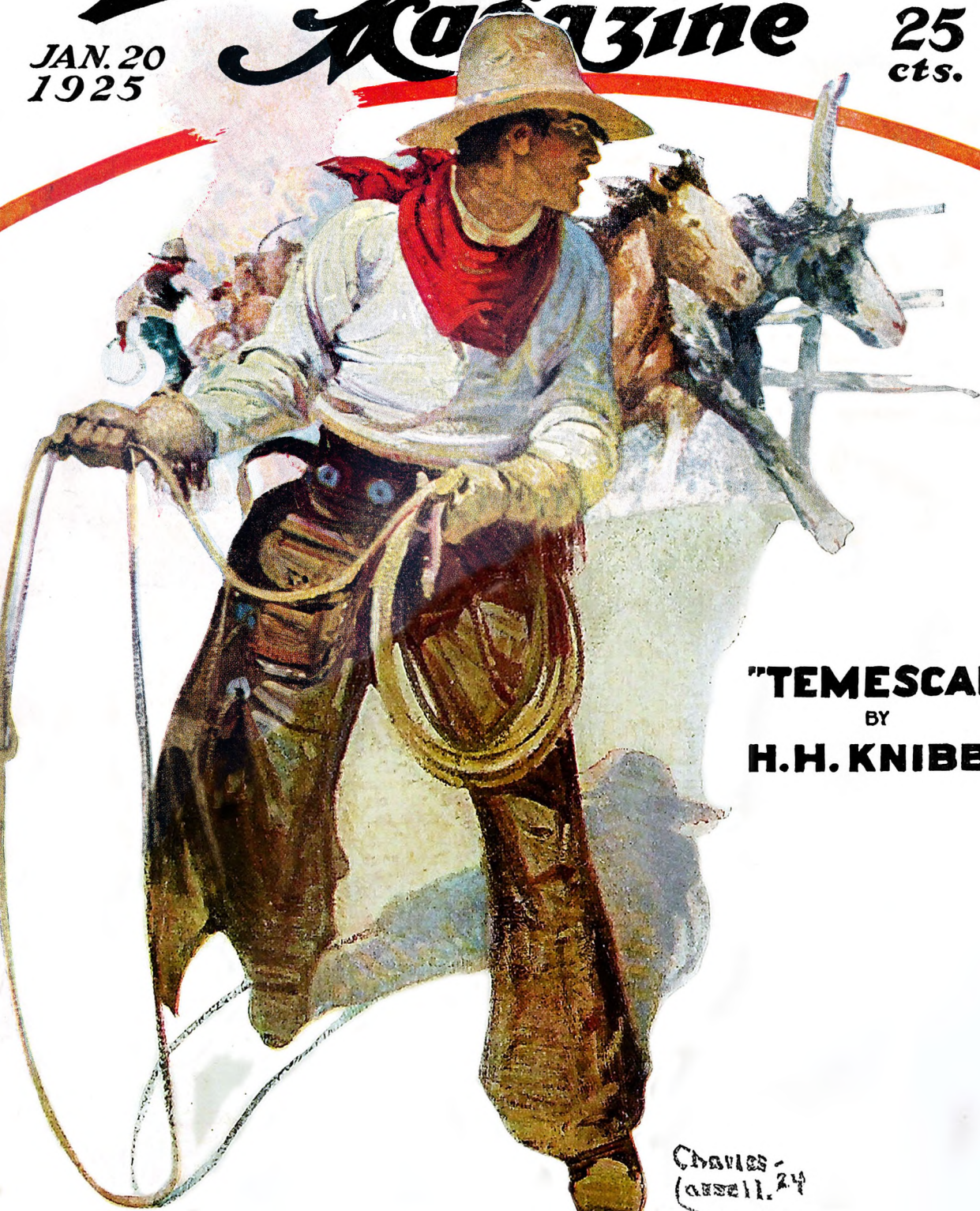


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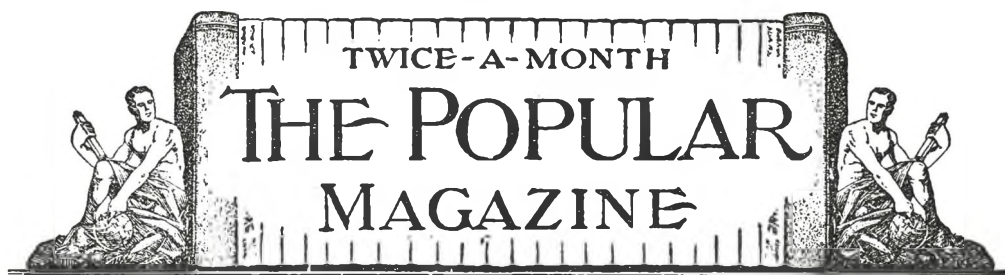
See Contest Announcement, Page 181

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Vol. LXXV

JANUARY 20, 1925

No. 1



THE BANISTER MYSTERY. A Complete Novel	William Morton Ferguson	3
A romance of intrigue, retribution, and vindication.		
FIRES OF FAME. A Short Story	Robert H. Rohde	76
True love advertises.		
THE HOUSE THAT BLACK BUILT. A Short Story	C. S. Montanye	86
Ottie Scandrel goes in for disaster in a big way.		
SCRAMBLED HEROES. A Short Story	Holman Day	98
Psychology has a mad fling in the North Woods.		
CAUGHT IN THE NET. Editorials	The Editor	114
TEMESCAL. A Five-part Story—Part II.	Henry Herbert Knibbs	118
An epic of romance and adventure in the Southwest.		
SO THIS IS CAIRO! A Short Story	Ralph D. Paine	149
The navy has a desert party.		
THE DUMMY SPEAKS. A Short Story	Bert Mohrman	161
A prize-ring episode with Fate for referee.		
THE THING THAT WILL NOT DIE. A Short Story	T. von Ziekursch	168
The spirit of the Northwest Mounted wins.		
THE PAY-DAY GAME. A Short Story	Calvin Johnston	174
Railroading—when it was no better than it should be.		
THE EYES OF SEBASTIEN. A Short Story	Alan Sullivan	182
French Canada—grim superstition—bright romance.		
A CHAT WITH YOU.		191

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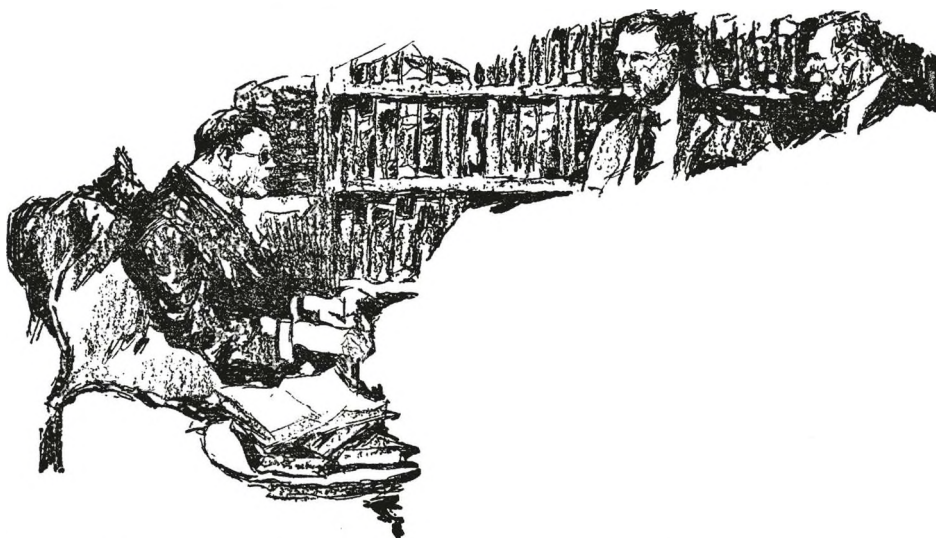
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXV.

JANUARY 20, 1925.

No. 1



The Banister Mystery

By William Morton Ferguson

Author of "The Big Fool," "Other Folks' Money," Etc.

Two men are murdered without a shred of valid evidence to point the murderer, and under circumstances so baffling that no suspicion can be justified. Yet suspicion runs wild and the innocent are placed in jeopardy of the law along with the guilty. Following, through the fascinating pages of this story, the dogged, relentless search of James Blunt for the key to the enigma, you may imagine—as he often imagined—that you have picked up a hot scent. But the probabilities are against you. For Mr. Ferguson has compounded a problem in criminology to balk the educated faculties of the keenest sleuths that ever sniffed a clew—in or out of fiction. More than that, he has written a tale of human drama that will challenge your sympathy and grip your interest. It is distinguished from most narratives of crime investigation in this, that its theme is not so much retribution for the wicked as vindication of the just.—THE EDITOR.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

ALIVE OR DEAD.

BLUNT was scanning the Henson record with the forlorn air of one who, though letter-perfect in the subject, still hopes to uncover something that isn't there. A very scanty dos-

sier this, no finger prints, Bertillon measurements, anything definite. Henson had never been officially "mugged." And yet that totally inadequate material represented not only much inspirational effort on the part of Blunt but patient work of the whole machine. Perhaps it would culminate in a three-thousand-mile wild-

goose chase. Well, no matter; it was all in the game and had to be done. The world knows all about a great man's successes but nothing of his failures.

Replacing in his wallet a letter from the commissioner at New Scotland Yard, Blunt arose moodily at length and sauntered to the window. Diagonally opposite, across Broadway, filled with the blue haze of early spring and late gasoline, loomed the gorgeous pile of the Hotel Rialto.

His abstracted gaze wandered up to the jade-green mansard roof, swung south and paused. Yes, Maitland Banister had made that whole corner his new home at a rental of twenty thousand a year. Twenty thousand for a few rooms for an old man and a girl, board, of course, extra; and people were starving, not merely in Europe. Well, such was life, and the war had been a lucrative evil to many. Banister had doubled his fortune.

THE war. A new train of thought while Blunt's subconscious mind still grappled tenaciously with the elusive Henson. Yes, there was something about an only son who had gone over there and never returned. Enlisted in the British army way back in 1915. A scapegrace, from all accounts; perhaps worse. Yes, there was something about a forged check; it had been hushed up, then completely silenced by the crash of the World War. Yes, a lucrative evil, and men had enlisted for more than patriotism. Many a bad reputation had been buried in Flanders Field as well as a good one found.

To Blunt it was all very fragmentary, amorphous, this history of the Banisters. The fact piqued him. Absorption in Federal business, necessitating long periods in Washington and elsewhere—and, before this, the onerous secret-service work he had done during the war—had taken him out of his former genre. Ordinarily, with his wonderful cameralike memory that recorded everything automatically, however minute, he could have given you offhand the inside history of any prominent New Yorker, and many by no means prominent except in their special nefarious callings.

It struck him now that he had lost touch with the inner life of Gotham except as it merged with that of Washington. The city and even State had been usurped by the nation. It was Halkett, his manager, who attended virtually to all local cases.

Well, why try to flog piqued memory? What had Banister to do with him? Oh, yes, Aloysius Parker—that was the connection. Why had old Parker phoned? He had never done any work for his firm, nor could they be called friends. An acquaintance, that was all. Was Halkett justified in saying that if they lost the Banister business—

Blunt turned from the window as Halkett himself entered.

"Mr. Bertram Parker wishes to know if he can see you," said the manager, emphasizing the first name and looking rather heated. "He saw you come in. I told him it wasn't your habit to see people without first knowing their business, but he seems to have a different opinion. Quite like his father. You'll see him? Oh, *very* well."

Appearances being so notoriously deceptive, one would never have suspected Bertram Parker of possessing the financial mind in such degree as to warrant his filling the responsible post of manager to the Banister Estate. He was of the large joyous type, having his father's booming voice and much of his manner. He radiated peace on earth like a Christmas card, which, with his air of utter goodness and shiny blocky outline, he rather resembled.

THE Van Alstyne Building possessing a thousand tenants, it was not remarkable that this was the first meeting of Blunt and young Parker. Their offices were separated by the entire block, and neither in the business nor social world had their orbits happened to cross.

"Your manager cut my father off pretty sharply this morning," complained Bertram, "and as he's most anxious to see you and thought he might have some difficulty in doing so, he called me up and asked if I'd make the appointment in person. He wants to know if you'll be kind enough to

meet him at the Rialto; he'll be up to see Mr. Banister, and as you'll be lunching somewhere—you see? It's very important; it concerns Mr. Banister's son."

"But I thought he wath dead?"

"Oh, no; badly wounded but not killed in the war. And now that his father's unable to attend to things, Hugh Banister should be here. He should be managing the estate instead of me—something he's quite able to do even though he's blind."

"Blind?"

"Yes, poor fellow. A German shell, you know. Under God's guidance I emerged from that inferno without a scratch, while he——" Bertram shook his large, polished head. "Terrible when you think of it, sir; never to see the blue sky, the sun, moon and stars, God's green footstool, the sight of a beloved face—ah, we don't realize what such a terrible sacrifice means. Even though I never knew him, still we were comrades, you may say; comrades of the war, members of the great American legion. Yes, a member even though he fought under another flag. In the matter of managing the estate I felt it my duty—however——" And he gestured and sighed again.

THE booming periods, the gestures, might have been those of Aloysius Parker himself, thought Blunt, as he asked where Hugh Banister was and why he didn't return. "Has he disappeared?" he finished with sudden interest.

"He may be in London, and as we heard you were going over there in any case—you see? I needn't say anything further; you would only have to go over the same ground with my father, and I can best leave it to him. As the family lawyer he's qualified to do it, while I've a certain ignorance and delicacy in the matter. My part is simply to ask if you'll allow him to lay the case before you."

"Oh, certainly. You've said enough to make me rather curious to hear the rest; though, mind you, I'm not promising I can do more than listen," said Blunt with his engaging lisp. "You thee, I'm not taking any cases; that ith, personally."

"We're quite aware of that; at the same time if it didn't interfere—you see? And we feel we need the best talent. We sent a man over, but—well, no doubt my father will tell you about that. I don't like to say anything, even hint it; one can be so easily mistaken. And I never judge anybody. In any case I ask you to bear in mind that, whatever it may be necessary for you to hear concerning Hugh Banister's past, that past has been atoned for nobly. Though, as I say, we've never met, my sympathy for him is only equaled by my admiration. To think of him, blind as he is, being able—— But I'll leave all that to my father."

Indeed so ready was Bertram to leave it all to his parent that he wouldn't hear of lunching at the Rialto but bade Blunt farewell outside the building. He would experience a decided embarrassment hearing his employer's intimate family history discussed before a third party, and, moreover it would appear that his tastes in the culinary line were as delicate as his ethical ones. All large men weren't large eaters; not for him the esoteric cuisine of the Rialto's celebrated chef but, say, a bowl of crackers and milk in some humble restaurant or dairy.

As Blunt started to cross the square he met a man who, deaf to the conductor's warning, had swung off a speeding Broadway car with an expert ease that belied his thickset bulk. He had pale-blue eyes, wore a dead cigar in a corner of his tight-lipped mouth and his hat at an aggressive angle. This was Corrigan of headquarters, baptized Daniel but better known as "Biff," a former running mate of Blunt in the old Mulberry Street days.

"**L**O, Jimmie!" This with a playful whack that nearly sent the other sprawling. "Ain't seen you since they invented kissin'. Givin' the old burg a little treat, eh? When are they gonna hand you the president's job?" While their rivalry had always been perfectly good natured, their friendship real, it was no more than human for Corrigan to feel a certain jealousy of the other's greater success.

He was generally thus delicately satiric over Blunt's prominence in Washington.

"Was that your old friend Bill Taft you were pallin' with?" he continued in the same vein as he nodded at Bertram's vanishing ample figure. "Oh, old 'Nosey' Parker's boy? Well, well, buttermilk builds bonny babies. Sure I know him; who don't? Ain't he the man who won the war? Well, he's never denied it. Anyway, don't he teach Sunday school and go in for all this uplift stuff? A big chip of the old block—in the figure. Sure. He's got no interest in that armada layin' off Rum Row, and he wouldn't know a high-ball from a cannon ball."

They talked for some time and then Corrigan said: "What about those twenties? Any more comin' in?"

Blunt shook his head. "They were shoved on the Continent and made there too—Zurich, we've reason to believe. They got the wind up and the gang's scattered. Mighty clever combine, but we'll nab them yet. Of course the man we really want is Henson."

"Aw!" pleaded Corrigan. "Ain't you got rid of that bug yet? Henson's layin' off Kinsale in the ribs of the *Lusitania*. You might as well look for Mr. Jonah in the Whale Hotel. You know that."

"Do I?" smiled Blunt. "Yes, he was on the passenger list, but did he sail? And couldn't one of the saved have taken another name? Or mightn't he have got ashore without being seen? If you use your imagination, Dan——"

"Aw, now Jimmie! A little imagination's all right in its place, but these wholesale orders of yours——"

"If Lou Henson didn't make that plate, then it was his ghost," said Blunt. "Alive or dead. I'm sailing to-morrow to get him."

CHAPTER II.

ABOUT HUGH.

HE was called "Nosey" by the irreverent partly in tribute to his name and the old song, partly because of a professional inquisitiveness indulged even in private life, but mostly because his nasal organ

merited, even commanded, special recognition. It was a vast bulbous affair, colored like a Turner sunset; compared with it the cerise background of his bulging cheeks seemed almost pallid. Before Volstead got his name on the statutes Aloysius Parker was proud of his facial color scheme, as he was proud of all expensive possessions, but now he explained it by an overweening taste for pickles. He had been a leader of the bar, in more senses than one, and was still a prominent figure, impressive and even awe inspiring to the uninitiated.

They had the Broadway corner in the orangerie and to the intermittent accompaniment of the Czech cellist up in the gallery, and the steady voracious clicking of his host's handsome porcelain molars, Blunt heard the rest of Hugh Banister's story. It took long in the telling because Mr. Parker, by instinct and training, was averse to verbal short cuts. He qualified nearly every statement, refused to commit himself to any definite opinion which might, by being proved subsequently erroneous, reflect on his vaunted acumen. If challenged, his favorite reply, accompanied by a look of profundity, was: "Well, I wouldn't say."

HUGH denied that forgery and I wouldn't say if he was guilty," he was saying. "At all events, whatever the truth, it came as a climax to his erring ways. No, I wouldn't say he was ordered from the house; but, anyway, he left, sailed for England and enlisted. If he'd only been like my boy—— Ah! there's a son for you. Never gave me an uneasy moment from the day he was born. Magnificent service in the war, if you can only get him to talk about it. Of course he should be in the firm: Parker, Leech and Parker—a cherished ambition. And that boy of mine has a natural inherited genius for the lawr." Mr. Parker always called it the "lawr." Perhaps it was a footnote to his youthful environment.

"A great and mutual sacrifice when he abandoned the lawr, Mr. Blunt. But I've guarded the Banister interests for over

twenty years, and one sacrifice more or less—I wouldn't say there aren't other men as capable and honest as my boy, but I wouldn't feel safe with a stranger in such a responsible position. No, my boy had to take it until such time as Mr. Banister's able to resume control or his son returns."

"And you want me to locate him, bring him back without his father's knowledge?"

"No, I wouldn't say that. What I meant was that Mr. Banister wouldn't commission you, though he'd wink at my doing so. Understand? He's got his back up about it, and has for some time. He was willing to let bygones be bygones, forgive and forget, but Hugh wasn't. I wouldn't say both of them are as stubborn as mules, but they've got the same family pride. Maitland Banister kept hoping Hugh would return, and then, when he didn't, he shut up the house in a rage and came here, vowing he was done with him.

"All this is strictly private, of course. He said he'd never lift a finger to bring him home. All the same I know what he'd give to bring it about without any sacrifice of his pride. Perhaps his own affliction has had its effect. He had a stroke, you know; more than that, he's going blind. Curious, isn't it? He's been operated on for cataract. I wouldn't say it was poetic justice, but others may."

BUT the son, as I understand, is totally blind," said Blunt. "In that case he'd be more incapable of attending to business than his father."

"No, I wouldn't say that; quite the contrary, in fact. For one thing his health is all right, and Mr. Banister's isn't. For another, Hugh didn't lose his sight until the last year of the war, and he's had all this time to learn to do without it. He went to that place in England, St. Dunstan's, and it's perfectly wonderful what he learned. He can typewrite like a professional—I've had letters from him—"

"Do you mean he has had to earn his own living?"

"Not at all," replied Mr. Parker, committing himself reluctantly to perhaps his

first unequivocal statement. "It might have been better if he had, if he had felt himself dependent on his father. But he's not; he has been in receipt of a very handsome income from his dead mother's share of the estate since he was twenty-five—that is, for the past six years or so. If he took advantage of St. Dunstan's it was simply in order to learn the quicker by expert instruction. You know the marvels they can do with Braille. No, far from being incapable, he's shown in his letters that he's fully qualified to take charge here. Of course my boy, having definitely and reluctantly abandoned the law, would remain as second in command.

THE long and short of it is that Hugh Banister has taught himself to do without eyes, while his father is too old and ill to learn. Between ourselves, Maitland Banister will soon be absolutely helpless, while his son is more able and accomplished than many people who have their sight."

"And he has disappeared? Come, Mr. Parker," said Blunt, his patience nearly exhausted, "what's behind all this? If you know where he is——"

"But we don't; that's just the point. He travels incessantly, and the last letter I had was from Switzerland. That was over six months ago. He may have returned to London, but we don't know. His only permanent address is Cox & Co., the army bankers, and he informed me in his last letter that he'd instructed them not to give any information about him, and that it was no use our bothering him further. You see it's not merely a question of looking him up, but of persuading him to return when found. We sent a man over to see him, in person, but it was no use."

"So your son said. And I got the impression that the job was bungled. Am I right?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that, and I'm sure my boy didn't mean to convey that impression. At the same time, between ourselves, we felt a certain—well, dissatisfaction. For he didn't even succeed in seeing Hugh."

"Was he a regular inquiry agent?"

"No, he's employed in my office. MacDonald's his name and he used to know Hugh Banister. I gave him a job——"

Mr. Parker paused and assumed his most formidable look; and, following the other's gaze, Blunt saw a couple descending from the gallery where they evidently had been lunching at one of the balcony tables.

"That's MacDonald now," said Mr. Parker, puffing out his cheeks and glaring. "And Miss Carruthers—Maitland Banister's ward, you know."

"Call him over," said Blunt, with inward relief. "I might as well hear his account of that trip at firsthand."

IT was needless to attract the couple's attention, for already they were threading a passage through the congested tables and heading for the Broadway corner. They made a striking contrast; she had ruddy hair, eyes of the rare, true sapphire blue, a big soft scarlet mouth. Certain novelists would have been certain to term her figure petite, chic, svelte. The man was spare, swarthy, and perhaps half a dozen years her senior. His only pretension to notice was a certain unconscious distinction of carriage and the clean hardness of the physically fit.

"Hello, Mr. Parker," said the girl, a dimple at the corner of the big mouth. "We saw you come in. Have you been looking for us?"

Aloysius Parker was clearly annoyed. He would have liked to ask in his best cross-examination manner how it happened, when Miss Carol Carruthers was supposed to be shopping, and Mr. John MacDonald on business bent, they should be here together. He had caught them nicely, proved certain suspicions that had been troubling him, but they seemed unfairly unconscious of the fact. They offered no explanation and he could demand none—at present, so far as MacDonald was concerned.

"Although, Miss Carol," he said with certain satisfaction, "you needn't tell your guardian, I'm making a final and, I be-

lieve, successful effort to bring Hugh home. I think this gentleman will have better luck than you, MacDonald." And to Blunt's annoyance he was introduced with the explanatory title of "the famous 'Lisping Jimmie.'"

MacDonald shook hands, the girl bowed and eyed him with frank curiosity. "I'm afraid that even you, Mr. Blunt, can't accomplish the impossible," she said.

"I don't know that I shall attempt it," replied Blunt. "Mr. Parker's rather taking my acceptance in this matter for granted. I don't see why, if young Mr. Banister's family and friends have failed to move him, I should be expected to succeed. Why should he do for me, a stranger, what he refuses to do for them?"

"Perhaps for the very reason that you are a stranger," she returned. "He doesn't hate you."

"Now, now," protested Mr. Parker, "I wouldn't say——"

"But I would," she interrupted. "It's the truth. Why else should he act as he does? When we learned of his terrible affliction and went over——"

"Ah, yes, I haven't told you that," said the old lawyer to Blunt. "Mr. Banister and his ward sailed at once——"

AND he dodged us," said the girl. "Hugh may have been treated unjustly, and I know he has suffered terribly, but that doesn't excuse him in my opinion. His father was ready to forgive everything—and, even if he'd nothing to forgive, he was ready and anxious to eat the humblest sort of pie—and Hugh wouldn't even see us. We were treated like—like dirt. I'd give anything if he could be induced to return, for I know what it would mean to Mr. Banister, even though he won't say so, but you can't bring a person home by main force."

"Not a law-abiding person," agreed Blunt with a smile.

"At the same time," said Mr. Parker, "if a third party pointed out his clear duty in the matter, a person of proved tact and ability"—here he looked hard at the silent MacDonald—"a person who apparently

held no brief for the family, and who could explain how things are with Mr. Banister—at any rate, MacDonald, Mr. Blunt would like to hear an account of your abortive attempt.”

MACDONALD'S brief and lucid account was a welcome relief from Mr. Parker's windy and involved phrases, and yet Blunt thought he detected a certain constraint and reservation under the assumption of perfect frankness and composure. It was at the Continental in Zurich that MacDonald had finally caught up with Hugh Banister, only to be declined an interview. “I had to state my business,” he said, “and he sent down word by his man. I hung around for a week but it was no use; he wouldn't see me.”

“You were personally acquainted with him, I understand?”

“Yes, but I hadn't seen him for years. Our families were neighbors once.”

“Has it occurred to any of you,” said Blunt mildly, “that somebody might be masquerading as Hugh Banister all this time? His circumstances would make such an imposture easy and profitable. As I understand it, it's about eight years since he left home and, apart from any change caused by his loss of sight, his appearance must have altered to an extent. No one has evidently talked with him, his letters are typed, and a blind man's signature can be expected reasonably to alter too. Some one intimately acquainted with his personal affairs would have found this quarrel with his father an admirable help to the scheme. The Continent is full of capable adventurers—more than ever since the war—on the lookout for just such victims. The thing is quite possible, but I'm asking if it's probable.”

There was a unanimous chorus of dissent. “His signature hasn't altered,” declared Mr. Parker. “I mean that though it's no longer straight—and, however expert, the blind can't always provide against that—it's essentially the same as I've always known it. There's no reason why it shouldn't be; if you sign your name with your eyes shut the spacing may be irregu-

lar, and the writing may slant, but the formation of the letters is the same. And a bank would be bound to know if there was any impersonation or attempted forgery.”

“That isn't true, either in your experience or mine,” smiled Blunt. “If it was, you and I would have considerably less employment, Mr. Parker.”

“But we saw him!” exclaimed Miss Caruthers. “We saw him even though we didn't speak with him. We were just behind him when he entered his hotel, and though he wore dark spectacles and I hadn't seen him for so long, I knew him at once. No, you needn't smile, Mr. Blunt; even if we were *behind* him we could see *part* of his face. And I should think his own father ought to know him if I didn't.”

THERE'S no question of impersonation,” said McDonald, “nor any mystery. He simply refuses to return until he's good and ready, and he wants to be let alone. In my opinion, as I've said before, there's no use trying to make him do what he positively doesn't want to do. He's not a child and he knows his own mind. If he's let alone he may decide to return, but he won't make his whereabouts known until he's stopped being bothered. In my opinion any further attempted persuasion or coercion would be only a waste of time.”

“As you say, that's your opinion,” commented Mr. Parker. “And now it's time you were getting back to the office. And I'm sure, Miss Carol, your guardian is wondering what's happened to you.”

“You mean we may run away now like good little children?” she laughed. “I'm not supposed to hear the rest of this confabulation? Well, I hope, Mr. Blunt, you'll consent to do the impossible and bring Hugh home. All my luck to you. Come along, Jack; you aren't wanted either.”

Mr. Parker stroked his lurid nose as he looked after the departing couple. “A charming girl,” he said with an indulgent smile. “She'll come into a good bit of

the Banister money, especially if father and son remain on the outs. Of course MacDonald hasn't a penny but what he earns—or pretends to earn. And if Hugh comes home—well, it was Maitland Banister's hope that some day they'd make a match of it."

The end of it was that Blunt consented to take the case providing it occupied no more than the time he meant to spend abroad. He would do his best to locate Hugh Banister and bring him home. The case interested him—and the people involved. On the face of it Aloysius Parker was playing a part that upset Blunt's private opinion of him; he was bringing Hugh Banister home to oust Bertram from what must be a very pleasant and lucrative position indeed. And Aloysius Parker had never been noted for this sort of altruism. Blunt was also satisfied that John MacDonald hadn't told the entire truth about that Zurich visit; in fact, for all his seeming frankness, he might have been lying wholesale. It was clear also that Mr. Parker had suggested, intentionally or otherwise, that MacDonald might be classed as a fortune hunter who hoped to marry Miss Carruthers for her eventual share of the Banister fortune; thus he would own a very strong motive in having Hugh remain where he was. There was also the suggestion that the girl herself, if she had no desire to marry Hugh, or he her, would profit financially by his continued absence.

There were other factors in the case which Blunt found equally interesting.

CHAPTER III.

BANISTER TALKS.

HUGH BANISTER and Eric Vivian sat smoking, drinking, and playing chess in the drawing-room of Vivian's suite on the top floor of a London hotel. The night was unseasonably warm, warmer than many a midsummer, and both windows were open. They were long wide windows, the sill hardly two feet from the floor, and through the half-drawn curtains one might have glimpsed the dark broad

sweep of the Thames and the lights of the Embankment. A green-shaded electric lamp, the only light burning in the room, shone down on the occasional table that held the chessboard, a decanter of whisky, a siphon, two glasses and an ash tray.

It has been said that tobacco loses its charm if one cannot see the smoke, yet to the real cigarette smoker who inhales this is known to be a fallacy. One might say with equal truth that in order to satisfy a craving for food one must be able to see as well as taste it. Hugh Banister derived the same enjoyment from cigarettes as he did from chess, though he was no longer able to see either.

THEY sat, the table between them, and at intervals Banister lit a cigarette from the stub between his lips, or took a gulp of whisky and soda. Ordinarily he was not an endless-chain smoker nor given to much drinking. From his movements one would never have thought him stone blind. Although the glasses were on the same side of the table, not once did he mistake Vivian's for his own. And in the same unerring manner he placed every discarded cigarette in the ash tray. The only noticeable fact which might point to his affliction was a heavy gold-headed Malacca cane resting against his chair; also, as the game progressed, it could be seen that with the ordinary board and Staunton men in use, he was unable to move his pieces on the right squares. He would call out his move, and Vivian, after repeating it for verification, would make it.

They had much in common these two; perhaps that was why they had become such companions, partners in affliction. They were about the same age, and if Banister had lost both eyes in the war, Vivian had lost one. If Banister wore dark glasses, Vivian wore a flesh-colored shield over his right eye. Nor was this all; Vivian's face was scarred, Banister's even more so. Vivian used to laugh and say that at least Banister was saved the pleasure of having to look at himself daily. Vivian joked about the German "Jack Johnson" that had blown half his company

west, but Banister never spoke of his wound. He seemed perfectly unconscious of his disfigurement.

"Queen to king's knight's fifth."

"Queen——" Vivian paused, his hand hovering with the piece in mid-air. "King's knight's fifth? You mean that? Are you sure?"

"Sure. Why?"

"Because it's an undeserved gift, old man. I take it——"

"The Harry you do!"

"Yes, with the advanced bishop's pawn, you know."

THE devil!" Banister frowned, then laughed ruefully. "Of course. What a bloomer! I clean forgot that pawn. No, I won't take it over; rules are rules. Let's chuck it; I resign handsomely. I don't seem able to keep my mind on the game to-night."

"Same here. I suppose it's the heat. I never remember a May like this. Lord, but it's hot!"

"As Egypt," said Banister.

"Eh? When were you there?"

"Just before the show closed."

"Secretive chap," said Vivian. "You never said you served there."

"No. 'Darkness in Egypt'—I can vouch for that. That's where I lost my eyes."

"Oh," said Vivian, and lit a cigarette. "Well, as I've often said before, it's a marvel to me how you've learned to do without 'em. Though I'm a whale at chess I couldn't play a game blindfold like you to save my life. What's more, I couldn't learn. It takes a great brain, or a special kind of one."

"Or merely the old law of compensation. You see how all my other faculties have come on. Or perhaps it's merely a matter of memory, and one can always think better in the dark. No distractions, you see. Then I always had a good memory; yes, I don't forget. And now, if I can no longer tell a person by his step, I can tell him by his voice and step."

"Ah, yes; the way you knew that chap—what was his name? Yes, MacDonald—before he recognized you. Yet you

hadn't seen him for years! Perfectly wonderful, I call it. And, speaking of that, are you never going home? I hope you won't think me cheeky, old man, but you know this silly quarrel with your father—of course you were justified at the time and all that——" He stopped short; Banister was taunting, a discordant, unnatural laugh.

"Good Lord! Vivian, haven't you suspected by this time that that was only part of it, a good peg on which to hang an excuse? How the devil do you think I could go home with this—this thing I call a face!"

Banister broke into a stream of oaths and imprecations, his face distorted with passion. It was a revelation to the other, hinting at a vanity he had never suspected. Banister's apparent indifference to his affliction, his silent and admirable fortitude, was only a mask after all. And now, for the first time in their acquaintance, the mask was off.

"By Jove, I—I didn't know you took it like that," said Vivian lamely. "We needn't talk about it——"

"I need. I've never said a word about it before, have I? Well, I want to now."

"Fire away then, if it's any help. But you know you shouldn't feel this way about it. A chap's looks don't matter a button——"

YOU know that's a lie," said Banister violently. "It's nothing but canting humbug, Vivian. That kind of stuff nauseates me; it's like the hypocritical rich who say it's far better to be poor. Don't matter, eh? You're no beauty, I understand, but you must be an Apollo compared with me. And yet, I suppose, you'd hesitate, even as you are, to inflict your face on the woman you loved, ask her to contemplate it for the rest of her natural life. Ever think of that?"

"By Jove!" said Vivian again. "I never thought, old man, that—er—that you felt——"

"That I cared for anybody? Oh, yes, Vivian; and for a good many years too. And I'll go on caring, that's the worst of

it; I'm made that way. As I told you, I've a good memory and don't forget. I feel like talking to-night and I'll tell you about it. You've heard me speak of her often—my father's ward."

"Miss Carruthers? But she must have been only a girl at the time."

"Quite so, only a girl. Impossible to fall in love with a child, eh? But I tell you that from the first—from the day she was left an orphan and came to our house, a twelve-year-old kiddie all arms and legs—I knew there could be only the one woman in the world for me. Funny, wasn't it? But it's the truth. You'll never know, I couldn't explain, what she represented to me. I never had a sister, I'd never known a mother, and she came to mean all that and more. I'd been pretty wild, you know, but from that day I began to pull up. I did indeed. And then there came that damned business of the check. She believed me, if my father didn't, and I can't tell you what her faith meant to me. It supported me through those horrible years of the war. I looked forward to the day when I could return, when I could see her again—and now I never can do either! Can you realize what it means?"

"Oh, but that's all nonsense, old man. Come, buck up. You know if she's the right stuff——"

DAH! Is she to marry me out of pity? Yes, and out of necessity perhaps? You see she's entirely dependent on my father and—— No, no, that isn't my idea of love, not the kind I have for her. I'd never place her in such a position. And, apart from that, I wouldn't have her see me for the world. I didn't want her even to know I was blind. I have my pride, Vivian, and I used to have looks to be proud of. My face is bad enough, but my eyes—you've never seen them. Well, take a look now. I want you to, Vivian; then you'll understand."

Banister suddenly whipped off the dark glasses and turned his face to the light. The result was horrible; his disfigurement in itself was bad enough but now the

greenish glow made it even worse. He had no eyes; the sockets, under the everted and mutilated lids, were empty as though picked clean by hand. It was worse than the face of a corpse, more like that of the grewsome inhabitant of some inferior planet as depicted by a morbidly imaginative artist.

BANISTER laughed as Vivian drew a sharp breath. "Needs a strong stomach even for those who have seen all the war horrors, eh? Yes, I can imagine it does. You're the first person I've shown 'em to since I left hospital. Can you imagine a young girl *marrying* such a perpetual nightmare?"

"Chuck it, Banister. What's the use of talking about it? You aren't yourself to-night. There's no use getting all steamed up——"

"If you can't talk to a friend of such things, whom can you talk to? I've got a lot of stuff bottled up in me, Vivian, but I'm not getting hysterical over it, am I? I want to tell you how I got this new face of mine; a fellow can go just so far and then he's got to tell somebody. Turn out the light, if you like, and let's sit by the window. It'll be a great relief to me to tell you the whole thing."

"Well, if you'd rather——" Vivian pulled aside the curtain and opened the window higher. Then he pulled up the table and chairs. A full moon swung in the eastern sky and made the room a thing of dull silver-and-black shadows. The uncertain light being no handicap to Banister, he filled his own glass and Vivian's with uncanny precision.

"It seems to me," resumed Vivian at length, "you've a long score to pay against the Germans."

"No," said Banister. "In the last analysis neither the Arabs nor the Germans, but one of our own men."

"I don't understand."

"You will. We were sold. The ambush that wiped out the whole battalion couldn't have been set without exact information. You can't blame the enemy for profiting from treachery. We did the same when

we had the chance; that is war. As I say, they were a head-taking tribe and I'd have lost mine—whatever the vultures had left—when they came back from the pursuit to gather the spoils, if the rest of our fellows hadn't happened along. Oh, there was no question of treachery; that's why the rest of the regiment made a forced march overnight but got there too late. The C. O. learned that Carter—that was his name—had been in communication with the enemy in person. So you see I've really to thank him for all that I've lost. You never knew a Lieutenant Reginald Carter, Vivian? Of course you were never in Egypt, but I was wondering if you might have heard of him or happened to run across him some time."

NO. the only Carter I knew was in the London Scottish. Different chap entirely. You mean to say the swine got off, didn't get up against the wall?"

"Oh, he got off; stayed with the Germans and then deserted, so we heard."

"Shooting's too good for such blighters."

"You're right, Vivian; it is. They ought to be smashed like vermin. Very likely Carter wasn't his right name, of course. When we tried to look him up we couldn't find any trace of his people. You know how they were taking anybody at that time, making officers of 'em; adventurers, criminals, any old thing—cannon fodder. The only sort of clew we had— You see the worst of it was, Vivian, that he was one of my own countrymen."

"I say, really?"

"Well, if not an American citizen, he'd lived a long time there. You understand he wasn't in my regiment but one billeted with us; we weren't intimate but there was no mistaking his accent, mannerisms, though he claimed to be British. But he was American by birth or adoption—I'm sure of that—and I hope it was only adoption. I'm sure he came over and joined the B. E. F. just like myself. You can imagine that I've longed to meet him again, Vivian; in fact that's another reason why I've stayed over here. Aside from my

own great debt I owe it to the battalion, all the fellows that he sent west, to find him."

"But that's impossible. I mean, handicapped as you are, you'd never know him."

Banister laughed gently and, leaning over, tapped the other on the knee. "Oh, but I would; that's just the point. Weren't you saying how wonderful it was my knowing MacDonald? I never forget a voice or step. And then there's the smell."

"You're spoofing me, old chap."

"On the contrary. Do you remember Wells' story, 'The Country of the Blind?' Never read it? You should; it's instructive. A man with two perfectly good eyes finds himself in a lost country where all the inhabitants are born without eyes; naturally he expects to have every advantage over them, but finds it's quite otherwise. In fact it turns out that he's the one who's handicapped. Now you see Carter has been searched for by more than me; lots of people with perfectly good eyes have tried to find him and failed. Why? Because he has successfully disguised himself. But that disguise, however admirable, wouldn't cut any ice with me; he couldn't disguise his voice, his step, his smell. I only have to concentrate on them, and I wouldn't be led astray by any change in his appearance. He might assume an English accent—English as your own—but he couldn't keep it up eternally; he would make slips; and he couldn't change its timbre. Nor could he change his step—or smell. So rather than being handicapped I've got the bulge on those who can see. You understand?"

BANISTER laughed again. "Oh, I'd know him, Vivian, though it might take some time to make absolutely sure. And then—well, as you say, shooting's too good for him. Besides, he isn't worth hanging for. He should be quietly and thoroughly smashed, like vermin. Let's drink, Vivian, to his smashing and the day he roasts in hell! Chin-chin, cheerio!"

Meanwhile Blunt and Chief Inspector Arnold, destined to be one of the Yard's "Big Four," were listening to the man-

ager of the hotel in his private room back of the lounge. It lacked a few minutes of midnight.

"As you saw, he's down in the register as H. Smith of Birmingham," the manager was saying, "but he may be Banister. Indeed, from all you've said, I think it's pretty certain he is. He came here a couple of weeks ago with his man, Jevons, and a friend, Captain E. Vivian. You'd think, being stone blind like that, he'd want a lower floor; but, no, he insisted on having the top. They've kept entirely to themselves; all meals are served either in Captain Vivian's suite or his. I haven't seen them more than once or twice."

"How and by whom are the bills paid?" asked Blunt.

"They have been paid weekly in cash by Captain Vivian and Mr. Jevons. Of course if Smith is really Banister he couldn't give a check in his right name. Jevons attends to everything for him; a very capable and superior sort of secretary-valet."

There was a sudden commotion without; then came a sharp knock on the door and one of the night porters entered. "Beg pardon, sir," he said hurriedly, "but there's been a terrible accident. A guest has fallen out of the window, Embankment side. All smashed up, sir."

CHAPTER IV.

HOMEWARD.

IT was some time before they identified the victim and the window from which he had fallen. The room had been in darkness and no one had actually witnessed the tragedy, the first intimation being the noise of the falling body that had startled and horrified a passer-by. The hotel was ten stories and it had been a sheer drop to the paved courtyard. They picked up the fragments of a flesh-colored eye shield, and further careful examination verified the suspicion that this shapeless mass had recently been the person who styled himself Captain Vivian.

Blunt went up to the room with Chief Inspector Arnold and the manager. It

was thought at first that, so far as the hotel staff was concerned, the last person to see the victim alive was the waiter who had served dinner in Captain Vivian's room. That was at eight o'clock and he had taken out the dishes an hour later, leaving Vivian and Mr. Smith together. But a chambermaid said that at eleven thirty she had brought Captain Vivian some extra towels for which he rang. To all appearance he was alone at that time.

AS the trio left the elevator they met a clean-shaven, sober-faced individual of middle age, very neat and prim, who turned out to be Jevons. Addressing the manager he said that his master and he had just heard some rumor of the terrible accident from a maid and he was on his way to find out the truth. Would they come and see his master, who was very much upset?

"We'll see him presently," said the inspector, introducing himself. "At what time did he return from Captain Vivian's rooms?"

"About a quarter past eleven, sir," said Jevons, evidently much impressed by mention of the Yard. "I always insisted on taking him there and calling for him when he was in the captain's rooms; because though he can get about extraordinarily well, the corridor's dangerous, what with the lift and stairs. The master told me to come for him between eleven and half past. The captain seemed all right when we left him, said he was going to have a bath and turn in. That's the last we saw of him."

"Mr. Smith remained in his rooms?"

"Oh, yes, sir. He went straight to bed."

Vivian's suite was near the south elevator, about halfway down the corridor from "Mr. Smith's" rooms. The doors of both bedroom and drawing-room were locked, and the manager, producing a duplicate key, entered the latter. The room, when they switched on the light, showed no sign of disorder nor were the window curtains even disturbed. The chessboard with the unfinished game still stood on the

table flanked by the glasses, siphon and decanter, and the air was heavy with stale tobacco smoke.

"Obviously it was an accident," said the manager at length, anxious to avoid all the notoriety possible. "You see how low that window is—of course it's seldom up so high, but the weather's been so hot—and Captain Vivian had only one eye. Probably the sight of the other was impaired too. Again, the light was out. It's very easy to imagine what happened—quite clear and simple. He turned out the light and then, perhaps mistaking the window for his bedroom door—you see it's painted white—walked right through it. Or else he tried to close the window, it stuck, he lost his balance and fell. Or perhaps he had a sudden weak spell, suffered from shell shock. These wounded soldiers, poor fellows, have had many fatal accidents like that."

If the explanation was equally clear and simple to the other two they made no comment; Inspector Arnold entered the adjoining bedroom and Blunt, after a seemingly casual examination, appeared to have become interested in the unfinished game of chess. The royal game was one of his hobbies; he had played top board for his university and was rated one of the strongest amateurs at the Manhattan Club and Divan Café.

THE arrival of the reporters from Fleet Street at length took the manager downstairs, and Blunt joined Arnold in the bedroom. The inspector had piled most of Vivian's effects on the bed and was going through them with meticulous care. It was not the first time Blunt and he had worked together on an international case, and there was a perfect understanding of method and appreciation of capability between the two.

"I found this in one of the two easy-chairs by the chessboard," said Blunt casually, and held out a small bottle. It had a rubber stopper and no label; the glass was blue and it contained a few drops of some liquid that proved to be almost colorless. At the bottom were one or two tiny

fragments that looked and sparkled like crumbs of glass.

Arnold had removed the stopper, taken a long sniff, moistened the tip of a finger slightly and carefully applied it to his tongue. He raised mildly surprised eyes. "Hydrobromide of hyoscin."

BLUNT nodded. "And tasteless in whisky, I believe. It shouldn't be hard to trace."

"No, it's bound to be in some poisons register."

At length they went to "Mr. Smith's" rooms and were admitted by the waiting Jevons. His master, in a dressing gown, was pacing the drawing-room and smoking a cigarette. He turned the dark glasses on the visitors and his nose wrinkled; it was like some sightless animal scenting. Then he smiled a welcome.

When Jevons had retired Blunt charged the other with being Hugh Banister and told of his search for him. "I've explained to Inspector Arnold," he finished, "your reasons for going under an assumed name."

"The famous Lispin' Jimmie?" commented the other. "I've heard of you, of course. Old Parker seems to be in earnest this time about getting me home. I admit my identity; what's the use? Of course Jevons knows it, and so do Cox & Co. I had to explain about dodging my family."

"Well, you've found me, but you know the old saying about the horse and trough, Mr. Blunt. A pretty-looking horse I am, eh? Maybe you see now why I'm not keen on going home. However, we can leave all that for the present. I'm more concerned about this terrible accident, the fate of poor Vivian. How on earth did it happen? I suppose I was one of the last people to see him alive and, no doubt, you'll want to hear all I know."

He asked them to sit down, to help themselves to cigars and the whisky and soda, apologizing for not being able to help them in person. Obviously he was greatly distressed over Vivian's death, but he proceeded to give a clear and calm ac-

count of their evening together; how, following dinner, they had played chess for an hour or so, and then, finding it too hot, had turned out the light and smoked by the window until Jevons came. And, to a question from Arnold, he explained how poor Vivian, complaining of the heat, had raised the window higher.

"Was the light turned on again before you left?" asked the inspector.

"I wouldn't have known if it was, of course. I couldn't say."

HOW long have you known the deceased?" pursued Arnold. "Where and how did you first meet him, Mr. Banister?"

"Why, does it matter?"

"Yes, very much."

"Well, I met him in Switzerland—Zurich—last winter. It was a chance acquaintance, the sort that quickly develops into intimacy. I was crossing the Munster bridge, out for an airing with my man, when Jevons' hat blew off and was picked up by some one behind us. It was Vivian. It seemed he was stopping at the same hotel, and he asked if I wasn't an ex-service man. He could tell by my walk. That set us talking about the war and he introduced himself, saying he was late of the King's Royal Rifles. He explained how he'd lost an eye in the show and been invalidated out.

"That was the beginning of our intimacy. We had a lot in common; he was fond of chess and travel, and so was I; we both had been pretty badly crocked and we were lonely. He hadn't any people, and I'd none I cared about, and he also had an independent income."

"Did you meet any of his friends?"

"No, he hadn't any in Zurich. As I say, he seemed a lonely sort of chap. He never talked much about himself. That's really all I can tell you about him. We went from Zurich to Geneva and St. Moritz, then to Paris and on here. We were planning to run down to Devon next week where he'd some property. I can't realize that he's dead. I'll miss him fearfully. He was a fine chap, kinder than a

brother to me." Banister paused, evidently much moved.

"Did he borrow any money from you?" asked Inspector Arnold in what seemed a very callous manner.

"Oh, a fiver now and then when he was a bit short, as friends will. Why?"

"Did it never occur to you, Mr. Banister, to look up his credentials?"

"Credentials? Why, no; I wasn't employing him. Why should I have?"

"As a precaution against being imposed upon," said Arnold. "A very necessary measure, I should think, for one situated as you are."

"If I'm blind," said Banister shortly, "Jevons isn't. And I'm not a fool. I don't chum up with every stranger I happen to meet, and I've explained how I came to do so with Vivian. You forget that a person situated as I am can't pick and choose; nobody wants to bother with the blind. I was very grateful for Vivian's friendship. And you don't have to see a person in order to like him, to judge him. What are you driving at anyway? Vivian was absolutely all right."

"On the contrary, Mr. Banister, we've good reason to believe he was absolutely all wrong," said Arnold.

"What! What do you mean?"

HEAD of an international gang of forgers and counterfeiters," said Blunt. "There's no mistake, Mr. Banister; his right name was Henson and we've been after him a long time. Their headquarters were in Zurich for a time, and there's no doubt it got too hot for them and the gang broke up. Henson took another alias and saw the advantage of getting in with you. Of course faking passports was nothing to one of his talents, and he traveled under your cloak of respectability. We were on our way here to arrest him, as a matter of fact."

Banister seemed dazed; he groped his way to a chair and sat down heavily. "An international crook? Vivian *dans cette galère*? Are you sure there's no mistake? Well, I'm damned! I'd have sworn by him. Is it necessary for me to say, gen-

tlemen, that this is absolutely the last thing in the world I'd have suspected?"

"Are you thure he didn't try his hand on your check book?" lisped Blunt.

"No, I'd Cox's half-yearly statement only the other day and it's O. K. Jevons checked it up with me. But I suppose I'd better admit now that Vivian was into me for over a hundred quid, borrowed at various times. I didn't think anything of it because he explained how he was land poor, the estate in Devon sometimes taking all his ready money. Do you mean to say he never was in the army and that his blind eye was only part of the fellow's disguise?"

Blunt explained how Henson was thought to have been drowned, and how they had never been able to get even a minor conviction against him. "Like many another crook," he continued, "he found the war very convenient. Things were getting too hot so he skipped out, managed even to make a safe get-away from the *Lusitania*, and to further hide his identity in the British army. He got a commission—he was well educated, as you know—and then deserted, possibly at the first opportunity. I'm telling you in a few words what it's taken us, the Sureté and the Swiss police, a mighty long time to piece together—and we haven't all the pieces yet. But we've enough to be sure of his identity."

"IT'S a lucky thing," said Banister, "that you know all about me. Mr. Blunt. I might have got into serious trouble over this acquaintance."

"Indeed you might," agreed Blunt.

"In the light of all this information, Mr. Banister," said Inspector Arnold, "did you notice anything strange in the deceased's manner of late, particularly to-night? Though, of course, you couldn't see, did he seem nervous and upset, not his usual self?"

"Yes, but I thought it was the heat; he was very restless to-night and seemed to have lost his appetite. And then we gave up chess, and he smoked and drank more than usual. Yes, now that I look back on

2B—POP.

it, he wasn't at all like himself the past day or so."

"You wouldn't know if he was in the habit of keeping poisons—say, hydrobromide of hyoscin?"

"No. He seemed pretty well up on drugs, as far as I'm any judge, but that's all. Why?"

It was explained why it might be a case of suicide. It was no more than reasonable to suppose that the victim of such an accident would have made some attempt to save himself at the last moment; he would have clutched, say, at the curtains and thus dragged them down. In all likelihood he would also have cried out. Then there was the poison. Hyoscin, a drug not commonly used, was a powerful narcotic; it produced drowsiness, paralysis, unconsciousness, death.

AT the first there's also some delirium," said Inspector Arnold. "It would produce a condition where a man, you might say, would have the courage to attempt a quicker and more terrible form of death. He'd hardly realize what he was doing, as if he were intoxicated. You see, hyoscin's a comparatively slow poison, if sure; I mean a person might lie unconscious for a dozen hours or so before dying. Henson may have known we were closing in on him and that ultimate escape was impossible. I believe he knew that. So he may have taken this way out. After taking the fatal dose he mightn't have meant to throw himself from the window; as the pupils of the eye become paralyzed, that part of the program may have been accidental. Or, if deliberate, he may have wanted to finish the business as quickly as possible."

"Poor devil!" said Banister.

"On the other hand," said Blunt, "it may have been suicide. It may just have happened that he wasn't able to catch at anything, and, if he screamed, that nobody heard him. Hyoscin is only given hypodermically in very small doses, in such cases as delirium tremens, mania, meningitis, and until the residue of those glasses is analyzed and an autopsy held, we don't

know that he took any at all. But everything would point to the fact that he did."

Inspector Arnold nodded. "You can't work with hyoscin," he further explained obligingly to a question from Banister, "because it's such sticky stuff; and so they make a salt. That bottle shows that the crystals hadn't been long dissolved."

Although no trace of the poison was found in the glasses, the whisky or anything in Henson's rooms, the Home Office analyst discovered over a grain in the remains, enough to kill two or three people. But though the poisons registers throughout London and elsewhere were examined carefully, there was no evidence of a sale that pointed to Henson as the purchaser. Indeed there was no sale of hyoscin to any private individual at all.

Considering his criminal calling, however, it would have been an easy matter for Henson to procure deadly drugs through illegitimate channels, and the natural inference was that he had come into possession of the one used while on the Continent. As it was plain that he must have taken the whole contents straight from the bottle, one that couldn't be confounded with any containing medicine, and, moreover that he had first to dissolve the crystals and thus prepare the fatal dose, there could be no question of death by misadventure. The jury brought in a verdict of suicide while of unsound mind, and that evening Banister informed Blunt that he would return home.

"I'll be returning too," said Blunt. "We can go together."

BANISTER laughed. "Going to keep an eye on me, eh? You needn't worry; I mean what I say. As I've told you, this affliction of mine had as much to do with my exile as anything else. Vivian—I mean Henson—said it was the wrong kind of pride, and I guess maybe he was right. All the same if you realized the full extent of my disfigurement—"

Banister suddenly raised a hand to his glasses, then laughed mirthlessly. "You see? A pair of beauties. Is it any wonder I want to hide my eyes all the time?"

But I don't want to be pitied, fussed over, be a burden to any one. Still, if my father really wants me and needs me, and he thinks I can manage the business, I'll go. And darned gladly too. If I can never see the Stars and Stripes again at least I'll know they're there. You mustn't think I liked being an exile. Home! Yes, and I won't be a burden; old Parker's right and I'm quite able to take hold of things. I'll show them what a blind man can do."

"I've thome idea of that already," lisped Blunt amiably.

CHAPTER V.

THE WELCOME.

CONSIDERING all the circumstances there probably had never been a stranger home-coming than that of Hugh Banister, a stranger reunion between wayward son and Roman parent. No doubt Maitland Banister's seeming coldness and domineering manner had had much to do with his son's waywardness. He was one of those unfortunate beings fated to hide his true feelings under a sheet of ice, and both father and son possessed the same high temper and a pride quick to take umbrage at the smallest slight.

When he received the cable announcing his son's prospective home-coming, Maitland behaved in characteristic fashion; whatever his real feelings he considered himself bound to make a gesture of disapproval and resentment. And he pretended that it was a colossal surprise.

"Huh," sniffed Maitland. "Well, well, I suppose we'll have to make the best of it. But I didn't ask him to come home."

He continued to voice this sop to his pride while at heart he was happier than he had been for years. Carol knew this but pretended otherwise. Still grumbling at having to leave the Rialto, he threw himself feverishly into the task of getting the old house ready.

"Only ten days, my girl; we'll have to hurry. He'll want a home, after all his gallivanting, and the best hotel in the world isn't one. He'll want his old room too; better have it done up. And a new car.

You'll have to see about the servants and everything; it's a nuisance, of course, but we'll have to make the best of it." Such was his slogan while his heart sang.

Back to the old home that he loved, to live again as a united family. A cherished dream. It was the more pathetic that Hugh Banister would never see the lavish preparations made for his reception, nor Maitland long. His sight was fading, in spite of all medical skill, and he existed in a perpetual twilight that was gradually becoming night. It was Carol who saw to the work on the house being carried out, consulting, proposing, planning with him.

JOHN MACDONALD received news of the cable with surprise and constraint, a constraint that grew as the days passed. On the day before the *Berengaria* was expected he called at the house on the Drive, where he knew Carol to be alone, putting the finishing touches to everything.

"I've a confession to make," he said awkwardly. "I've got to prepare you for a shock. I saw Hugh in Zurich."

"What!"

"Yes, when I entered the hotel I noticed him in a corner of the lounge, and though I should never have recognized him the desk clerk told me afterward it was he. When I looked again, Hugh had gone. I don't know how he knew I was there but it seemed as if he did. He went up to his room and stayed there until I left Zurich. But this is the part—he's horribly disfigured."

"O-o-h!" said Carol, staring at him. "But we saw him in London and he wasn't."

"You happened to see only one side of his face," explained MacDonald. "You must have. One side's all right; the other is—horrible. You know how proud he used to be of his looks. I guessed then why he didn't want to see me."

"But why on earth didn't you tell us?"

"Because it was his secret. It's quite evident he didn't want it known."

"You should have told. Oh, poor, poor Hugh! Don't you see how this changes everything? Don't you see that it shows

it wasn't all unforgiveness and stubbornness on his part? I—I'm very angry and—and astonished at you, Jack. I don't see why you didn't tell."

"Maybe you don't," said MacDonald, "but I'd do it again. It was his secret, not mine. Maybe men see these things differently from women. I felt in honor bound not to tell so long as he hadn't."

"But you knew perfectly well that if Uncle Maitland had only known this——"

"What difference could it have made?" he caught her up. "None at all. Hadn't he already made all the overtures, done all he could to get him to return? It didn't lie with Mr. Banister, but with Hugh. And I don't know that this had really anything to do with Hugh's remaining away; I'm only inferring it had. It's for him, not us, to interpret his conduct. Anyway I'd say nothing to Mr. Banister."

"But I certainly will," declared the girl. "He's not so blind that he won't be able to see that awful change. He should be prepared for a shock even more than I. And it's Hugh's secret no longer; he has put his feelings aside. And he should try to put the best construction on it all. I mean we've a right to believe that it had a great deal to do—perhaps everything—with his remaining over there; and we've a right to tell his father so. We should do our utmost to make the relations between Hugh and his father better, make the home-coming a success."

"I'm sure I'm not trying to keep them apart, if that's what you're insinuating," retorted MacDonald, flushing darkly.

"It's not my habit to insinuate, Jack."

WELL, I repeat, if Hugh didn't want his secret known it wasn't for me to give it away. I acted as I thought I should and I've nothing to reproach myself with. I say you should let him explain—however, do what you like."

"I intend to. And if your conduct is irreproachable, your manners aren't."

"Thanks," said MacDonald, and stalked out.

Thus already the home-coming of Hugh Banister had produced a discord where

heretofore complete harmony had existed. It was their first serious quarrel, nor did it promise to be the last.

To youth eight years or so seems a very long time and but for that fleeting glimpse in London, Carol had seen nothing of Hugh Banister nor heard much more. She had been a child when he left and now she was a woman. The pleasant picture of him had not only faded during that time but had been replaced gradually by one infinitely less pleasing; a heart overflowing with pity at his terrible affliction had dried up at the treatment accorded his father and herself. And now, thanks to MacDonald's admission, the old picture was restored with added luster and glory; all her former compassion had returned, and with it something more. She was still at the age of hero worship.

AS she waited at the barrier, with the garrulous Aloysius Parker and his buoyant son, she blamed herself anew for having so cruelly misjudged this belated war hero they were there to meet. Yes, a hero of heroes; instead of a monster produced by Armageddon and his wrongs, fancied or real, he was one of those strong, silent, self-sacrificing characters so seldom met with outside fiction.

He was not a monster of implacable unforgiveness and filial hatred, but a highly romantic and pathetic figure for whom she waited with tense expectancy. How would he receive her? With but indifferent success she had tried to conjure up the memory of those far-off days when, for a year or so, he had played the part of indulgent elder brother. How helpless he would now be, and how much she had to make up to him! It was all Jack's fault, this cruel misjudging of Hugh. And Jack, to add to his sins, had not put in an appearance.

"Surely he could have come to the dock," she said. "I mean Mr. MacDonald."

"There's nothing at the office to detain him," replied Mr. Parker. "Nor will there be in future. I gave him a week's notice this morning."

"Surely you didn't discharge him? Why?"

"He discharged himself," replied the old lawyer, pulling down his ornate vest. "I've suffered a great deal from that young man, Miss Carol, and only for Mr. Banister I'd have discharged him long ago. He has no qualifications, no veneration, for the law; no, and he never will have. To him the law is not a great and noble profession but merely something to furnish him with money necessary for what he calls a good time.

"I've said nothing but given him every chance," continued Aloysius Parker. "He thought that because of Mr. Banister's kind interest in his behalf he could act as he pleased. Apart from his total unfitness for the law, there was this amazing deception about poor Hugh. He let us down inexcusably, betrayed us. It would have made a profound difference had Mr. Banister known of Hugh's disfigurement. If I hadn't sent Mr. Blunt over we'd never have learned the truth. That move forced a tardy confession from MacDonald. I suspected all along there was something queer about that Zurich trip. Obtaining money under false pretenses—that's what it comes to. The most reprehensible sort of conduct, as I told him. He tried to justify it, gave me a lot of impudence, and the upshot was that instead of taking a week's notice he walked out."

"I'm sorry," said Carol, biting her lip. "Uncle Maitland had already spoken to him about it—and now he has lost his situation. I—I feel that it's all my fault."

NOTHING of the sort," declared Bertram, patting her hand. "You had to tell Mr. Banister; you'd no alternative. It would have been wicked, unpardonable, not to."

"Exactly. You mustn't feel that way at all," said Aloysius, patting her shoulder. "MacDonald himself is solely to blame, and, sooner or later, he would have found that the law is no profession for him. The law doesn't demand genius, but honesty and straight dealing are obliga-

tory. The firm of Parker and Leech was founded and has flourished on those qualities. MacDonald's behavior in the matter of Hugh is susceptible of an explanation quite different from the one he gave, an explanation that's considerably less worthy and more believable. I needn't mention it."

Carol flushed hotly, but whatever she intended saying was checked by the sight of Hugh Banister, flanked by the faithful Jevons and Mr. Blunt, advancing to the barrier.

Her first sensation, contrary to all expectation, was one of invincible physical repulsion; her flesh seemed to crawl as her eyes met that face whose unblemished half only rendered the whole more terrible. The dark glasses seemed to complete the sinister picture; she thought of the smoky bulging orbs of some Silurian monster. Then came swift pity, overwhelming compassion and understanding. So this was Hugh who used to be so boyishly vain of his appearance! What a change, and how he must be suffering!

WHATEVER his feelings at the ordeal he kept them hidden. "Well, Carol," he said matter-of-factly, tucking the inseparable Malacca cane under his arm and groping for her extended hands, "here I am at last. I've been smoked out, couldn't dodge the famous Lipping Jimmie as I did you and father and MacDonald. What? Oh, how are you, Mr. Parker? Thought I remembered that voice. And this is your son. Yes, yes. Regular reception committee. Where is my father?"

"He's waiting in the car," said Coral. "He—he can't see very well——"

"Yes, Blunt told me. That's why I'm here. Got to come home and see that old Parker doesn't pillage the estate. Ha, ha, if a lawyer can't rob a couple of blind men, whom can he rob?"

Aloysius Parker evidently considered the jest in bad taste, for his mulberry cheeks swelled ominously, yet he achieved an indulgent laugh. "Even I would find that impossible," he said, "for you forget that there's my boy to reckon with.

You'll understand how impossible it would be, even for me, when you get to know him. Of course he should be in the law but—well, duty is duty. If you're going to take hold of things——"

"I should say I am. Why else should I return?"

"Of course. Exactly," nodded Mr. Parker indulgently. "My boy will help you to the utmost. You'll find him indispensable."

Hugh Banister smiled, a gentle smile that Carol was to learn to look for and dread, then, with tapping cane, he walked from the dock.

The greeting of Maitland Banister was characteristic; one would never have suspected with what deep and varied emotions he had awaited the meeting, all that he had done to make it a success. The other's terrible disfigurement was mercifully hidden from him to a certain extent, yet Maitland's dim eyes discerned through their perpetual twilight that which wrung his old heart. Still he was so constituted that nothing of what he felt could pass his lips; not to save his life could he have voiced his real feelings.

"Well, Hugh!" he said dryly, extending a skinny hand from the car, a hand that trembled slightly.

"Well, father!"

They shook hands and that was all.

Hugh turned to Blunt. "Many thanks for your company," he said with the gentle smile. "I hope we'll be able to finish that last game of chess some day. I've taken down the position; it's about even so far. You're a fine player."

He smiled again gently at Blunt, bade him good-by, and entered the gorgeous new town car.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARKER IDEA.

THE Parkers' idea—it was the fruit of both father and son—of sparing no effort to bring Hugh Banister home was far from being inconsistent with Blunt's conception of the parental character, or the altruistic undertaking it appeared. It had its inception after Maitland Banister was

forced to give up active control of his affairs. Had it been his intention to relinquish the reins entirely to Bertram, the Parkers would never have troubled about Hugh; rather it would have been to their continued interest to keep him in innocuous exile.

It may be said here that Aloysius Parker, in a small and subtle way, had done what he could to keep father and son apart. The Banister fortune was a luscious plum that in truth he had guarded jealously for years, hoping that eventually the greater part, if not all, would fall to him and his. Hugh's exile had happily removed a formidable obstacle, and, to further consolidate his grip, Aloysius had recourse to his son.

Bertram, in spite of his imposing looks and the perpetual parental puffing, was a very ordinary mortal, a good bit of a fraud like his father, and perhaps us all. If he had abandoned the "lawr" it was simply because it had abandoned him; he had found the examinations too much for his mental and physical laziness. Indeed it had become a burning family question what to do with Bertram when the war happily solved it and he emerged triumphantly a new figure.

THE parental ability at pulling strings had wangled him a cushy staff job, and ultimately even a medal, denied to many who had earned it. He came home covered with bogus glory and found another cushy job in the office of the Banister Estate, where he quickly wormed himself into a position of trust and responsibility. Thus are heroes rewarded.

Maitland Banister accepted Bertram at his own and his father's valuation, and, smarting under Hugh's callous indifference, treated him more favorably than otherwise he might. In Bertram and John MacDonald, whom he had known as Hugh's whilom boyhood friend, it would appear that he tried to find the companionship denied him by his own son. They were frequent visitors, common friends of Carol. But while he liked Bertram and found his work satisfactory, Maitland had

no intention of leaving him in sole command of the office.

Perhaps he sensed that with the father controlling the legal helm, the son the financial, the Parker team would be too strong a combination for a man going blind. It might present opportunity and temptation that even the most upright would find difficult to resist. Perhaps he knew Aloysius better than the latter thought he did; he was shrewd, suspicious by nature, and had dealt with Parker all his life. It might have occurred to him that the adroitness by which he, Maitland, had hitherto profited, could be turned against himself.

ON the other hand he may have thought simply Bertram, while an able lieutenant, lacked the experience and ability for commander in chief. At all events he made it clear that Bertram's enforced promotion was only temporary. Maitland kept hoping that he would be able to resume active control of his affairs, but, failing that, he would engage as manager an older and more experienced man than Bertram.

Now, to the Parkers, a blind man, whatever his capabilities, was infinitely preferable to the sort of manager Maitland would be sure to install. Moreover, they didn't believe for one moment that Hugh was the capable person they pretended. A blind man might be able to type letters and all that, but—well, the fact remained that he was blind. They realized sooner than Maitland that some one must take his place, and, seeing it couldn't be Bertram at present, they thought of Hugh. At the worst it would give them time, during which anything might happen and Bertram would remain in charge. Aloysius knew well that, whatever Maitland might pretend, he would appoint no new manager so long as there was a chance of Hugh's acceptance.

At the best, Hugh would come home and Bertram would have as chief a mere blind figurehead such as Maitland had become. This assumption of independence, this pretense of not being handicapped by

his affliction—it stood out in his letters—was evidently Hugh's weak point. Vanity had always been his weakness; he had been inordinately vain of his looks, and now he was inordinately vain of his ability to do without sight. Well, they would play on it, flatter him into believing himself all that he pretended. Let him reign nominally in the office of the Banister Estate, let him think himself the whole show. One must be charitable to the blind.

SO Aloysius had broached the idea to Maitland, emphasizing Hugh's wonderful ability. As father and son had never corresponded, he was at liberty to draw on his imagination. "Perfectly marvelous," he had summed up. "The last letter I had—why, he can do anything! And a sound business head. Completely changed in that respect and others. But, after all, he's an experienced man by now. Why pay a manager if he'll come? He's the logical one, and my boy will help him. The brilliant and inevitable idea occurred to me after reading his last letter. I wouldn't suggest it if I wasn't sure of his ability. And the managership will be a bait. He's tired drifting round Europe; he's lonely and he wants to settle down and work. He wants to come home and he's merely waiting for a gesture——"

"I'll make no more gestures," Maitland had growled. "But if—however, don't bother me about it."

So the Parkers' shrewd plan had succeeded, and such profound self-deceivers are even the most humble and single-minded of us, that father and son assured each other that they had acted nobly.

They were so assuring each other now as, dinner over, they sat on the porch of the Banister home—Lafayette House, as it had been renamed—one of the few reminders of old colonial days that still graced the upper Drive. It had been remodeled from time to time, palatial mansions now hemmed it in north, east and south, yet it still maintained much of its virgin acreage and simple grandeur as in the days when the gallant Frenchman had proffered his help to the colonies in their

fight for freedom, and partaken here of the Banister hospitality. The ground alone, a half square block, was worth a fortune but Maitland had steadfastly refused all offers.

"A touching picture, my boy. It's pleasant to know that we've brought it about," murmured Aloysius benignly, and nodded at a window on the right. It was the evening of Hugh's home-coming and the dinner had been an informal affair, confined strictly to the family and a few old friends like the Parkers. From where the latter now sat they could, through the lighted window of the drawing-room, see Hugh and Maitland and Carol Carruthers talking and laughing with old Doctor Armitage, the family physician, and his robust spouse.

"Never saw old Maitland in such good fettle," continued Aloysius with a proprietary air. "It cheers me; it does indeed. There's nothing that makes one so truly happy and contented, my boy, as being kind and considerate to others. It's the only thing that pays in this sinful and selfish world. Maitland's so happy at the success of my scheme that he spoke of increasing my—er—honorarium. Of course I wouldn't hear of it but he insists."

ALOYSIUS appeared to wink a somewhat rheumy eye, but, no doubt due to the darkness, his son failed to take any notice.

"And it makes your position the stronger, my boy. As you see, poor Hugh, for all his pretensions, is really a flat tire; badly punctured, I'm afraid. Of course it will be your duty to encourage his pretensions. A charitable, obligatory deception. It will make him and his father so happy to believe that he *can* run things."

Bertram nodded the polished head. "I was afraid, not that Hugh would prove fit, but that—I mean about Carol."

"Thought we might be bringing home a rival?" smiled Aloysius, rocking on his flat heels. "No, no; sympathy is one thing but love quite another. I'd no fear of that. True, it was Maitland's secret wish

at one time, but it takes two to make a match. She was only a child and Hugh merely regarded her as a sister. And now—perhaps it's just as well the poor fellow's such a sight. It quite rules him out of any marriage. No woman could possibly think of marrying such a—er—nightmare; and no man would think of asking her to."

Bertram nodded again and stroked his own smooth pink cheek. "He is a sight," he agreed contentedly, eyes on the window. "Far worse than I expected."

"No, Hugh would never expect it, nor his father either," continued Aloysius, knocking the ash from his cigar and staring dreamily across the lamp-lit Drive and black Hudson to the brooding bulk of the Palisades. "It's quite apparent that Hugh has resumed his old footing with Carol, his brotherly attitude, and has no thought of changing it."

"Why should he? Now, if he had sight, if he could see what a beauty she's developed into—but he can't. There's nothing to tempt him there. The picture he has of her is that of an immature and awkward girl, and that picture must remain with him to the grave. No, if I were to consider such a subject as rivals, I should say that our friend MacDonald was the possible danger. And now—well, he has exposed himself at last."

"I'm glad we didn't have to," said Bertram piously. "Our forbearance has been rewarded. Of course I couldn't bring myself to tell Carol long ago that he wasn't worthy of her friendship. One has to live up to one's code, even if other people have none. It's remarkable how everything good works to its own end. I told my lads last Sunday in class how, if you only follow the progress of evil long enough, you'll find that its supposed triumph is only temporary."

ALOYSIUS rubbed his nose and shot a glance at his buoyant offspring; if the latter had seen it he would have been considerably surprised. Occasionally even Aloysius found the filial hypocrisy difficult to digest. It was a far richer and more

bountiful offering than his own. It might be said that the father regarded hypocrisy as a business, the son as a religion. Aloysius put it off after office hours, when among his particular cronies, and would have found it agreeable to do so in private with his son.

BUT Bertram wouldn't have it; he never put his off, even when alone. He had been reared in an atmosphere of hypocrisy and taken seriously what, at heart, his father knew to be a sham, what he regarded as a mere business and social necessity. He had never posed publicly as a moral reformer. But Bertram had even arrived at the point where he believed himself to be a war hero, and he loved to display his medal to all and sundry as though it had been honestly earned. The completeness of the thing rather staggered Aloysius at times.

"Yes, my boy," he said, "hoist with his own petard. MacDonald tried to keep Hugh away, fearing even such a possible rival. But the question is has he been hoisted far enough? Is Maitland angry enough with him to change the will?"

"Oh, I think so. We don't know what passed, but MacDonald must have got what he deserved for he hasn't dared to show up since."

"Well, I don't know. As I told you, Maitland made a new will, after his experience in London, leaving Hugh very little—of course he couldn't touch his wife's money—and giving the bulk of the estate to Carol, and a hundred thousand to MacDonald."

"Yes, yes, I haven't forgotten—nor that you allowed him to make that last ridiculous bequest." It had evidently rankled with Bertram; he spoke quite irritably.

"A lawryer must do as he's told, my boy. You know I did all I could, or dared, to prevent it. If father and son get on, it goes without saying that father will make a new will in favor of son. We can't help that, we must expect it—if they get on. They may quarrel again; there's that old check business, the family pride and temper to reckon with. And what-

ever appearances may be to-night—however, we'll see what the future holds.

"In any case Carol will be well provided for; perhaps she'll get half with Hugh, seeing he has his mother's income. When the new will's made you may be sure I'll do all I can for her. But I doubt if MacDonald's bequest will be rescinded. Maitland's been like a father to him. However, we'll see. The breach may be wider than we think."

I DON'T think you'll see him here again," said Bertram. "Aside from all else, he won't care to meet Hugh, knowing that Hugh will be told of the underhand trick he tried to play on him. He'll want to avoid him."

But Bertram was wrong; half an hour later, during a game of auction, the truth dawned on him that his partner had basely deserted him. Carol had induced another to take her hand for the proverbial five minutes, and now Bertram did the same. He went to look for her.

Of course Miss Carruthers wasn't expecting Mr. MacDonald, let alone looking for him; she merely happened to be strolling about the grounds when he appeared. Entirely an accidental meeting. Accidental also that they eventually entered the little summerhouse. These things have a way of happening.

"Yes, of course I want to see Hugh," MacDonald was saying. "Do you think I've been trying to dodge him?"

"Have I suggested that?"

"If you haven't, I'll bet a dollar others have."

"Don't be so nasty and cross, Jack."

He looked very tired, disgusted. "I suppose I am cross. I've had no time for anything but hunting a job. Of course old Parker's told you already. Well, it's no fun on a hot day—nor any day."

"Why did you leave like that?"

"Because I'm totally fed up with the 'lawr.'" He laughed shortly. "Old Parker's right; I'm not made for it. He fired me, yes, but I'd have quit anyway. I know they all say that, but it's so. He can go to blazes!"

"Jack! You've lost your temper—and you know it's your worst fault——"

"One of them anyway. It's all right to preach, but if you had to work for old Parker—and he had the infernal impudence to suggest—— However, it's no matter; I'm through."

"Have you got another position?"

"No, I haven't. Do you think it's as easy as all that? If I ever thought so I know better now. Two years in the Argonne are an asset to some, a handicap to most. I've found that out. Two years chucked away, wasted."

"No, not wasted; never that. You can't, you shouldn't reckon them by material values alone."

"Fine words, but they won't feed you. The war's as dead as Cæsar, and the fellows who gave up good jobs and more for it are fools. That's being proved. I'd have had my degree. When I see how lots of fellows have fared, fellows I know who never saw a German except as a prisoner——" He paused. "Anyhow I'm way behind other men of my age. Maybe I'm just plain dumb. I'll have to try something else than the lawr."

"Uncle Maitland can easily get you another position."

"Do you think I'd take it from him? Not much! Not another favor, thank you."

"Don't be silly. Of course he was angry about Hugh, but anything he may have said—his bark's always worse than his bite, and he doesn't even mean half his bark. You should know that by this time. He's only waiting for you to ask——"

"He'll wait a long time."

"I think you're perfectly stupid."

"Glad there's something perfect about me."

THERE was a long silence. Then a shadow appeared on the moonlit walk. It grew slowly, monstrous and deformed, and they watched in silence as though fascinated. The girl thought of a witch and her broomstick, MacDonald of some grotesque three-legged animal.

It approached without sound, and at

length Hugh Banister stood revealed. He leaned on the Malacca cane, shining glasses upturned to the moon, and sniffed audibly. The couple in the summerhouse did not stir.

"Hello, Carol. Hello, Mac," said Banister presently. "Oh, I know you're in there; I can smell you."

They advanced in embarrassed silence, the girl with a forced laugh, MacDonald with an awkward greeting. Hugh gave him a limp reluctant hand, smiled gently when the other explained laboriously how he had been prevented from welcoming him home before. There was a decided constraint between them, and the girl clutched at anything to cover it.

"You're like an oger, Hugh, with your fo, fe, fi, fum," she laughed nervously. "How did you really know we were there? You couldn't have heard us, for we weren't talking."

"Mr. Bertram Parker told me you were here."

"Oh," she said thoughtfully. "I see." Then, with something like relief: "Of course I knew you really couldn't smell people out like that, like—like a witch doctor of Rider Haggard's."

He smiled again. "Perhaps I can smell cut not only people but things. I've a highly educated nose; the law of compensation, you see. That's how I knew you, Mac, in Zurich, before you recognized me."

"Really?" said MacDonald, and changed the subject.

CHAPTER VII.

MURDER AGAIN.

WAS Hugh Banister a murderer, and, if so, why? What had been the motive? Or was the jury right and had Lou Henson committed suicide?

Over a month had passed since that night in London, and Blunt, long since back in Washington, had not yet answered the question. In spite of pressing Federal work it still lived at the back of his mind; indeed it was very much alive. More sensational and intriguing cases are known to men of Blunt's profession than ever

see the light of day; and, thanks to the law of evidence, many a suspected and respected criminal is walking the streets a free man.

On the night of his arrival from London, while a dinner was being given in honor of Hugh Banister, Blunt talked the whole case over with Corrigan. Aside from any question of friendship he considered it his duty. Blunt's position as guardian of society extended only to Federal matters, and his status was simply that of an outside expert called in by the government.

Even the famous Blunt Agency handled only criminal cases; it would have nothing to do with divorce cases or ordinary civil ones; and naturally it couldn't act unless engaged by the municipality or individual. But Corrigan was the paid guardian of society, virtual head of the detective bureau, and he had the opportunity to do what Blunt couldn't. Moreover, it was his duty.

IT might surprise the average layman to know how much time and effort is spent by the police in trying to prevent crime; the best type of officer would rather prevent one murder than solve a dozen. He truly rejoices when a man is plucked from the downward path and he does his honest best to help the reformed crook keep straight.

Blunt and Corrigan were of this type; they discussed the case of Hugh Banister, not as insatiable sleuthhounds seeking a victim at all costs, but as two very experienced and human students of erring mankind. The same might be said of Inspector Arnold of the C. I. D.

"Now, Dan," continued Blunt, having fully amplified what Corrigan had heard of Henson's death, "the point to bear in mind is Hugh Banister's ability, physical and mental. For all his affliction, precious little is impossible to him. Of course darkness would be no handicap to him and he could have doped that glass when the light was out. And the action of hyoscin, being what it is, would have leveled the physical inequalities between the two. Henson could have been pitched from the

window without a struggle, without realizing what was happening."

"Uh-huh. And the locked doors?"

"A duplicate wasn't used. The Grand Hotel has special keys for every door and about every locksmith in London was questioned. But the bedroom door has a transom—and we found the key on a couch.

WAS it Henson's habit, after locking his bedroom at night, to remove the key? Perhaps; people have funny habits. But the transom was open, because of the heat, and the couch was near enough to chuck a key onto."

Corrigan nodded and shifted his cigar to port. "And the girl who brought the water after Banister had gone?"

"She swears it was Henson, but she may be wrong. She admits that the bedroom was dark, that he took the pitcher from her at the door with a single word of thanks. We couldn't shake her evidence, nor Jevons', about Banister leaving about half an hour before Henson's death.

"On the other hand, we could find nobody who saw them at eleven thirty, nor any later time. Of course Jevons is the crux of the case, you may say; if we postulate Banister's guilt, we must postulate Jevons' also. It couldn't have been done without his complicity, at least complicity after the fact. That's obvious. If he's a liar, he's as good a one as Banister himself. He may be actuated simply by loyalty to his master, or his silence may have been bought. He could have attended to details that Banister couldn't, such as seeing to the glass being properly washed, and throwing the key through the transom."

"Why was the bottle left there, and who's chair was it?"

"Henson's, according to Banister. I think it was an oversight, one of these accidents that endanger, when they don't ruin, the cleverest plans. Why trouble to wash the glass—of course there's no evidence that it was—put in some fresh whisky and soda and yet leave the poison bottle? You see that only for the finding

of that bottle there would have been no post-mortem inquiry, no suspicion of poison.

"And apart from the evidence of the maid and Jevons, if we hadn't known about the hyoscin, the mere idea of a blind man being able to throw Henson from the window without a struggle would have been ridiculous. It was the bottle that made Arnold and me suspicious. If Henson poisoned himself, then, of course, he must have drunk straight from the bottle, swallowed the whole contents, for he wouldn't have washed the glass afterward. We searched Banister's room on the quiet—Jevons' too, for that matter—but found no trace of hyoscin, nothing of an incriminating nature. And then there's the apparent lack of all motive."

"In fact, Jimmie, you've got nothing on him?"

"Absolutely nothing," agreed Blunt. "Of course Banister's guilt wasn't so much as hinted at during the inquest; there was his social position, his affliction, his war service, and all the evidence pointing to his absolute innocence. The question never entered the mind of the coroner, nobody's but Arnold's and my own. And what I'm telling you is strictly on the quiet."

Corrigan nodded. "But you think he's guilty?"

BLUNT lighted a cigarette and began to walk the floor. "I'm pretty sure of it," he said at length. "So is Arnold. You know how you get an indelible impression sometimes without a shred of supporting evidence. We may be wrong, but there it is.

"Nothing could be more innocent, mind you, than Banister's bearing. Jevons' too. I crossed with them on purpose, had them under close observation, but nothing doing. Either Arnold and I are all wrong or those two are the cleverest actors I've been up against for many a day. There's no question of Banister's mental ability, of course; I've had examples of his subtlety over the chessboard—playing blind, mind you. He makes no attempt to

hide his ability, no more than would an innocent man."

"There's no kid about his eyes, eh? I mean he wasn't operated on and had his sight restored, like you hear about sometimes, and didn't let on?"

"No, that would have been impossible; he hadn't any eyes to restore. I mean they were totally gone. I was at St. Dunstan's and heard about it. And then I saw for myself.

HE claims, more or less seriously, to have a wonderfully developed sense of smell, touch and hearing; but he may get his results more from a sixth sense, an intuition, that some of the blind seem to possess in an uncanny degree. Altogether a most interesting character whom I hadn't the chance to study as I wished; he was sick—or pretended to be—for three days and kept his room. And now I won't have the chance to see more of him.

"It's no intention of mine to crab the Banister reunion by airing what I think, and that's aside from any question of a suit for libel. I may be all wrong about Hugh Banister, and I hope I am. I wouldn't have his old father know for the world. On the face of it, my sympathies are all with Hugh Banister; if he killed Henson I'm sure he had a good and sufficient reason.

"On the other hand, Dan, we've more to consider than sympathy. There's another side you've got to look at. If I'm right, here's a man who, having committed one cold-blooded calculated murder, may commit another. That's what we've to consider."

"Why should he? What do you mean exactly by that?"

"I mean that Hugh Banister may have lost more than his eyes in the war; he may have lost his sense of moral values, his respect for the sacredness of human life. If we teach men to kill by intensified training, is it any wonder if we find ourselves like Frankenstein?"

"We've had examples of the war's legacy before this. What I wish to point out is that Hugh Banister has come home to

a situation that may well develop into anything. Outwardly it may be a scene of domestic peace and happiness, but inwardly—who knows? Women and gold, the two things that cause most of the crime in this world. I believe there are three men, among them Hugh Banister himself, who are at least interested in the one woman. And, whatever the truth about Hugh Banister, he's not the sort of person his family and friends think. If I'm not greatly mistaken the Parkers, for one, will soon find that out to their cost.

"A very interesting situation, Dan, and I can't be here to watch it. But you can and must. Is Hugh Banister's homecoming going to prove a blessing or a curse?"

"Aw, quit riding him, Jimmie. You got the hump to-day. Anyway, what can I do? What can anybody do? Am I to go stick him in the cooler because you *think* he may have croaked Henson?"

Blunt turned moodily from the window. "No, of course. But I'd watch him, Dan; I would indeed. Keep in close touch with affairs at the office and Lafayette House. You can do it without his knowing. Find out all you can. It won't do any harm and it may do a lot of good. I don't care what he may have done to Henson; it's what he may do to some one else."

THERE was more in Blunt's mind than he cared to say even to Corrigan; conjectures, doubts, suspicions that he knew the other must ridicule even as his own common sense sought to ridicule them. Nor was this all; Corrigan's half jocular assertion that he, Blunt, had taken an inexplicable dislike to Hugh Banister troubled him. It troubled him because it contained more than an element of truth to which he had been blind. He had been prepared to meet Banister with the widest sympathy and understanding, had striven hard to do so, yet there was an indefinable something about the other that repelled him, something that had nothing to do with the thought that he was possibly a murderer.

Yes, if he did not actively dislike Hugh

Banister he certainly mistrusted him, mistrusted all he said and did. Why this should be so he was at loss to say. Was his judgment swayed unconsciously by this passive and inexplicable antipathy? Perhaps. And yet there was Arnold; he had the same suspicion. Perhaps something would yet turn up to prove it definitely right or wrong. Arnold of the C. I. D. wasn't done with Henson's death; he would plod on doggedly so long as any doubt existed in his mind. He was that kind. And it might yet be discovered where, and by whom, that hyoscin had been procured.

Nor was he, Blunt, done with the case either; if it wasn't his task and pleasure to pursue it as regards Hugh Banister, there was Henson's old gang to be accounted for if possible. And further light on the dead leader, if it could be procured, might shed further light on Banister. Was it true that they had met for the first time last winter in Zurich? There was that old business of his father's check; rightly or wrongly Banister had been accused of forgery, and forgery had been one of Henson's specialties. Again, both men had left for England at approximately the same time. Was this only coincidence—it had struck him inevitably that day in the Rialto—or could a motive for Henson's death be looked for and found in an earlier acquaintance between the two?

"I may be all wrong. I hope so," repeated Blunt to himself as he boarded the Washington train. "Anyway I've told Corrigan all I can."

NOW, at the end of a month, Blunt was back in New York sooner than he had expected. Though Federal matters had engrossed him entirely he knew something of how things had progressed with Hugh Banister, how his own doubts and misgivings had apparently proved groundless.

He knew, for instance, that Hugh, much to old Maitland's delight, had taken a firm hold of affairs and that he was proving how capable the blind may be. Blunt had heard from various sources, even seen some notice of it in the press; for Hugh,

while leading a quiet, regular life, was bound to attract a certain amount of attention. For five days in the week he was driven down in the town car to the Van Alstyne Building where he worked as hard as any clerk. Jevons always accompanied him; his secretarial duties had increased vastly with his salary and he had become a fixture in the office.

But if Hugh Banister made no attempt to court publicity, neither did he attempt to shun it; the cheerfulness and fortitude with which he bore his great affliction, his ability and self-discipline, were commented on in all quarters, and those who had dim recollections of his unstable and headstrong past, remarked how effectually he had outgrown all his youthful follies and attributed it to his chastening experience in the war.

Truly the dross of his character had vanished, the gold emerged refined. What a blessing he was proving to his father, and how completely all differences between them had been swept aside, all wounds healed, the breach closed and cemented by mutual love, understanding and sympathy. "They're getting along like a couple of turtle doves, him and his old man," Corrigan had summed up in a brief letter. "You were all wrong, Jimmie, about him, and I guess you know it by this time. I guess maybe the only ones who don't care for him particularly are the Parkers and that fellow MacDonald. There's a reason."

That letter had been received yesterday, and now as Blunt left the Pennsylvania Station, after waiting for the passing of a brief but terrific thunderstorm, the newsboys were calling a late extra. He bought a paper and learned, from a stop-press notice in appropriately smeared red, that Maitland Banister had been murdered.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE LIBRARY.

AS Blunt boarded an uptown subway train almost the first person he saw was Corrigan, his square bulk filling the rear compartment. At the unexpected

meeting Corrigan looked his surprise and pleasure—and something more; he looked perturbed, sheepish, perplexed, annoyed.

"Lo, Jimmie, squeeze in here," he greeted, his eyes on the paper in the other's pocket. "We can talk pretty private here. Heard the cheerful news, eh?"

"Yeth. I thought I'd catch you at Lafayette House."

AIN'T had a chance to get there yet. I was on Staten Island when the word come in. Say, don't it beat hell? After me telling you—it's certainly funny; funny and unreasonable, that's what it is. But it ain't got nothing to do with young Banister," he added quickly. "You can bet your bottom dollar on that. Why, him and his old man—you needn't be looking that way, Jimmie."

"What way? I'm not looking any way, Dan."

"Y'are so. I know what you're thinking, but you're dead wrong. This here crazy prediction of yours, and your theory about——"

"I haven't any about this. I don't even know how Mr. Banister was killed. A stop-press account isn't illuminating."

"Well, I don't know much more'n you. But he was shot—and that lets young Banister out, if nothing else does. I guess his ability don't run to potting folks with a gun at that range."

"What range?"

"Through a window—the window of the library. That's what the precinct boys say. The old man was in there alone. It was discovered hardly more'n an hour ago, about eight o'clock. There'd been a hell-roarer of a thunderstorm; what we got a while back was only the tail end of it. Fine murdering weather."

It was Blunt's first visit to Lafayette House, though he knew it by sight and repute, and as he entered the grounds his first thought was what, in spite of the apparently crowded environment, an excellent place it was for just such a crime.

It was in reality an oasis of solitude and secrecy, the adjacent buildings merely lending it a bogus air of publicity. The

nearest neighboring window that commanded the grounds was half a block distant, the house itself was surrounded by shrubbery, and at the hour of the tragedy a regiment might have maneuvered unobserved about the premises. Moreover, outside the house proper the quietness of the place was also greatly fictitious; a constant stream of motors passed up and down the Drive—traffic was particularly heavy at that hour when diners were going to the Claremont and elsewhere—trains shunted on the railroad, boats hooted in the river, and even the tortured voice of the suffering surface car came insistently from Broadway. All this in normal conditions; noise and to spare without a thunderstorm raging.

Owing to the prominence of the victim the tragedy had arrested more than the ordinary attention and there was the usual foreground common to such scenes; motors lined the curb, knots of people stood talking and gesticulating on the corner, others graced the stone wall across the Drive and stared at the house with morbid fixity, while a patrolman guarding the entrance gates waved off with his yellow nightstick the more enterprisingly curious. Reporters buzzed like bees, dashing out to the nearest drug store to phone in their latest load of questionable honey. The precinct captain, two of his men and a headquarters detective, were already in the house.

AS he passed with Corrigan down the hall to the library, Blunt saw a tableau through the drawing-room door. Miss Carruthers was crying silently on a couch while Hugh Banister was evidently trying to console her. Aloysius Parker paced the hearthrug and blew his lurid nose. Bertram, polished head in hands, sprawled in a chair; his habitual buoyancy was appropriately gone and he suggested somewhat a collapsed balloon.

Lastly there was John MacDonald; he stood aloof from all, staring steadily at nothing in particular, his face hard and set. A precinct detective occupied a chair in the hall by the door.

Nothing had been disturbed in the library, pending the arrival of Corrigan and the medical examiner, and Maitland Banister still lay where evidently he had fallen, his head pointing toward the window some six yards distant. The wire screen of this was raised a few inches and the awning down. Obviously he had been shot in the back and death had been practically instantaneous.

NEVER knew what hit him," said Captain Gorman. "Went clean through him. Here's the bullet, a .45 automatic. We found it over there," pointing to a spot near the opposite wall.

"Uh-huh, a Colt army," nodded Corrigan, turning the bullet between spatulate finger and thumb.

"Where's the shell?" lisped Blunt.

"Haven't found it," replied Gorman. "I guess it wasn't ejected."

"But it was bound to be if it was an automatic," said Blunt. "You can't stop it ejecting and reloading unless it happens to jam."

Gorman didn't appreciate this exposure of his ignorance regarding automatic firearms. "I suppose it's outside somewhere," he said with calculated carelessness. "You can't see everything with a flash light. Anyway it doesn't matter."

"Indeed," said Blunt. "If you haven't the shell how do you know it was an automatic?"

"Why, can't you see it's nickel jacketed, Jimmie?" Corrigan displayed the bullet impatiently while Gorman smiled.

"Yes, but can't ordinary revolvers fire bullets like that too?" asked Blunt.

"They can, but they don't," said Corrigan. "Not commonly anyway. An automatic has to take 'em because soft lead won't work. I don't set up as any firearms expert but I ain't sure that nickel-jacketed cartridges are even made for ordinary revolvers. I've never seen any in my experience."

"Nor I," said Gorman. "Of course I'm not an expert either."

Blunt smiled. "But you can't say that that bullet's from an automatic, let alone a

Colt army, without seeing the shell. You really can't. You can only prove it by the shell."

"I can prove it by ordinary common sense," said Corrigan. "It's dollars to doughnuts, Jimmie. Of course we'll find the shell; it's bound to be somewhere. And now," turning to the police captain, "let's have what you know."

It had happened, according to the brief account that Walker, the butler, had given Gorman, between seven thirty and about five minutes to eight. The family always dined at eight and on this occasion they were expecting the Parker couple as guests. Miss Carruthers and Hugh Banister were in their respective rooms, but Maitland had gone down to the library shortly after seven to see a visitor. The latter was MacDonald, who had been shown out by Walker half an hour later. Maitland remained in the library, busy with papers at his desk. Walker had closed the door, the last he had seen of his master alive.

AT that hour the old man in the library had been isolated from the rest of the house; the only other room on the same side of the hall was the big drawing-room in front, connected with the library by sliding doors that were closed. The old-fashioned kitchen occupied a rear extension, connecting by the butler's pantry with the billiard and dining rooms on the other side of the house. There was no garage; the cars were kept at a neighboring public one on Broadway, and the chauffeur went home after supper unless he happened to be needed. Apart from the chauffeur and butler, the servants comprised a cook, upper and lower housemaid, Miss Carruthers' French maid, and Jevons who, in spite of his office work, still acted as attendant to Hugh Banister.

About ten minutes after MacDonald had left, at the height of the electrical storm, the servants heard what they took to be a particularly loud thunderclap, and to which they paid no great attention. Neither Hugh Banister nor Miss Carruthers, who were still in their rooms,

appeared to have noticed it particularly, and the chauffeur had already left for home.

At five minutes to eight Miss Carruthers left her room and, going straight to the library, discovered the tragedy. A few minutes later Bertram Parker arrived, followed by his father. MacDonald had only returned to the house shortly before the arrival of Corrigan.

HE says," added Gorman, "that the first he heard of it was from the papers, but according to the butler he must have had some kind of a run-in with the old man before he left. He could hear them bawling at each other. MacDonald was an officer in the army, you know," he concluded significantly.

"So was Bertram Parker," said Blunt. "And so was Hugh Banister, if that goes to prove anything. Anybody might possess such a weapon; they weren't hard to get after the war."

"I'm not trying to prove anything," retorted Gorman. "I'm only telling Mr. Corrigan what I've had time to learn. There's no sign of the weapon, and there aren't any finger prints or even footmarks, so far as we've been able to discover. You see the awning is down so that the ground under the window is bone dry. It only rained for about fifteen minutes, and after the long drought the ground just ate it up. I asked Mr. MacDonald to remain till you came, and the Parkers meant to anyway. I haven't quizzed anybody."

Corrigan was examining the papers on the desk. At length he lifted the telephone and, calling headquarters, asked them to send a precinct detective round to MacDonald's lodgings, the address of which he had evidently known.

"Come along, Jimmie," said Corrigan, starting for the drawing-room.

Blunt shook his head. "I've no standing here; this is your case, Dan. Go ahead. I'll see that nothing's touched here."

Alone, Blunt made another examination of the room. There was nothing of the traditional sleuth about his actions; he didn't crawl about on all fours, and he

used a magnifying glass but once. Yet, after removing the delusive nose glasses with their broad black-silk ribbon, his keen eyes missed nothing. His movements were silent and there wasn't a wasted motion.

He had asked mutely, and been given as mutely, Corrigan's permission to be left alone, the other knowing well his real reason for staying. And even if they should happen to hold opposing theories and opinions regarding this crime, Corrigan knew that whatever Blunt might discover he would make common property. There would be no holding out valuable evidence on him.

In real life the private detective of Blunt's caliber who, according to certain fiction, is always at odds with the regular police, would never get far. No small measure of Blunt's success came from the help he gave and received from the police whenever possible. It is only by such coöperation that master criminals can be coped with. More than once when he was engaged on a case with Corrigan, which he brought to a successful conclusion even against the other's theories, Blunt had stood aside and allowed his old friend to receive the entire credit.

At length he turned out the light and stepped to the sliding doors; they proved to be unlocked and, parting them slightly, he had a good if restricted view of the drawing-room.

CORRIGAN, with Gorman and his men, had begun his inquiry with the sort of ferocious amiability for which he was noted. While never exceeding his authority, except when it could be done with impunity, or being anything but fair according to his conception of the term, he invariably conveyed the impression of thinking every one guilty until their innocence should be proved.

With a certain class of malefactor his direct methods were very successful, and at handling a certain class of crime he was an acknowledged master. He had failed, however, in those exceptional cases where something more was demanded than the sort of experience and intellect he could

supply; but these failures, thanks to Blunt, remained unknown to his superiors. In short, a very able but somewhat overrated man; a kindly and humane man when off duty, but capable of being quite terrifying when on. His professional experience of humanity, based on costly experience, was far from flattering; and, if possible, he was even more wary of women than of men.

All the servants had been summoned, including the chauffeur who had returned on hearing of the crime, and, after listening a while, Blunt closed the doors as silently as he had opened them, left the room and stole upstairs.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WILL.

I'M askin' where you were, and I wanta know," snapped Corrigan, thumbs in the armholes of his vest and freezing turquoise eyes on the butler.

The old type of butler, beloved of the footlights and fiction, is fast disappearing in this servantless age, if it ever really existed. The former retainers of the Banister family had scattered beyond recovery during the Rialto régime, and Walker, like the others, was a new importation. He lacked the weight, physical and otherwise, of his professional prototypes; a sallow, middle-aged man, he suggested in his black suit, low collar and string tie, an itinerant lay preacher. He appeared in no wise flustered by Corrigan's manner.

He spoke in a precise mincing voice. "To be exact, I had just entered the dining room from my pantry, after bringing up the wine from the cellar. I can't say even now if it *was* a pistol shot; and, of course, I never thought so at the time. I thought it was thunder, that a bolt had struck pretty near the house. It came between two other thunderclaps. No, I didn't think of investigating; I'd too much to do."

Questioned further, the fact emerged that from the time MacDonald left until the tragedy was discovered—that is to say for the space of twenty-five minutes—a

person might have entered the house, gone to the library and left the house again, without any one but the victim and his slayer being the wiser. The hall door had an old-fashioned chain as well as lock, but Walker, after showing MacDonald out, had used neither because, as he explained, it was so near the time for the Parkers to arrive. The dining-room doors were closed so that Walker, when in the room, couldn't see the front hall, and the noise of the storm would have prevented his hearing an intruder.

Although everything pointed to the fact that no such intruder had entered the house, that Maitland Banister had been shot from outside, Corrigan was overlooking no possibilities. It could not be said of him that, whatever preconceived theory he might hold, he sought for and followed only a supporting line of inquiry. Facts were his great stand-by.

And so the fact emerged that during those all-important twenty-five minutes not only was Walker nearest the scene of the tragedy but that he was hidden from the eyes of all the other inmates. The doors between kitchen, pantry and dining room had been closed and entry to the wine cellar was gained through the pantry alone; thus his fellow servants, all of whom had remained in the kitchen, with the exception of Jevons and Miss Caruthers' personal maid, had actually seen nothing of him until he rushed in with news of the tragedy.

THIS was the only additional information of interest that, apparently, the cook and housemaids could supply. And all that the chauffeur could say was that when he left the house, shortly after seven thirty, he saw no one lurking about the premises. Considering the circumstances, however, and the facilities for concealment, it would have been remarkable if he had.

Marie Brun, the French maid, was next questioned. Remarkable to say, she was genuinely French and with an accent as charming as her eyes; a dark, voluble little Provençal, she knew "nozzing, nozzing

of zis so terrible affaire." She had helped mademoiselle to dress, then gone to her room at the top of the house where she had remained until informed of the tragedy. She had left mademoiselle shortly before the clock struck the half hour; yes, at seven thirty. Why had she remained in her room? Obviously to dress, m'sieu'. It was her evening out, and one must dress,

LEWIS JEVONS next. He had improved since Blunt met him that night in London, seemed more the secretary and less the valet. If he resented being lumped with the servants he failed to show it. A bland individual with a gathered manner. If possible he knew even less than Marie Brun. His employer, Mr. Hugh Banister, and he had been upstairs together all the time, first doing some necessary clerical work in the study; then he had helped the other to dress.

Finished with the servants for the time being, Corrigan waved them out of the room and, with the same relentless thirst for facts, which he always tried to quench, however tedious the process, he began to question Miss Carruthers who, it seemed, could add nothing to what he had already heard. Yes, her maid had left about seven thirty; she had allowed her off early and had finished dressing herself. That had taken some twenty minutes.

Even if Corrigan had been totally ignorant of the Banisters' affairs, which was by no means the case, the bearing of these five people now left in the room could not have failed to arouse his liveliest curiosity and interest. There was an unmistakable atmosphere of tension, hostility; if he was not a particularly sensitive man, he was an observant one.

More than once he surprised even the Parkers glancing quickly askance, the one at the other, while from time to time, after Jevons had gone, both favored the silent but attentive Banister with the most curious looks. Their bearing toward him suggested a strange blend; it seemed placating yet suspicious. But they appeared openly hostile to MacDonald who still

stood aloof as though oblivious to everything but his own thoughts.

"You went straight to the library, Miss Carruthers?" challenged Corrigan. "Why? And how did you know Mr. Banister was there?"

She hesitated a moment, her hands continuing their incessant nervous play. "I knew he was there," she said at length, "because I knew he had gone to see Mr. MacDonald. I—I was anxious to hear what the result of that interview had been."

MacDonald smiled slightly and turned to Corrigan. "Mr. Banister and I had a row, as I'm sure you know," he said almost recklessly. "I dare say Walker overheard it, and any other eavesdropper who happened to be there. I'll save them the trouble of trying to explain it."

"I'll come to you presently," said Corrigan, while Miss Carruthers flushed hotly. "I'll hear first if these gentlemen have anything to say," and he turned to the Parkers.

IT appeared that the Parkers lived quite near by, around the corner on West End Avenue, and some work connected with a church, of which he was an active member, had detained Bertram until nearly seven thirty, while ordinary business matters had kept his father in town. This was the reason they hadn't arrived at Lafayette House together. Although Bertram had come straight from the church, and it was only a few blocks distant from the Banisters' home, he explained, when interrogated by Corrigan, that he had spent some time in a subway kiosk sheltering from the storm. As he turned down the side street leading to Lafayette House, a man passed him hurriedly, coming from the Drive; but it had been too dark to see what he looked like.

"At least," concluded Bertram virtuously, "I wouldn't care to say definitely. But he wore a dark suit, and, I think, a straw hat. And from his movements he must have been young. He crossed to the opposite side of the street, almost running, as we neared each other. I was passing

a lamp at the time and he could have seen me plainly."

"Curiously enough," said MacDonald with the same smile, "I am young, I'm wearing a dark suit, and I possess a straw hat which I wore to-night."

"What are you insinuating?" demanded Bertram.

"No more than what you are."

I WON'T tolerate this!" said Bertram with a gesture. "I won't allow you to impute ulterior motives to me or question my veracity."

"Outrageous!" exclaimed Aloysius.

"S'enough!" broke in Corrigan. "Now Mr. MacDonald, let us hear about your visit to-night. I guess you know you don't have to say anything about this trouble you had with the deceased; you don't have to now unless you want to. Anything you care to say may be used against you, y'understand."

"I worked long enough in a lawyer's office to know a good many things," said MacDonald, looking at the Parkers. "I've nothing to hide and I'll tell you all I can. To begin with, I wasn't invited here to-night, and it's the first time I've been in the house for a couple of weeks, though I used to be a constant visitor. The late Mr. Banister was always very kind to me until we fell out; it was over a personal affair, a family matter, which I don't feel at liberty to disclose.

"Mr. Parker will tell you, if you don't know already, that I left his employment a month ago, and you'll also discover that I've been pretty much up against it financially. But our quarrel had nothing whatever to do with money"—here the Parkers exchanged an ironic glance—"and it was merely over a question of conduct. The late Mr. Banister appeared to think I'd acted very discreditably over a certain matter."

"You'd better explain it," broke in Miss Carruthers. "If you don't, I shall."

Hugh Banister nodded and broke his long silence. "There's no use making a mystery of it, and it's bound to come out at the inquest anyway." He spoke imper-

sonally, not to MacDonald but to the room in general. He had not exchanged a word either with the Parkers or MacDonald.

MacDonald, after glancing from the girl to Banister, shrugged and proceeded to relate how he had been blamed for not telling of his seeing Hugh in Zurich. "So far as I know that, and nothing else, was the cause of our quarrel," he said. "Maitland Banister—and others—appeared to think I'd some ulterior motive for keeping silent, some dishonorable reason for not wanting Mr. Hugh Banister to return home."

"But all that happened a month ago," said Banister in the same impersonal tones. "I understand that my father had it out with you the day I arrived. And he had forgiven you."

"There was nothing to forgive!" snapped MacDonald. "But *you* didn't believe my explanation—no, you didn't! No one here did. No, of course you didn't *say* anything, but do you think I'm a fool? I knew what you were all thinking!"

"Oh, you've no right to say that," protested Miss Carruthers in a scarcely audible voice.

And Banister said calmly: "I was speaking of my father."

"Well, he didn't believe me either," retorted MacDonald. "Whether you know it or not, he suggested, if he didn't actually say, a whole lot since that day. It was going on all the time. Yes, it was."

HE turned to Corrigan and continued more calmly: "The last time I was here I swore I'd never enter the house again. As I say, Mr. Maitland Banister hadn't definitely accused me of anything, and, in fact, since that day of his son's home-coming he didn't openly refer to the matter. Nor would I; naturally I was sore and touchy about it. But he showed with increasing plainness that I was no longer welcome here, that he was taking an increasing dislike to me for some reason or other.

"Well, I stayed away, and I wish now I'd never come back. But I cared a great deal for Maitland Banister and, in spite

of his temper and cranky ways, he used to care for me. I got thinking things over, when I cooled off, and I decided not to let my temper and pride make things worse between us as, no doubt, they had. Instead of pretending indifference, I determined to try and get at the heart of his increasing dislike for me, find out what else I was supposed to have done to make him so sore at me. I meant to keep my temper, if he didn't keep his, and do all I could toward a better understanding.

I MEANT to do all that, I tried to do it, but I didn't succeed. When I called to-night Mr. Banister agreed to see me readily enough but, when I broached the subject on which I'd come, he seemed to take it for granted that I'd some confession to make; and when I hadn't, he grew angry. When I asked how I'd offended him he said I needn't play the hypocrite to boot. When I continued to protest my ignorance he flew into one of his old tempers, and I could get nothing from him except the evident fact that he thought I'd acted like a scoundrel, and that I knew it as well as he. My old temper got the best of me and, after saying things which I now regret, I left the house in a temper and went straight to my home. That's all I know."

"Was that screen up when you were there?"

"The window was open, of course, and the awning down, but I didn't notice the screen. Mr. Banister wasn't afraid of thunderstorms; he rather liked them, in fact. He wouldn't close a window on that account."

"Was there any talk of a will?" pursued Corrigan.

MacDonald looked astonished. "No. What will?"

"His will. It's there on the desk," and Corrigan nodded at the library.

"It wasn't there when I left, and I haven't been in the room since," said MacDonald. "At least I saw nothing that looked like a will, and the subject was never mentioned. There was no reason why it should. He never talked to me

about his private affairs, and I would have no interest in his will."

"What!" exclaimed Aloysius Parker. "Why, you've an interest to the extent of over a hundred thousand! You benefit by that amount."

"What do you mean?" demanded MacDonald.

"But," put in Bertram in apparent surprise, "surely you knew about it? We—er—always understood you did."

"Then you understood wrong!" cried MacDonald. "I don't know what you're talking about. I never even knew he'd made a will. I never knew he—he meant to leave me anything, and I wouldn't have taken a penny. You needn't look like that, Mr. Parker; I say I knew nothing about it. Not a thing!"

Aloysius Parker shrugged slightly. "I saw that will on the desk, Mr. Corrigan, and examined it in the presence of Captain Gorman. I identified it as one drawn up by me, pursuant to the instructions of the deceased. To the best of my knowledge it's his last will and testament, but it's my duty to add that he was about to make another. In fact I came here to-night on lawr business; my late client wished to discuss after dinner the drawing up of a new will, the terms of which he'd made known to me."

Mr. Parker coughed, stroked the lurid nose and added: "The terms of the new will were materially different in many respects from that one, and now they can never be carried out. That's all regarding the matter I feel at liberty to say at the present time and place."

CHAPTER X.

CONJECTURES.

BLUNT went upstairs to have a look, among other things, for the weapon and damp clothes. The rain had been torrential, if brief, and a person leaving the house and going round to the library window couldn't have escaped a wetting. There was every reason to suppose that neither Banister nor Jevons, the Parkers, Miss Carruthers nor MacDonald, knew he

was in the house; that they hadn't seen him arrive, slip past the drawing-room door, or heard him in the adjoining room. He could count on half an hour at least.

THE rooms on the second floor opened mainly on two corridors that formed an inverted "L." Hugh Banister's suite, bedroom, study and bathroom, were at the back and northern side of the house, Miss Carruthers' in the southwestern front overlooking the Drive. Thus she was around the corner of the "L," so to speak, at one end of the transverse corridor. Maitland Banister's bedroom occupied the other, the northwest corner at the junction of the two corridors; thus it was on the same side as Hugh's rooms and might be said to be a continuation of the suite. In fact they shared the same bathroom, into which each bedroom opened. Jevons' room was on the top floor as were those of the servants.

In the middle of his investigations Blunt's quick ear heard a step on the stairs, and he had only time to glide out of the study before Jevons appeared.

"Well," exclaimed the secretary, staring, "if it isn't Mr. Blunt! I hardly knew you without your glasses. I haven't seen you for a long time; in fact we understood you were in Washington. When did you get here?"

Jevons seemed merely surprised and pleased at the meeting; and Blunt didn't show his annoyance, though well aware that his opportunity for investigation was nipped in the bud.

"I saw it in the papers and came right up," he said with his studied lisp. "There were no servants about and I took the liberty of entering. Of course I've no professional interest in the case, and I didn't want to interfere with the proceedings downstairs."

"You can wait here," said Jevons, and obligingly opened the door of the study which Blunt had so recently closed. "Yes, the police are holding a quizzing bee and I've passed with honors for the time being. We do things differently in England and you've no equivalent for Scotland Yard.

That man Corrigan would make the most innocent think himself guilty, and he seems to say and do what he likes. I declare he might even make me think I'd killed poor Mr. Banister. However, I'm sure no one will object to his methods if they get results."

"This is a bad business, Mr. Jevons."

"You may well say that," replied the other, offering a chair. "Bad's no name for it. And Mr. Hugh home only a month! He'll take it hard, though he's not the one to whimper. Some people have all the trouble in this world.

"But there's one consolation; he had the opportunity of making it all up with his father, of knowing by-gones were by-gones and that everything had been forgotten and forgiven. That's a great consolation, and he has you to thank for it, Mr. Blunt."

"Mr. Parker rather; I was only the instrument."

Jevons' bottle shoulders lifted slightly at mention of Parker. "It was your argument that prevailed with Mr. Hugh," he said. "He told me so himself. He wouldn't have come home for a dozen Mr. Parkers. If this had happened when he was away, before he'd made everything right with his father, he'd never have forgiven himself."

"I suppose you've no idea how this happened?"

I EXPECT we all have our own ideas,"

replied Jevons slowly. "I'd talk to you sooner than I would to the police, seeing you've no professional interest, and being such a friend of Mr. Hugh's—but it's not for me to say anything, except that, to my mind, money's at the bottom of the business. If it isn't, I don't know what else it could be. You wouldn't think Maitland Banister had had an enemy in the world; a lovable old man, if maybe a bit hard to understand at times, from all I saw of him. You may be sure Mr. Hugh will spare no pains nor money to bring the murderer to justice, if I know anything of him."

"You should know him, if any one

should. You've been with him some time, Mr. Jevons?"

The other nodded. "And very lucky I was to get such a good employer."

"And he such a capable employee."

"I don't know about that," said Jevons modestly. "But I'm sure I always try to do my best, and it's not an easy position. I don't mean to say a word against Mr. Hugh, but—well, he has his own ideas and sometimes they aren't always right. You know what I mean? Sometimes he gets hold of an idea and nothing can shake him off it."

TAKE, for instance, this Captain Vivian, or whatever his name was. In justice to myself I must say I knew he was no more than an adventurer at best; I felt it the moment I clapped eyes on him, having had a bit of experience that way. But could I get Mr. Hugh to believe it? I could not. Nothing would do but that Captain Vivian was one of the finest chaps that ever stepped, a sort of long-lost brother whom he'd found and didn't want to lose. And between you and me, Mr. Blunt, I doubt if he really believes in his heart even now that the captain was the rascal you say. If I hadn't watched sharp Mr. Hugh would have lost more money over it than he did. That's what I mean by getting fixed ideas. This quarrel with his father was simply another one, to my mind, and you talked him out of it."

"But you'd say that, in your experience, he was entirely sane?"

"Sane? Lord bless you, yes!" exclaimed Jevons, staring round eyed. "Why not? I didn't mean to suggest anything like that."

"Nor do I, of course. But you know, according to the doctors, we're all a bit cracked in some way. And considering what he must have suffered in the war—did you know him in the army?"

"I? Your idea of my age is very flattering," smiled Jevons. "I think I've improved since coming over here, but I'm nearer fifty than forty, and the brass hats weren't taking my kind if they could help it. I wasn't much to look at in those days

—an underpaid bookkeeper, and the firm went wallop in the war."

He seemed to have fallen into a reminiscent vein, glad of the opportunity to talk about himself. "I did my bit clerking in Whitehall, and very glad to get it while it lasted," he said. "Everybody wasn't a war profiteer, and I'd a hard time when it came to finding another civil job."

"Then I saw Mr. Hugh's advertisement in *The Times*. It seems he'd found it difficult to get a suitable man who'd meet all his requirements—he'd had two or three—and I was very fortunate in being able to satisfy him. I tried hard enough; and, never having had any sort of home or dependents, I didn't care if he never settled down. I was glad of the chance of traveling; there's nothing like it for educating and broadening a man, Mr. Blunt."

"I should have thought you an old globe trotter."

"Would you indeed?" said Jevons, evidently pleased. "No, sir, a young one, so far as experience goes. I don't mind saying I hadn't been many miles from Bloomsbury all my days: but I've had 'some' globe trotting, as you say over here, with Mr. Hugh. And very pleasant and educational it was."

YOU were with him before he went to Zurich? I mean the last time."

"Oh, yes; a couple of years at least."

"Had he ever been there before?"

"I suppose so, though I can't really say. But he seems to know the Continent as I do London. Why?"

"I was wondering if he'd met this Captain Vivian, or Henson, before. I mean before you knew him."

Jevons glanced at Blunt quickly, then looked away. "Well, I don't see why he wouldn't have known him," he said at length, "even if in the meantime he'd gone blind. And the other chap would in any case. There would be no reason for pretending to meet as strangers. No, no, I dare say Vivian had Mr. Hugh marked down for a mug—a sucker, as you say over here—but they'd never met before."

He seemed in a hurry to change the sub-

ject, even if crudely, for he continued: "If a person had any doubt of Mr. Hugh's sanity they should see him at work in the office."

"I believe you've proved very useful too."

"Well, it's my regular line, so to speak—bookkeeping and all that. I'm Mr. Hugh's eyes, you may say."

"Well put," nodded Blunt. "But I hardly thought he needed any, his other faculties being so keen."

"In some cases, yes, though his ability is wonderful."

BLUNT agreed. "You find your new work interesting? Perhaps you'll soon be able to dispense with the services of Mr. Bertram Parker?"

Jevons looked at him sharply a moment. "That's for Mr. Hugh to say, of course. Yes, the work's interesting—very. I think I hear them coming out of the drawing-room. Mr. Hugh will be very pleased to see you again."

It was after midnight when Blunt finally left the house with Corrigan, a couple of detectives remaining on the premises apparently to see that nothing was disturbed. The medical examiner had come and gone, and there was nothing else to do until morning furnished the light necessary for a more exhaustive examination of the grounds.

Following his conversation with Jevons, Blunt had had a talk with Marie, Walker and the other servants, and thus, though avoiding the drawing-room, had learned quite as much as Corrigan. Perhaps more. He had also seen for a short time Miss Carruthers and Hugh Banister, who seemed pleased at renewing the acquaintance, though neither was in the mood for conversation.

MacDonald had gone home; no weapon or other incriminating evidence had been found at his lodgings and there was nothing tangible on which to hold him formally, pending the inquest, but he was free in name only. None knew this better than he himself; escape, were it in his mind,

would have been impossible. Perhaps others felt that as well as he.

Corrigan was in an ill humor; in spite of all his efforts he had learned very little, no more than he had known or guessed. Everybody had held out on him, refused unfairly to part with the sort of information he wanted.

The conspiracy of silence had defeated his direct methods. Although he didn't want to admit it even to himself, the apparently simple case looked as if it might develop into one of those nasty psychological complex affairs that he dreaded and hated. He was never at his best in such cases, and the very prominence of the victim would focus public attention on his efforts.

It was impossible for him to sit and think out a problem quietly; he was the type whose deepest mental processes must be attuned to action. His thoughts were generally hammered out to the thud of suffering sole leather. And so now he strode down deserted West End Avenue, the silent Blunt at his bulky side.

"Of course old Parker's got something up his sleeve—they all have—that he don't mean to trot out till the inquest. That's the worst of having a lawyer to deal with," growled Corrigan at length. "I couldn't put 'em over the jumps as I'd have liked. He was full of his rights, and what the rest didn't know, he told 'em."

WELL, let him play the clam; he ain't fooling me none. I know what's on his mind. It goes without saying that the obvious answer is MacDonald; but I ain't come to my age without knowing how to be leery of the obvious."

"And yet," said Blunt, "the obvious may be right. There's no logical reason that just because it's obvious it should be wrong."

Corrigan grunted. "Don't start any of your highbrow stuff, Jimmie; my head don't lean to it just now. I believe it's a plain proposition and I'm lookin' for a plain answer."

"I mean, Dan, that a great deal of nonsense has been talked and written about

such matters. It has become a proverb to beware of the obvious. But it has no more general truth than any other mental rubber stamp that we use because we're too lazy to make our own. It's the obvious that's generally right."

YOU mean," said Corrigan, impatiently and hopefully, "that you think it's MacDonald? Well, not wishing him any hard luck, I hope it's a plain answer like that, that he croaked the old man before he could turn him out of his will. Of course he had every chance of getting rid of the gun, and I never thought he'd be fool enough to take it back home with him. It was just a small kind of bet that I never overlook; it may win some time. He dropped it in the river, most like; that'd be safest. And, Jimmie, it wasn't only the money: there's the girl too. You were right about saying he was gone on Miss Carruthers."

"Really?" murmured Blunt.

"Yes, I ain't blind, and I've been keeping an eye on all these folks since you went to Washington. Yeh, I know they seem to have had a falling out, but it's only a lovers' quarrel. Now if the old man didn't want her to marry him, threatened to cut her off too in his will if she did—y'see?"

"You mean she was party to the crime?"

"Maybe, maybe not. Or maybe she was the whole party," said Corrigan, as though speaking of the weather. "I read that will, if you didn't. She wins a whole lot more'n MacDonald—more'n two thirds of the whole boodle. Yeah, a nice quiet ladylike little dame, all broke up over her dear guardian's foul murder, but—well, it's a coupla million at least and the man she loves. I've seen in my time, and so've you, many a ladylike little dame pull the trick for considerably less.

"Now," he continued, shifting his cigar, "that's two obvious answers for you. We'll come to another that's pretty near as obvious—the Parkers. I'll tell you something, Jimmie; that fine old law firm has been living on nothing but its rep for a good while back, its rep and the Banister

business. That's between you and me and the income tax.

"What's more, if I know anything, Son Bertram's making a play for the girl too. That's why they've got a down on MacDonald. Maybe you saw that there's no love lost between 'em."

"I saw that there didn't seem to be much love lost between most of them. Yes, I know about the Parker firm; I heard some time ago that if they lost the Banister business there wouldn't be much left. But why kill the goose that laid the golden eggs?"

"Because maybe it was gonna quit laying," said Corrigan. "What I mean is that maybe the Parkers were gonna get the sack. Y'see that will gives 'em control until the girl's twenty-five; a lot can happen in that time, especially if the other executor's an old crab like this Doctor Armitage who don't know much about such things. Supposing in this new will the old man was gonna leave the Parkers out? Or supposing they knew young Banister was gonna get most of it instead of the girl? Bertram don't want to grab her off without the coin; I'll tell the world he don't. I guess you and I've got no fond illusions about 'my boy' and his old man."

"I know very little about the son. But how can he expect to marry her if she's in love with MacDonald?"

"And supposing it's made to appear that MacDonald's guilty? Even if he wasn't chaired he'd be queered for good with her, wouldn't he? Of course I'm only guessing, Jimmie; there are so many blamed answers to this thing that maybe it won't be easy to pick a winner."

"You haven't mentioned one yet," said Blunt. "I mean Hugh Banister."

CHAPTER XI.

BLUNT THEORIZES.

A W!" said Corrigan, and stopped, to stare at the other by the light of a neighboring lamp. "And you mean to say that's obvious?"

"In a sense, yes; even more than the others because here there may be a man

with whom murder is a fine art. If he killed Henson——"

"If! Aw!" Corrigan waved his short arms. "Ain't you got over that yet?"

"No," said Blunt soberly, "I haven't."

Corrigan eyed him with sudden and unwilling suspicion. "Look here, did you find anything——"

"Nothing. If I'd got hold of something tangible you'd be the first to know. Should I have to say that? I'm only guessing like you, Dan."

"No, not like me," said Corrigan virtuously. "I ain't let go of common sense, not for a minute. Facts, that's what I go by. But you're being worked by this crazy prejudice you still got against that poor cripple."

"I admit that it's quite possible," sighed Blunt. "Do we ever know when we aren't ruled by prejudice? But I'm trying to guess honestly. There can be no argument without a hypothesis, and you have to guess before you can search. Even Darwin said that."

"Never heard of him," dismissed Corrigan. "He couldn't have been much of a detective. I guess my idea of the obvious ain't the same as yours, Jimmie. If you can give me one common-sense reason, one hard fact for suspecting young Banister—— Why, say, take only one thing; how in the name of Mike could he have hit the old man first crack out of the box—intentionally, mind you—at that distance?"

THERE are several answers to that," replied Blunt. "In the first place I'm not prepared to admit, though it may seem wildly improbable, its physical impossibility. Banister possesses an instinct or faculty that serves him wonderfully in place of sight. You know that. I haven't been able to test it as I would have liked; I told you he kept pretty much to himself coming over, and I've had no opportunity since. You know how some scientists are claiming that sight may be developed through the pores of the body—the way 'blind' fish are supposed to see—and

though I'm not suggesting anything so incredible as that, the fact remains that Banister's faculty is abnormal. I heard stories about it before I met him, when I was looking him up at St. Dunstan's.

AND, after all, Dan, would it be impossible for even the normally blind to commit such a crime? Consider the weapon used; an automatic is far easier to aim truly than a revolver; you point it instinctively in the right direction as you would your finger.

"Banister was trained to its use in the army. Couldn't you point your finger accurately at a sound in the dark? Banister knows that his father's in the library, he pushes up the screen, he hears him move—or his uncanny faculty points the direction——"

"Aw! And that poor cripple goes downstairs and does all that without being seen!"

"Presumably somebody did it without being seen, didn't they? If Miss Caruthers was able to do it, why not Banister? It would have been easier for him because his rooms were nearer the stairs; he wouldn't have to pass her door, but she would have to pass his."

"She was alone, wasn't she? And he wasn't; Jevons was with him all the time. You're ringing him in too, eh?"

"Obviously," nodded Blunt. "If Jevons' complicity was necessary in the Henson murder, it was even more necessary in this. You can't admit Banister's guilt without his. And so we must consider the point that Jevons may have fired the shot, with the connivance, or at the instigation, of Hugh Banister."

"Oh, all right," said Corrigan indulgently. "I can imagine him being a party after the fact in Henson's supposed murder—because he couldn't help himself—and he kept mum for love or coin, but why should he agree to bump off the old man? Of course servants are awful obliging these days, they'll do anything you ask 'em.

"And what about the motive? That's as clear as mud too. I tell you young

Banister and the old man were on the best of terms, thought the world of each other. And that ain't all; putting it on its lowest basis, do you know what Banister loses by his father's death? Just two million, Jimmie. And if the new will had been made he'd have got it all. I'm sure of that, and we'll see if I ain't right."

I'M not saying you aren't, Dan. But money isn't everything, and don't forget that he has his mother's fortune. And it's conceivable that in certain circumstances a man might be willing to sacrifice even two million dollars, perhaps only for the time being."

"Now whaddaya mean by that?" Corrigan removed his straw hat and wiped his brow.

"Well, have you considered, if the crime was committed by some one in the house, why they should have troubled to go outside? The danger of the shot being heard couldn't have weighed with them, for the muzzle of the gun must have been actually in the room. By going outside there was the additional risk of being seen by somebody without as well as within.

"Why take that risk? Obviously because it would widen the field of suspects. For instance MacDonald mightn't have been able to enter the library again unseen, but he could have waited a while and then sneaked round to that window. You speak of the Parkers' hatred of MacDonald but you say nothing of Hugh Banister's."

"Because he don't hate him," said Corrigan. "If there's any little trouble it's all MacDonald's fault. It seems he saw Banister in Switzerland——" And he went on to explain the matter. "That's what got him in wrong with old Maitland and so he holds young Banister indirectly responsible. But that don't make Hugh Banister hate MacDonald. Why should it?"

"You're overlooking something, Dan. You admit I was right in saying that MacDonald and Bertram Parker were at least interested in Miss Carruthers. I also mentioned Hugh Banister. Now wait a min-

ute; I'm going to put up a very complex argument because it may be that we're dealing with a very complex character and situation. I'll need all your attention. Understand that I'm not a bit sure of anything I say, and though my thoughts are cloudy I'll try to put them into as clear words as I can. I'm talking for my own benefit just as much as yours."

It was remarkable, considering the minute basis of solid fact on which he had to work, how accurate were Blunt's inductions and deductions, his reasoning from the general to the particular, from the particular to the general; it was as though he had been present that fatal night in London when Hugh Banister told for the first time of his love for Carol Carruthers.

"Now, Dan, renouncing, making a sacrifice at a distance, is much easier than if the coveted object is constantly before one. What Hugh Banister found himself able to do in London he may have found it impossible to do in New York. Also it makes a big difference if you see, not merely in the imagination, somebody else walking off with the prize.

AS I say, perhaps Hugh Banister's chief reason for remaining abroad was that he didn't want Miss Carruthers to see his terrible disfigurement, and personal vanity may have had as much to do with this as love. Love is a species of vanity, you may say, and according to all accounts Hugh Banister was inordinately vain of his looks. In any case he decides to renounce—all the easier if he'd no idea the girl cared for him in that way—and then Fate forces his hand and he has to return. And what does he find? That instead of learning to forget her, as he may have thought, he cares for her more than ever, and that an old friend, a false friend, is going to marry her."

"How do you mean false?"

"I mean that Banister may believe MacDonald's real reason for not telling of his disfigurement was that he didn't want him to come home, that he feared him as a rival. It would follow then as a corollary that MacDonald had reason to believe

Miss Carruthers cared for Banister—something the latter had never known and which, if he had known, would have changed all his plans.”

“Huh! First you say that he don’t want his disfigurement known, next that he hates MacDonald for not telling about it. You can’t have it both ways. That ain’t logic.”

“Why not? You must use some imagination, Dan, and knowledge of human nature. If Banister believes MacDonald acted as he did from a purely selfish and unworthy motive, he would naturally resent it. You would yourself. Anybody would.”

“And so because he’s sore at MacDonald he goes and kills his own father, eh? Aw, be reasonable, Jimmie.”

Blunt spoke slowly. “Yes, very far-fetched if his sole motive was to make MacDonald pay the penalty of the crime. But in how many cases do you find a single clear-cut motive? The commonest actions of even the most normal of us are prompted by a queer mixture of motives. It’s asking too much of poor humankind to expect a logical reason for everything.

YOU know how many crimes are committed for apparently no reason, or the most trivial and ridiculous. But supposing Hugh Banister hated his father? Yes, you say he didn’t, but on the evidence available at present I’m not prepared to agree. We don’t know what may have been going on beneath the surface.”

“Nothing was going on but the best of good feeling,” said Corrigan emphatically. “If you don’t want to take my say-so, you’ll find it out from everybody who knew them. Everything had been forgotten and forgiven, I tell you. Why should he hate him?”

“Well, supposing you’d been a mighty handsome fellow once, and then you were blinded and disfigured like Banister? Even if you’d never been inordinately vain of your looks you wouldn’t exactly love the person responsible for your affliction, would you?”

“But what’s that got to do with it?

Old Banister wasn’t responsible for what happened; he’d nothing to do with it.”

“We don’t escape the result of our actions so easily as all that,” said Blunt. “However he may have changed, whatever his real feelings, Maitland Banister left a good deal to be desired as a parent. If he had acted differently over that old matter of the check, Hugh wouldn’t have enlisted in the British army.”

CORRIGAN snorted. “Sooner or later he’d have had to go over there anyway, wouldn’t he? Uncle Sam or John Bull, what’s the odds? Yes, he served longer, but how many of our own boys were killed, maimed, blinded? He’d have to run the same risk; it was all in the game. Nobody but a crazy guy would blame old Banister for what happened.”

“Exactly,” said Blunt, and lighted a cigarette. “And so, in the eyes of a mental specialist, if not the law, Hugh Banister may be what you call crazy. He hates his father, say; he hates MacDonald, and by killing the one he may have the State kill the other—at least discredit him, remove him as a rival. And then he marries the two million dollars he has apparently sacrificed.

“But, mind you, it needn’t necessarily follow that he counts on marrying Miss Carruthers. Money never bulked large in his life, and he’s well off with his mother’s fortune. Who can follow all the twistings of the sort of embittered, distorted mind I’m postulating and trying to explain? As I say, it’s hard enough sometimes to understand the workings of even the normal mind. He may have hated his father because, indirectly, he made him *unable* to marry; and he decides that if he can’t marry Miss Carruthers, MacDonald shan’t either. Perhaps he knew nothing about the will, or he counts two million dollars cheap for his revenge.”

Corrigan took off his hat again and fanned himself vigorously, then sat down on the stoop of a vacant house and produced another cigar. Blunt took a seat on the step beside him. A strange enough spectacle for that hour of the morning,

but Gotham has many. These two specialists in crime had pondered and argued in many a less conventional spot. It was cool and quiet on the stoop, and Corrigan was very warm indeed. However he might pooh-pooh and deride, he had reason to respect even Blunt's most fantastic theories.

Blunt's slim nervous hands were nursing his dapper knees. His eyes were melancholy and vastly troubled; they stared fixedly into the night as though in anxious search of some elusive, tantalizing, vital secret.

I NEVER expected old Banister's death," he said at length. "I don't know that I expected anything to happen. I wish I could like Hugh Banister, believe in him, see in the man the spirit that suffered so bravely, went through that hell without a whimper.

"Apparently I'm the only one who can't. They spoke tremendously well of him at St. Dunstan's, and Jevons seems to think there's nobody like him. I thought perhaps it would be different when I saw him again to-night, that I'd got rid of all prejudice; but no, he affected me in just the same way. It's queer. Perhaps the fault lies entirely with me, some deficiency in my character."

"It all comes from thinking he killed Henson," said Corrigan. "You got that idea and it's still riding you. And if the reason you give for him killing his father is mighty thin and far-fetched, you can't give any reason at all for him killing Henson. He'd have to be clean crazy, a sort of homicidal maniac, eh?"

"Not necessarily. There's that old business of the check, Dan. Supposing he'd known Henson long ago. I'm not satisfied that he didn't. That forged check was the beginning of all his trouble. He was pretty wild in those days, from all accounts, and he may have got in with Lou Henson. The latter may have done the actual forging, or Banister at the other's instigation. I don't know. The whole difficulty lies in Henson having been such an elusive character; you know he

had so many aliases, led such a secret life, that it's impossible to find out much about him.

"But I've an idea that Banister didn't meet him for the first time in Zurich. His perceptions are so keen and acute that I can't believe he could have been deceived for so long a time as to the other's true character. I feel that Banister had some good reason, some secret reason, for continuing the intimacy. If we find out that reason we may find the reason for Henson's death. Arnold of the Yard is working along that line, and I've been trying to trace a connection between the two over here."

"So you haven't let up on that business, eh?"

"It was Federal work," replied Blunt defensively. "If Banister forged his father's name, he may have forged Uncle Sam's. I had to consider that, quite apart from the Henson matter. You see, the point is this: he may have been one of Henson's gang until he came into his mother's money and there was no longer the necessity of being crooked and running risks.

"Then he may have tried to break away. Henson found him and, being on the run, tried to blackmail him. The old Valjean stuff. Banister may have shut his mouth for good in the only way he thought possible. *That* may have been the motive for Henson's death.

"On the other hand——" Blunt flipped away his cigarette and shrugged. "I'm not even sure that old Banister was shot from outside the house. It mightn't even have happened in the library at all."

WHAT! Where else could it have happened? And don't the bullet prove it? There's the mark on the wall where it struck after going through old Banister. There's no getting away from that; facts are facts, Jimmie."

"Yes, when they aren't faked, Dan. That's the point. That mark on the wall—was it made by a spent bullet, or by the bullet in a clever hand? I wish I knew. Here's an undisputed fact—if Maitland

Banister was half blind, he wasn't stone deaf."

"Yeah? And what about it?"

"That screen," said Blunt. "It wasn't up; there's no reason why it should have been, and Walker swears it wasn't when he left the room. That screen has a voice, Dan; I tried lowering and raising it. It's swollen with the damp and it sticks and squeals like sin. It would be no easy job, either, to raise it from outside. Now Maitland Banister was shot square through the back, and if he wasn't able to see his slayer he must have heard him. He couldn't help hearing that screen being raised. He would have had plenty of time to turn round—and so he wouldn't have been shot in the back. It's a point, Dan."

"It is," admitted Corrigan. "I hadn't thought to try the screen. But here's another; MacDonald might have raised it before he left the library, knowing what he meant to do later, without old Banister noticing. And you mustn't forget that anybody could have entered the house and made his get-away. Yes, it might have happened in the library, and then they fixed it to make it look as if the shot came from outside. But it would take a clever hand to set that stage."

"Admitted," said Blunt. "We aren't up against a fool, whoever he may be. Intentionally or otherwise, Jevons saw to it that my investigations upstairs remained unfinished. I admit finding nothing against him nor Banister, but then they would have had plenty of time to lock up the weapon, remove all evidence.

IF that empty cartridge case doesn't show up— Of course the point is this: Hugh Banister may have a Webley, not a Colt, or at least have used British ammunition. It's only reasonable to infer that, even though Colts were used in the British army as well as the regular service Webley. And he isn't the sort to leave a shell that could be identified as British."

"If he's as clever as you make out he wouldn't use a British gun or ammunition at all. He'd use a Colt and leave the

shell where it couldn't be overlooked, make all the evidence possible to hang on MacDonald or some one else."

"Yes, that has to be considered too," nodded Blunt. "Don't let anything I've said prejudice you, Dan; you at least must keep clear eyes. The answer may be MacDonald, the Parkers—anybody. We may know more to-morrow if Gorman's boys didn't go and clutter up all the footmarks at the start. And the inquest should prove interesting."

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNKNOWN.

THE inquest did prove interesting, perhaps the most interesting that had ever been held in the little room around the corner from the Bridge of Sighs. It was especially interesting to Blunt, who sat in the Centre Street building and studied Hugh Banister as he had studied him in the Westminster coroner's court, because it upset, gave the lie direct, to most of his cherished theories and proved Corrigan to be right.

Not only did it show that Hugh and his father had been on the best terms possible, and that the former had suffered tremendous financial loss by the latter's death, but that Hugh had no animosity toward John MacDonald. In fact it might be said that but for Hugh Banister's evidence MacDonald, at the end of the proceedings, would have found himself transformed from a suspect into a prisoner held for the grand jury.

Aloysius Parker's evidence, following as it did all that had gone before, seemed enough in itself to convict MacDonald. The very fact that he tried to appear impartial and disinterested made it all the more damning. Having repeated what he had told Corrigan about the elder Banister's intention, on the night of his death, of making a new will, he produced a sheet of foolscap.

"Here is a rough draft of the new document," he said. "At the time I made a note of the terms, the changes my late client wished to make, and these are set down here and initialed by him, as you see. Two

thirds of the estate, real and personal, was to be left to Mr. Hugh Banister, the rest to Miss Carruthers. The executors were to be the same, myself and Doctor Armitage, and other small bequests were to remain unaltered. But Mr. MacDonald was to receive nothing."

"Do you know why? Did the deceased give any reason?"

MR. PARKER said it was due to the quarrel they had had. The trouble between Maitland Banister and MacDonald had already been aired in court, and Mr. Parker proceeded: "If there was any other cause for ill feeling between them, my late client didn't mention it to me. He contented himself by stating simply that his feelings, during the past month, had changed to such an extent that he wished to cut Mr. MacDonald out of the will. He wouldn't listen to anything I ventured to suggest; he was firm as adamant on the matter and refused point-blank to discuss it."

"When did he first speak of making a new will? When was this rough draft made?"

"About a month ago, a few days after his son's return."

"Was Mr. MacDonald in your employment then?"

"No. I had discharged him several days before that."

"What was the delay in making the will?"

"It was occasioned by my late client's inability to decide on apportioning the estate among the two legatees; he didn't know whether to divide it equally between his son and ward, or to leave the major portion to the former. The fact that Mr. Hugh Banister has his mother's portion weighed with him, but eventually he decided as I've stated. That was the sole reason for the delay."

"Can you say if Mr. MacDonald was acquainted with the terms of the proposed new will? Did the late Mr. Banister say anything that would lead you to such a belief?"

Parker pondered. "Not in so many

words, but naturally I inferred that the fact had been made known by him."

Aloysius then managed to make it clear that even if MacDonald hadn't been told about the will he could have informed himself. The day after the draft was made MacDonald had called at the office, presumably for some belongings which, due to his hurried departure, he had overlooked. Mr. Parker was out at lunch and MacDonald, well known to the clerk in charge, had opportunity to go where he pleased.

He knew where such a document would be kept. The inference was plain that, contrary to MacDonald's denial, not only was he aware of being a beneficiary under the old will, but that he knew of the impending changes in the new, and that this was the real cause of his quarrel with Maitland Banister. It followed then that, aware in some manner of the will being drawn up that night, he had come to make a final plea; failing in this he had made sure of the money by murder.

The police were unable to offer any evidence pointing to MacDonald's guilt, or, in fact, that of any one. Morning had revealed nothing of importance that the night had concealed. Neither the weapon nor the empty cartridge case had been found, nor was there anything illuminating in the way of finger prints or footmarks. Nor had any discrepancies been discovered in MacDonald's account of his movements; he might have gone straight home, walking all the way, and hearing first of the crime from the papers.

AND so with the other actors. But such evidence as there was pointed unmistakably to MacDonald. He remained the one clear object in a mass of obscurity, the only one who had both the motive and opportunity. There was Walker's evidence and Bertram Parker's, while even Miss Carruthers, though saying she knew nothing whatever about the will, had been forced to admit the obvious ill feeling between MacDonald and her guardian. And then had come Aloysius Parker's evidence to cap it all. Whether MacDonald would

ever be convicted on such evidence was beside the point; but that he would be held for trial seemed certain until Hugh Banister, unavoidably arriving late, took the stand and with a few words demolished all that the Parkers had erected.

Banister stated emphatically that not only had his father never informed MacDonald that he meant to bequeath him a hundred thousand dollars, but that the sum was to stand in the new will precisely as in the old. Needless to say this produced a sensation. MacDonald, who had been looking grim and cynical as though expecting the most adverse evidence, couldn't conceal his astonishment and pleasure. Likewise Miss Carruthers.

As for the Parkers, they were considerably more than astonished. It seemed to Blunt, watching closely, as though they considered that Banister had dealt them a foul blow, as if an enemy had suddenly come into the open, as if a presumable friend had turned foe. More than this, it was as though they had half feared Banister might thus reveal himself in his true colors. Although there wasn't the slightest suggestion that he had any guilty knowledge of his father's death, Aloysius Parker had gone out of his way to testify to the love existing between father and son; he had buttered Hugh Banister up, as it were, lauding his character and conduct, and now this was his reward.

The proceedings terminated at length and the end of it all was the true and tried verdict that Maitland Banister had met his death at the hands of some person or persons unknown.

BLUNT, leaving the court, found an opportunity for which he had been looking for some time. He found Miss Carruthers alone, wandering about like a lost child. Perhaps she had been waiting to see MacDonald or to meet Banister and had missed them in the crowd. At all events Blunt didn't ask an explanation but bundled her into a taxi, telling the driver he needn't break the speed laws in reaching Lafayette House.

Miss Carruthers made no demur; she

seemed glad of the company, or indifferent to it. It was as though a long strain, under which she had been laboring, was at an end, at least for the time being, and with the consequent reaction had come a "lost" feeling. There were *bisque* curves beneath her fine eyes, eloquent of sleeplessness and mental fatigue, and her hands were still restless.

WELL," said Blunt, "the coroner's done with this distressing business, if the police haven't, and I'm sure we all wish we were like him, happy and content in our ignorance. I wonder, Miss Carruthers, if you'd consent to discuss this case with me as if I were a tried and true friend? Aside from my acquaintance with the principal actors, my interest is very great. Problems of all kinds obsess me and we appear to have a very pretty one here. Do you think it would be very hard? As an overture to confidence shall I say that I don't believe you fired that shot?"

"That's a concession." And she answered his smile tremulously. "But if you don't, I'm sure others do. Certain papers have more than hinted at the possibility. I *could* have done it, you see. Oh, it's horrible, all of it!"

"And," said Blunt, "I don't believe Mr. MacDonald is guilty either."

She flushed and her tired anxious eyes brightened suddenly and wonderfully. She clasped her small hands. "Oh, don't you *really*? I'm so glad to hear you say that. No, of course he isn't; he couldn't be."

"I wonder, Miss Carruthers, if there's anything you didn't feel called upon to tell the coroner and police, something you might care to tell me—if you've sufficient confidence in me."

"Oh, I have confidence in you," she said earnestly, meeting his direct gaze with one of equal sincerity. "I have indeed. It's not a question of confidence. But I really don't know anything more than I've said. Do you think I've been hiding something?"

"No, not that exactly. I mean you may have knowledge of matters that apparently

may have no bearing whatever on Mr. Banister's death, intimate details that you may think shouldn't be made public. You of all people should know the undercurrents of the life that apparently flowed so tranquilly at Lafayette House. Your own private and personal opinion of all that went on—if you could talk to me as you would to your own heart——

I'M asking a great deal, but I'm most anxious to correct my own viewpoint by yours, most anxious to clear Mr. MacDonald and others of all suspicion."

"I shall be only too glad to help in any way I can," she said. "I'll try to answer any question you care to ask."

"Thank you," smiled Blunt. "Now please don't mind if some of my questions may appear most peculiar and irrelevant, even if they seem grossly impertinent. Sometimes I find information in strange places and by stranger means. And an apparently irrelevant question may suggest an entirely relevant train of thought. Of course this little talk of ours will be kept entirely between ourselves."

"Now, were Hugh Banister and his father the completely loving and united father and son that every one has pictured them? If the servants and intimate friends weren't able to notice a flaw in the combination, were you?"

She shot him a quick startled glance, then said: "Oh, they were. There's no question of that."

Obviously she spoke the truth, spoke it with some perplexity and even unwillingness. It was as though she herself had doubted, had sought for and failed to find the flaw in the combination, would have been rather pleased at finding it. Moreover Blunt received the impression that, having been unjust to Hugh in her thoughts, she was now doubly anxious to do him justice. Undoubtedly, he thought, the recent evidence in favor of MacDonald had much to do with this, perhaps everything.

"You know," she continued, "Uncle Maitland had some misgivings about Hugh's home-coming, but it was a won-

derful success from the first; I mean where he and his father were concerned. No one could have been more loving, patient and attentive than Hugh; they never had a single disagreement about anything. And you know Uncle Maitland could be rather trying at times with those whom he loved most. But Hugh's suffering has taught him sympathy and forbearance. No, as you say, if there had been the slightest discord between them I should have been the first to detect it. But the old business of the check had been completely wiped out, everything forgotten and forgiven."

Corrigan's own words. Blunt, hanging tenaciously to a cherished theory, was being compelled at last to loosen his grip.

AND now a very personal question, Miss Carruthers: Do you think Hugh Banister wishes to marry you?"

"Certainly not," she replied promptly and without any false embarrassment. "Yes, I believe it was Uncle Maitland's wish at one time, and I think he might still have liked it if it had been at all possible. But, of course, it wasn't and isn't."

"You mean because of Hugh's affliction?"

She looked wounded. "I do not, Mr. Blunt. That had nothing to do with it. I don't care for Hugh in that way, but, if I did, nothing like that would stop me. It wouldn't stop any woman who really cared. But he doesn't care for me in that way either."

"I'm not at all sure of that," said Blunt. "Are you?"

"Perfectly. In fact he doesn't care for me in any way."

Blunt looked his surprise and disbelief.

"It's true," she said, flushing. "Do you think a person can't tell, especially a woman? No, of course, he tried not to show it, but I know."

"But why," said Blunt, obviously astonished and perplexed, "should he dislike you?"

"I'm not saying he does; that supposes,

infers, a certain interest. He is just—indifferent. It has nothing to do with my benefiting under the will," she added quickly. "He's above anything like that. And besides it goes without saying that he'd no idea I'd be benefiting so enormously at his expense; he knew his father intended making him the principal legatee. He has said so. Nor," and she flushed again, "has it anything to do with Mr. MacDonald. If you think, as certain papers have hinted, that they were—were rivals, you're very much mistaken."

"Then have you any idea why Maitland Banister took this increasing dislike to MacDonald? I will tell you frankly that I thought Hugh Banister was very far from being indifferent to you, that his father supported him in his desire, and for that reason became more opposed to Mr. MacDonald."

"No, no," she said, shaking her head vigorously, "that's all wrong. Really it is. I did think that Hugh actively disliked Mr. MacDonald for some reason or other, quite apart from that Zurich matter; but now hasn't he shown that he doesn't?"

IF any one turned Mr. Banister against Mr. MacDonald it was the Parkers. I'm saying to you what I think, thoughts that have no proof. I repeat that Hugh is completely indifferent to me. Indeed I do think he really dislikes me in a passive sort of way. He seems to have cared, been capable of caring, for no one but his father."

"Perhaps," said Blunt with a sudden penetrating glance, "it's because you dislike him. Do you dislike him? What are your exact feelings toward him?"

Again that fleeting, startled glance as though she were surprising thoughts in him that she believed no one could possibly entertain but herself, thoughts with which she declined to grapple, which she preferred to keep hidden or at least obscured.

"I don't know," she said, gazing out of the window as the taxi turned down Seventy-second Street to the Drive. Then

4B—POP.

she turned and met his eyes. "Yes, I've promised to tell you everything, so I'll try to explain."

Blunt had the sensation of one listening to a definition, if not analysis, of his own feelings as inspired by Hugh Banister. She even blamed herself, attributed it, as had he to Corrigan, to something lacking in her own character.

"He's so worthy, so deserving of sympathy, of admiration," she said. "And I'd so much to atone for, I was so anxious to make up for it. I did try my best, I tried awfully hard, and the result has made me so miserable. Did you ever think of a person with a small, cold, wicked, watchful heart like—like a coiled snake? Oh, I shouldn't say that! I haven't said anything to any one about my feelings; I haven't talked to any one, as I'm talking to you. You—you seem to understand."

"I don't know; perhaps he hasn't forgiven me for having misjudged him, for thinking he remained abroad through stubbornness and an unforgiving spirit. But it's impossible to know him; no matter how much I've tried I can't get below the surface—a hard, evasive surface. Always I feel it, I meet it under the soft gentleness. It slips away like a thing in the dark, a thing that wouldn't frighten so much if one could only grip it, see its face. Oh, I'm talking wildly, stupidly! But there alone in that big house—sometimes I'm terrorized for no reason at all. That's the worst fear in the world—fear of the unknown. Sometimes I think he—he——"

SHE stopped, sat up trembling, mastered with an effort what seemed almost to approach incipient hysteria. "This is too absurd," she said, forcing a smile. "I'm not usually so silly. I suppose it's reaction, nerves. You mustn't take seriously what I've been saying."

"No one is more worthy of sympathy, of admiration than Hugh Banister. There must be something deficient in me, not him. And now that he has stuck up so admirably for Mr. MacDonald—and I

thought he'd forgotten their old friendship. You see I've been misjudging him again. I'm sure we'll reach a complete and sympathetic understanding. I'll try all over again, try awfully hard."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ULTIMATUM.

HUGH BANISTER was in the drawing-room with the Parkers when at length Miss Carruthers reached home. She heard their raised voices—that is Bertram's and his father's. for, whatever the circumstances, Hugh never raised his—and paused wide eyed in the doorway. Something had happened, was happening; something grossly unpleasant to judge by their expressions and the few words she had overheard. And Hugh was enjoying it vastly in his secret way, if the Parkers obviously weren't. They were heated, excited, scowling; he calm and cool, smiling the gentle smile.

"Sorry, but you're *de trop*, Carol," he said, turning the dark glasses on the opening door, seemingly knowing in his uncanny way that it was she. "A confidential talk, but I shan't be long. Thank you."

When she had gone, the door closed again, Aloysius, fuming at the interruption, began where he had evidently left off. "And I say I've come here to demand an explanation, to protest against such unheard-of and monstrous conduct! You made me out a liar before the coroner and jury, before my friends and acquaintances, in the eyes of the world—*me*, a person of my reputation and standing in the law! a person whose word and motive has never been questioned. And I tell you, sir, that but for the respect I bear your dead father and the—er—ethics of my noble profession, I should have thrashed the matter out there and then to your cost. To your cost, sir."

"I say again that your father never meant Mr. MacDonald to benefit by so much as a penny, and that you know it as well as I. I say you do, sir! In your misguided zeal for shielding this whilom friend, whom you should know as a false

and base one, you haven't hesitated to sacrifice your father's most ancient and honorable one; to outrage his sacred feelings, to cast aspersions on his character—a man, sir, I may add, to whom you owe everything. But for me, and all my prodigious efforts in your behalf, you would still be a wanderer on the Continent, forever beyond the power of your dear father's forgiveness.

"Nor is that all, sir," continued Aloysius, thumping the table and flourishing his arms as he worked toward his peroration, deceived by Banister's silence. "You suggested most unwarrantably that I no longer possessed your dear father's confidence. You cast, knowingly or otherwise, the gravest doubts on me as a friend and honored member of the law. You suggested that there were to be other changes in the will of which I was to be kept ignorant until the last moment—I, his confidential friend and lawyer!

THAT won't do, sir; you can't make these derogatory suggestions and statements and remain exempt. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, nor are you dealing with an obscure member of that law. For your dear father's sake I am still prepared to show a certain forbearance, but it won't do, sir, it won't do. I say it won't do!"

"And, if you'll permit me, I say so too," remarked Banister with a sudden change of expression. He looked suddenly formidable, almost sinister. "I cordially agree. No, Mr. Parker, it won't do; decidedly not. Very interesting as a forensic effort, no doubt, but I'm not an ignorant prisoner at the bar. And, unfortunately, most of the terrifying effect is lost because I can't see your antics.

"I'm not to be bullied, Mr. Parker, nor bluffed, nor cajoled. Now put away your bag of tricks, all this wind and bluster, and let us proceed to business. I think we understand one another, you and your admirable son and I. At least I certainly understand you two, and you may understand me more completely when we're done. But I think—I'm sure—you've

more than an idea of what I'm about to say. Yes?"

The Parkers, taking advantage of Banister's blindness, exchanged a long look of trepidation, dismay, and anger. But Aloysius, still hectoring, had another thump at the inoffensive table and declared: "No, sir! unless it is a tardy apology for, and explanation of, your conduct, this most outrageous and unwarranted attitude. I repeat——"

NO, don't!" said Banister, and held up a hand. "No more fulminations; I've had enough. To proceed to business, there will be no reason, Mr. Parker, for you to feel cut up about disbursing that sum to Mr. MacDonald, because, you see, you aren't going to officiate as one of the executors."

"Am I not?" said Aloysius rather futilely, puffing out his cheeks. "Indeed! And why not?"

"Because my father didn't wish you to. He intended you to have no part in the new will."

"I deny that!" exclaimed Aloysius. "I repudiate that statement. And in any case it has no bearing whatever on the matter. There's nothing but your unsupported word for this ridiculous assertion, the same as in all your other derogatory ones. And even if it was your father's wish, which I emphatically deny—and I should be the first to carry out his wishes—it has no sanction in law. I am one of the legally appointed executors, sir, and I shall do my sacred duty, carry out my trust. You cannot get around the law, sir!"

"No?" smiled Banister. "But what if an executor is proved unworthy to hold his sacred trust? What if he's proved unworthy to practice the sacred profession of the 'lawr?' What if he really should be in jail with his admirable son for misappropriation and conversion of funds confided to his care—in short, theft!"

"Ah, you see? Yes, as you know quite as well as I, both you and your virtuous boy have made, in your respective posi-

tions, quite a nice little steal from the Banister Estate."

"That's a lie!" cried Bertram, while the picture presented by Aloysius of astonishment, outraged probity and indignation, was quite one of the most admirable counterfeits he had ever executed.

"Enough!" exclaimed Banister at length, with his formidable look. "I admit it was all done most cleverly—but perhaps you don't know that in Jevons I've a pair of eyes that knows all about cooking books, all the ins and outs of crooked finance. And though I'm physically blind, gentlemen, I'm not spiritually nor mentally so. I can tell the true from the false—call it a sixth sense if you like—and, almost from the first day, I knew that you two were false.

"You were false to my father; you took advantage of his faith in you, and then of his infirmity. And you thought to find in me one equally trusting and infirm. That was the true reason for all your 'prodigious' efforts on my behalf, Mr. Parker. A blind trusting figurehead was imperative; you thought to conceal from me those speculations about which a shrewd outsider would have been sure to ask awkward questions. You deny it?" he concluded as Bertram began to shout. "You think your tracks are so well hidden that I can't prove anything? Very well, we shall see."

ALOYSIUS frantically waved his spluttering scion to silence. This was an occasion for *men*. It was no time for venting spite and hatred and chagrin, no time even for bluffing. He had tried his best bluff and failed. The worst had happened, they were in a very tight corner indeed, and it would be the height of crass folly to block the only possible loophole of escape.

This man Banister wouldn't have forced an issue unless he were sure of the outcome; that was the keynote of his suddenly revealed character. He had the goods on them. He and Jevons—ah, that man Jevons with his placid air of innocence!—had been burrowing in the dark

all this time, secret foes under the guise of helpful friends. That man Jevons, an expert bookkeeper, auditor, master of involved finance—he whose position in the office had been apparently so humble and trivial! And Banister with his gentle smile, his seeming readiness, eagerness to believe all that was told him— Oh, it was dastardly, a vile conspiracy! A scurrilous plot against the reputation and good name of the honorable Parkers!

"No, Mr. Banister," he said cautiously, "we aren't daring you, as it were, to prove your case. I hope we can discuss this matter temperately—as I have from the first—and approach it in a mutually conciliatory spirit, with forbearance and—hum—toleration. The Christian spirit—it smooths the roughest road.

"To my mind there is nothing to be gained by taking it into court, making it public; such a course is greatly to be deprecated. The law is costly, and your dear father so lately laid in his grave—no, no. I trust that is your view also?"

"It depends," said Banister grimly. "So far I've heard no admission of guilt on your part, nothing that would prompt leniency on my part. As for going into court, so far as I'm personally concerned, I don't care two straws. If you think I'm bluffing, I'm waiting to be called—indeed, even anxious."

FOLLOWING some further consideration, Mr. Parker said, with the air of utter frankness of one fully aware that an opponent has no witnesses, "I'm willing to admit certain—hum—irregularities on the part of my boy and myself. I'm quite willing, even anxious, to do so. It is the way of honor, the mandate of conscience. The complexities of managing such a large estate, the manifold legal duties involved, were immense. I don't wish to put any blame on your dear father who, through his illness, was unable—or perhaps forgot or didn't properly understand the——"

"That won't do, Mr. Parker. Leave my father out of it."

"As you wish," sighed Aloysius,

"though I like to talk of him; he was very dear to me. However, I ask you to believe that those—hum—irregularities were committed through ignorance, through—er—an excess of zeal and duty, rather than with any intent to defraud. Also that we fully intended informing your dear father—you see I must mention him again—of the matter, and intended doing our utmost to replace the moneys that were—hum—lost through unfortunate speculation.

"To err is human, sir, and to put the whole matter in a nutshell, we thought—taking advantage of our tried and true service and your dear father's infirmity—you will excuse my mentioning him once more—we could invest certain moneys more profitably to his advantage——"

OH, yes," broke in Banister. "And to save him all worry you not only didn't tell him, but you did it through a mythical third party, converting the proceeds to yourself. And I know how the money went, not so much in unfortunate speculation as keeping up the sort of secret life you and your son lead—night clubs and other amusements of equal respectability."

Aloysius looked vastly astonished and pained. "I repudiate that statement, sir," he said, waving down an outburst from Son Bertram. "Your information, wherever gained, is sadly erroneous. However, that's beside the point; I won't dispute it with you, abandon my attitude of conciliation and good will. I have admitted fully and freely to the—hum—irregularities, and no man can do more."

"Oh, yes, you can," said Banister. "You can put it in black and white. A verbal confession without witnesses—and you are two to one——" He smiled. "You see?"

"We'll see you in hell first!" shouted the long-restrained Bertram.

"Very good," said Banister. "Take your choice—hell or jail. It's all one to me."

"And if we are prepared to give a signed admission," said Aloysius, balking at the word "confession," "what are you

prepared to give? That's the point." He had discarded all flowers of oratory and become the legal haggler. "You can't expect us to place ourselves so completely in your power for nothing, to thus give in without a fight. There must be a *quid pro quo*."

"Not necessarily," said Banister. "I don't admit that for a moment. I'm not compelled to give anything, while you are. But solely for the sake of my father and because I'd prefer not to have any further notoriety if possible, I'm prepared to give you immunity. I'm quite aware that I shouldn't be able to secure any financial redress, that you aren't able to return the money you've stolen; so in a sense the game wouldn't be worth the candle. In other words, I'm prepared, under certain circumstances, not to prosecute."

AND what guarantee have we of that?" demanded Aloysius, secretly vastly relieved.

"None," said Banister, "but my word. Take it or leave it. And here are the further terms: Your son will resign his office, and you yours as executor. Make whatever excuse to the court you like. You are totally done in all respects with any connection whatsoever with my father's affairs. And as a guarantee of your noninterference in the future, I propose to hold your signed statement of guilt."

"Now, gentlemen, that's the ultimatum and, I dare say, you know quite as well as I that you're getting off dirt cheap. But don't let me influence you; if you think you can beat these charges in court, go to it. But you must decide one way or the other here and now. My offer of clemency has distinct limits. My relenting mood is merely temporary."

"You give us your word," said Aloysius at length, mopping his perspiring brow, "that no unfair use will be made of this—hum—admission? It won't be made public or anything like that? If we keep our part of the agreement, we can depend on you to keep yours?"

"I've already answered that," said Banister coldly. "Although it's apparently be-

yond your ken, there is no more solid or binding guarantee than the word of a man of honor."

It was the hardest, the bitterest decision Aloysius ever had to make in a career replete with trying decisions. Aside from all else it was against his whole nature, his training, to thus incriminate himself irrevocably by putting pen to any such documents. A verbal admission without witnesses, as a man of honor to another—a gentleman's agreement—was one thing, this quite another. But none knew better than he the penalty of refusal. And there was no use appealing to this man for pity or understanding; useless to plead his long and really faithful service to the Banister interests, to explain the temptation that came with opportunity and adverse fortune.

However, even the written word, as couched in the language of the law, can be made sufficiently innocuous, and he, Aloysius Parker, was a master of cloudy and complex phraseology, something that seemed one thing but meant quite another. He could make this—hum—admission a work of art, adroitly and subtly nullifying it. And Banister was blind. Indeed something quite different could be read over to him aloud. Cheered by this agreeable prospect, he uncapped his fountain pen and stepped to a small writing desk.

I CONSENT, Mr. Banister," he said with dignity. "For the sake of your father I consent. As I say, any recourse to the law is to be greatly deprecated. Now I shall draw up the—hum—admission."

"No," said Banister, "you shan't." And, raising his voice, he called Jevons.

The sliding doors parted and Jevons appeared, placid, innocent-looking Jevons, neat and orderly, with pencil and notebook in hand. He bowed respectfully to the Parkers, who were too outraged to do more than stare. To be caught by such a hoary trick! Aloysius, who had used it himself prodigally, was in particular mortally offended and incensed.

"You've taken down the stenographic report of this interview, Jevons?" asked Banister pleasantly.

"Yes, sir," said the other, dutiful eyes on his notes. "Shall I read it over, sir?"

"No, I don't think it's necessary—just now. These gentlemen wish to sign a full confession. You will take it from my dictation."

Nothing upon which to rely, in order to save the family name and reputation, but the word of this man whom he had again underestimated, this man who had proved himself doubly a trickster! And yet if he refused to sign, there was that stenographic report—an admission of guilt in itself. It would be merely declining a wonderful possibility for a terrible certainty. And though this man was an unscrupulous trickster, he might be true to his own peculiar code of honor.

AT this desperate phase in his fluctuating fortunes, his back to the wall as it were, Aloysius struck a more lofty, truer note than any uttered since the days of his high ambitions and ideals and small beginnings. Putting everything aside he made perhaps the most eloquent plea of his career, eloquent because of its evident sincerity and true feeling.

He pointed out that, contrary to Banister's assertion, the money had not gone in riotous living but the bare necessities of life; that the peculations had been going on only a comparatively short time, that it was a single error in a long career of honorable and faithful service, that—

"Am I to dictate this confession or not?" interrupted Banister coldly.

"At least," cried Aloysius desperately, his voice breaking, "leave my boy out of it. I'll sign anything you say, but leave him out. That's all I ask. I take the whole blame; it was all my fault. What he did was to cover my—my misappropriations. I made him do it. He's entirely innocent."

"Not a bit of it, no more than you," said Banister. "Both of you sign or neither. Which is it to be? My patience is done and I give you exactly one minute

more to decide. Jevons, take the time. One minute and not a second longer. If they decline, ring up the district attorney's office."

At the end of the minute Banister began to dictate: "We, the undersigned, do hereby voluntarily——" There was nothing cloudy or figurative about that document when Banister was done. In vain for Bertram to protest and squirm, for Aloysius to suggest the extenuating word, the ambiguous phrase; it was a watertight, copper-bottomed, double-riveted affair that would insure the Parkers, father and son, an appropriate term behind the bars.

"Something like this is necessary," said Banister, when it was signed and witnessed, "to protect myself, to protect the estate from further depredations by you two. Of course you're aware that a case I could prove in court now, I might be unable to do with the passing of time. Your thefts have been so cunningly contrived and covered that, without the evidence I've dug up, you needn't be afraid of detection by any one else—or at least conviction.

"There may be suspicion—I can't help that, and you must be prepared for it—but without my aid they can't bring anything home to you. That aid, as I've promised, no one shall have unless you make it necessary by your future actions.

"No doubt," he concluded meditatively, "I'm not doing my duty to society by this display of clemency; however, there it is and I trust you'll profit by it. You've had a lesson by which other clients may benefit. I'm doing what I think my father would have done in the circumstances, doing it simply and solely for the sake of his memory. And now, good evening, gentlemen. You understand, of course, that in the future we meet as strangers."

CHAPTER XIV.

RARE CANDOR.

WHAT has happened?" asked Miss Caruthers anxiously as Banister came out on the porch to find her sitting in the twilight. "I mean about the Parkers. I

just saw them go; they didn't speak to me and they looked—I can't describe it. It was awful."

"They're a couple of rogues, as I suspected from the first," said Banister, taking a chair at her side. "Looted the estate of over a hundred thousand. Of course this is confidential. Hypocrites and thieves. You remember the Frenchman saying that the more he saw of people, the more he respected dogs. Very true. Everybody's the same; and seemingly the most honest are the most corrupt."

SHE listened amazed. "And they are to go scot-free? It is generous, noble of you."

"I'm afraid neither the one nor the other. What's the good of prosecuting? I'm merely trying to do what I think my father would wish, act as he would. There's no question that, because of his long association with Parker, he'd have let the old rascal go. As for generosity, the money really belongs to you, as it turns out. If you don't agree with what I've done——"

"Oh, but I do!" she broke in eagerly. "Of course I do. I wouldn't think of prosecuting, making it public. I'm so sorry for poor old Mr. Parker, in a way; of course it's no excuse, but he's had so much trouble, his wife and daughter dying—I'm so glad you feel that way about it, too."

She was experiencing a renewed rush of sympathy for the silent figure at her side. This magnanimity toward the Parkers, how unlike the picture she had conjured up to Blunt and then tried to wipe out! Now was the time for grappling with this evasive personality, of coming to a complete understanding. Not since Hugh's home-coming had there seemed such a likelihood of their spirits becoming *en rapport*; indeed it was one of the rare occasions on which they had been alone together. Hitherto he had appeared to shun rather than seek such meetings.

"Besides it's not really my money," she continued hurriedly. "Hugh, I want to speak about that; it's the first chance I've

had. I don't want it, I can't take it. And your father didn't mean it for me; he meant you to have it. It's yours, not mine."

"No," said Banister, and his voice coming out of the darkness, still calm and dispassionate, might have been that of a disembodied spirit. "As Mr. Parker would say, there's no getting round the law. It doesn't matter what my father intended—the money's yours and you're entitled to it by law. The will can't be broken, and at least I certainly shan't attempt it. I've money enough and to spare."

"I won't take it!" she exclaimed.

"I don't see what you can do," said Banister. "However, I'm sure there are plenty of charities only too eager for funds."

"Oh, please don't talk like that! Don't—don't you realize something of how I feel about it? Try to understand my position, Hugh. I couldn't profit from Uncle Maitland's death like that. It's like—like blood money! Don't you know what some people are hinting, and more thinking? That I——" She broke off, unable to voice the rest, expecting, waiting for a word of sympathy and understanding.

It did not come. Banister said nothing. The dark glasses seemed to glow in the dark like the eyes of a cat. Again came that inexplicable unreasoning fear, that more than physical repulsion as though something abnormal, beyond the ken of reason or understanding, were reading her thoughts like an open book.

A HORRIBLE thought assailed her. She flushed, half arose, resumed her chair, choking down both fear and indignation. Surely he couldn't believe or even suspect that *she* had killed his father! No, no, he couldn't; she was misjudging him monstrously again. She must try once more, avoid for the time being this matter of her inheritance. His proved friendship for MacDonald—ah, that was decidedly safe and solid ground, undeniable proof of his nobility of character. She would speak to him of that.

She made a sad bungle of her words,

talking against what seemed an almost hostile silence. Result, she said more than she intended, less than she meant. With no great stretch of her nervous, excited imagination she could fancy him smiling gently, enjoying her floundering.

"No one should be indebted to me for what I did," he said at length. "I simply performed an elementary duty as any one would. I told the truth, that's all. Why shouldn't I?"

"Because I—I thought you hated Jack for some reason or other."

"Hated him? Oh, dear me, no. How absurd!"

"But you haven't been friends with him," she said desperately. "You know you haven't, Hugh. What he said was true in a way. Whether you intended it or not, you—you made it uncomfortable for him here. You avoided him, showed unmistakably that he wasn't wanted. Uncle Maitland did too."

Embarked on the subject, finding herself committed to an argument she had not intended advancing, she continued: "It's all very well to say that the Zurich incident was forgotten and forgiven, that his explanation was believed, but—but it didn't look like it. I couldn't help thinking that the Parkers had been telling lies about him to your father and that you believed them too. I still think so. It must have been something like that. You know it must."

I KNOW nothing of the kind," said Banister. "My father wasn't the person to believe lies, nor am I. And it was never our practice to listen to slander behind a man's back. Your suggestion to the contrary is hardly complimentary, nor does it show a knowledge of our characters that I surely thought you, of all people, possessed. However, as I intimated at the opening of this conversation, the people one thinks one knows best are those one is oftenest deceived in."

"I'm sorry," she said, biting her lip. "I didn't mean to infer anything underhand or dishonorable on the part of you and Uncle Maitland. You know I didn't. I'm

so glad if you've all your old friendship for Jack, and you may be sure he is too. I saw him for a few minutes outside the court to-day, and he'll be up to-night. He couldn't come sooner because he's got a position, a really good one."

"I thought you were expecting some one," said Banister. "I'm sorry to say, however, that if he's coming expressly to see me—which I doubt—I won't be able to see him."

"Why? Where are you going?"

"Nowhere."

"Then why can't you see him?"

BANISTER was silent, then replied: "I didn't say can't; I said won't. If you must know, I haven't the old friendship for Mr. MacDonald, nor can I ever have again. He has forfeited all claim on that, as he knows quite well. By your accusation of the Parkers I'm forced to tell you something I intended not to. The Parkers have sins enough of their own to answer for, and that they're guilty in some respects doesn't remove the obligation of my telling the truth, any more than it did in the case of Mr. MacDonald. Rather than the Parkers telling lies to my father about him, I told my father the truth. That is the explanation of his and my attitude toward Mr. MacDonald."

"Oh!" she said in a small parched voice. "And what was it? Yes, I must know."

"It concerns our meeting in Zurich," said Banister. "A great deal more happened there than you've been given to understand. If Mr. MacDonald had merely seen me at a distance, as he was subsequently forced to admit, I could accept his explanation that he didn't mention the fact because he believed I didn't want my disfigurement known. But he didn't merely see me at a distance; we met, we talked together."

"Oh, surely not! He said——"

"Yes, that he saw me in the lounge, identifying me subsequently by the desk clerk's description; that, when his card came up, I sent down Jevons declining an interview; that I kept my room until assured by Jevons that MacDonald had left

Zurich. Exactly. That was his amended story when he heard I was coming home; it was part of the truth, but only a very small part. The whole truth is that Mr. MacDonald met me the following day when I was out for a walk with Jevons; we had a long conversation and in the course of it he said that, not only had my father no desire to ever see me again, but that he, MacDonald, was engaged to be married to you and that the wedding would be soon."

"What!"

YES. And though saying rightly enough that he'd been sent over by old Parker to induce me to return—he knew I might learn that from Parker himself—he made it clear that my father had nothing to do with it. In short he removed all reason for my ever wanting to return."

"That's a lie!" MacDonald had suddenly appeared on the porch behind them. "That's a lie, Banister!" He stood in the light from the hall door, his face convulsed, hands clenched. "What do you mean by saying a thing like that? We never met in Zurich! I never said one word to you, let alone anything like that!"

Banister had arisen. "Ah, eavesdropping?" he said gently.

"Nothing of the kind!" cried MacDonald. "I couldn't help hearing. It's lucky for me I did, that I arrived in time. There have been a lot of lies about me, but I'm going to nail this one to the table. No doubt you were telling Carol all this under the seal of a sacred confidence—something else to estrange us!"

"You're mistaken," said Banister calmly. "Do you think I didn't know you were there? No, no, my false friend, you forget this educated nose of mine! I scented you long ago; knew you were hiding, spying, listening in the shrubbery down there. I should have said nothing to Carol if I hadn't been sure you could overhear. What I have to say I say to a man's face; I leave backbiting to others. I wanted you to hear the truth at last; you should have heard it before if I hadn't

had to consult my father's wishes. But now he's no longer here."

"The truth!" exclaimed the other, choking on the word. He stepped forward, seemed about to fling himself on Banister.

Banister appeared to sense this. "That's right," he said icily, recoiling a step. "Assault me! I'm only blind and helpless. Quite in keeping with your manly, chivalrous character. Yes, proceed to strike me."

"You're crazy!" burst out MacDonald. "That's what's the matter with you. You must be. You know perfectly well we never met in Zurich or any place else!"

"On the contrary, Mr. MacDonald."

"It's a wholesale lie! And, by heavens! Banister, if you had only sight I'd give you the hiding of your life! You deserve it if ever a man did. False friend? It's *you* who are that, and have been all along. I see that now. I came here to-night to thank you and apologize, thinking I'd misjudged you, and I find you slipping a knife in my back. I never heard such a bare-faced lie in my life as the one you've told!"

THEN you are strangely deaf to your own voice," retorted Banister. "Happily for me I've a witness to that conversation you deny, though I'm not in the habit of having my word vouched for. I don't need it. No doubt you thought Jevons was beyond earshot that day in Zurich, but it so happens that he wasn't. He can corroborate everything I've said. Shall I call him?"

"I don't care if you call a dozen smiling smug Jevons!" said MacDonald violently, the other's calmness seeming to goad him to further anger and loss of self-control. "You can pay him to corroborate anything. Carol!" And he turned to the amazed and silent girl who was watching them wide eyed. "Do *you* believe this farrago? One of us, Banister or I, must be a liar and scoundrel—which is it? You've got to choose. Do you believe him or do you believe me?"

"Not forgetting that I've a witness to

my truth, while Mr. MacDonald hasn't," said Banister smoothly.

Obviously she was greatly distressed. "Isn't it possible that both of you may be right?" she pleaded. "I—I mean supposing you'd mistaken some one else for Jack, supposing some one had impersonated him——"

PREPOSTEROUS! exclaimed Banister. "Quite impossible. Who would, and why? You are constantly forgetting my sense of smell—and then there is Jevons. No, Mr. MacDonald has at least managed to speak one truth—that you have to believe either him or me. There can be no compromise in this matter, no middle way. Him or me."

She looked from one to the other, from MacDonald standing pale-faced in the dim light, to Banister's glasses gleaming in the darkness. "Why have you only spoken of this now?" she asked suddenly, her eyes still on the glasses. "If you thought it your duty to tell your father—and I'm not saying it wasn't—why not me, the person principally concerned?"

"My father, as I've already intimated, didn't wish it," replied Banister. "He wouldn't stoop to drag it out of Mr. MacDonald. What was the use of telling Mr. MacDonald something he already knew? It was for him to come and make a full confession. My father waited for that, thinking it would ultimately come. Again, neither my father nor I were sure that you weren't secretly engaged to Mr. MacDonald. That also took time to disprove. But will Mr. MacDonald deny even now that he's in love with you, that he wishes to marry you?"

"No, I don't deny that," said MacDonald quickly, and Carol flushed from neck to brow. "I think Carol has at least suspected that for some time, though I apologize to her for being forced to mention it here, bring her into all this. But there's no secret engagement or even understanding between us, nor did I ever claim any to you or any one else. Perhaps you'll explain why, if this alleged conversation took place, I didn't own up to it when I heard

you were coming home, knowing you must learn the truth and expose me? Explain that, if you can."

"I explain it," said Banister, "by your relying on doing what you've done now—denying wholesale that such a conversation ever took place."

"I do deny it! No one knows better than you that it never took place. This is merely an extension and elaboration of the old insinuation that I tried to stop you from coming home. The Parkers suggested it, and I've been made aware of it in one way or another from the first. By its use you succeeded in turning your father against me, and now you want to turn Miss Carruthers. You hate me and would like to see me without a friend."

"If your own conduct leaves you without a friend, that's surely not my fault," replied Banister. "I merely wish Carol, for her own sake, to know of that conduct. It is for her to decide whom to believe; I leave it entirely to her common sense and understanding. Come, Carol—say what you think. You must."

"I don't want to, Hugh. You place me in a very awkward and distressing position. I'd rather say nothing."

"But you must. I insist," he said harshly. "The position is none of my making, but obviously it must be met, and only in the one way. Surely you can't hesitate! Speak out!"

HE seemed entirely confident of what her answer must be; his voice was assured, even authoritative.

Again she looked from one to the other, her hands working nervously. "Very well," she said at length, "if you insist, I believe Jack."

There was silence. Banister appeared too astonished to speak. To Carol it seemed a malignant sort of silence; and it made it all the more terrible that she was unable to see his face clearly, little more than the glasses shining in the darkness. But she could picture the expression of that face, imagine its dismay and anger. He seemed to be peering at her with craned neck and fixed intensity.

At length he gave a short, neighing laugh, mirthless and contemptuous. "That's your considered opinion?" he challenged.

"It is," she answered with hotly beating heart. "I didn't wish to say it. I would rather have spared your feelings, Hugh——"

"Oh, don't mind *my* feelings," he broke in harshly. "Why consider them at this late day?"

"I—I've always considered them."

"I beg to differ." Banister had become elaborately polite. "In a way I'm not astonished at this decision of yours, based, shall we say, on inclination rather than common sense or even an elementary conception of justice? We believe what we want to believe, and love is notoriously blind. It's what I suspected all along—you're in love with this man!"

MacDonald, stepping forward, was about to speak when the girl forestalled him. "I don't recognize your right to ask that," she said quietly, "but I'm not ashamed to answer it. Yes, I love Jack. As he has said, I think our hearts have known that a long, long time."

MacDonald's hand went out to hers, and they stood with interlocked fingers like children in the dark.

"Congratulations," said Banister. "I hope you'll be very happy. I'm sure you deserve to be, both of you. A truly worthy couple."

HE paused, then continued: "You mustn't regard me in the light of a rejected suitor, the fox with the sour grapes. No, no, nothing like that. I admit, Miss Carruthers, that at one time I cherished the fond delusion of your becoming my wife, but that was before my blindness, before my disfigurement, before my admirable friend told me of his engagement to you."

"That delusion, based on a romantic misconception of your character, was responsible for my remaining abroad. I schooled myself to renounce; it was very, very hard, and I thought my heart broken, my life blighted. But since coming home

and renewing your acquaintance I've found it quite otherwise. Forgive me if I appear unflattering, but we have agreed to be candid, haven't we? So rather than feeling in the smallest degree disgruntled, I can assure Mr. MacDonald of my very heartiest congratulations, with quite a whole heart wish him felicity, applaud him for capturing such a coveted prize. Indeed my only difficulty lies in knowing which to congratulate most, you, Mr. MacDonald—or myself."

I THINK that's the most caddish, cowardly speech I ever heard," said MacDonald hotly. "Cowardly, because you're taking such advantage of your affliction. If you've got to be nasty about this, at least confine your remarks to me. Your conduct is really scandalous."

Banister gave tongue to his neighing laugh. "Chivalrous protector of the weak, censor of morals—the rôle fits you so admirably, Mr. MacDonald. But you may find I'm not so helpless as I seem; others have discovered that to their cost. Ask the Parkers. False friends—their name is legion. You think I wish to hide behind my blindness? Oh, not a bit of it."

"You wouldn't dare to say what you've done if you knew you'd get the thrashing you deserve," said MacDonald.

"I've faced the German army, yet I'm afraid of you! You're surprisingly ignorant of my character, you who should surely know me better," said Banister as though amused. "But as to this charming romance, why only reveal it after my father's death? I'm sure he would have been glad to know of it. And surely he was entitled to know, seeing how vastly both of you profit by his death, that it's his money which will enable you to marry."

"Are you insinuating," demanded MacDonald, "that we—that I——"

"Yes, that I—too," said Carol in a muffled voice as MacDonald paused. "I've felt it. Oh, it's too horrible! Hugh, you don't really mean it, that we—that I—killed Uncle Maitland?"

"Why do you act like this, say such

dreadful things? What have we done to deserve it? Why do you hate us? Can't we be friends just the same? We—we mustn't quarrel like this over Uncle Maitland's grave! Oh, Hugh, please do try and——"

"There's no occasion to get hysterical," said Banister coldly. "Have I accused you, any one, of my father's death? I make no accusations that I can't support. Friends? How can you continue to be friends with a liar and a scoundrel?"

"I never said that."

"There is no need. I must be that, seeing you're so entirely satisfied that Mr. MacDonald isn't. It follows logically, inevitably. I told you there could be no compromise. You've chosen; well and good. I'm not objecting to your choice; far from it. But I couldn't think of subjecting you to the continued society of a liar and scoundrel. Certainly not. As this house belongs to me, my generous share of the estate, it follows then——"

"I shall leave to-night. Now!" exclaimed Carol. "I wouldn't stay another minute after all you've said—and left unsaid. I—I'll be glad to go, I'll take Marie and——and send for my things."

"As you please," shrugged Banister. "I think it will be a mutual relief. In any case your continued presence here might only give rise to unpleasant talk. And if you and Mr. MacDonald can manage to make this your farewell visit to Lafayette House I shall feel infinitely obliged. It would save me the trouble and awkwardness of instructing the servants not to admit you in future."

"You—you——" Apparently MacDonald found words inadequate; swearing under his breath he turned and followed the girl into the house.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER!

ALMOST a month had passed and the Banister mystery, as it had been dubbed inevitably by the press, gave every promise of remaining one, taking its place among those unsolved criminal problems

like the famous case of Mary Rogers utilized so skillfully by Poe. In spite of all investigation it became daily more insoluble, and, to some, the attitude and conduct of Hugh Banister was perhaps the most insoluble ingredient in the whole complex mixture. Notwithstanding the great interest aroused, passing time and other events was pushing the case back in the public mind into the limbo of forgotten things—forgotten in a sense but not forgiven.

The impression had got abroad that Hugh Banister knew more than he had any intention of ever admitting, that at least he had some suspicion as to the identity of his father's murderer and that he was keeping silent for reasons best known to himself. Various versions were given of the undoubted fact that Miss Carruthers had left her old home and returned to the Rialto, and that neither she nor John MacDonald was longer received at Lafayette House.

Banister, when interviewed on the matter, declined to make any explanation other than that Miss Carruthers was obviously under the necessity of making her home elsewhere. Nor would he consent to discuss MacDonald.

BANISTER refused also to comment on the fact that Bertram Parker had resigned his position, and that Aloysius, under the plea of ill health, had begged to be relieved of all duties as one of the executors. This, following immediately on the undoubted estrangement between Banister, Miss Carruthers and MacDonald, had whetted the public appetite to a hungry keenness, but as time passed and, contrary to eager expectation, nothing further of a sensational nature happened, it became dulled and finally blunt.

Aloysius Parker, true to his plea of serious ill health, left for the White Mountains, apparently in a very black humor. He looked at least mentally ill, and report had it that he and his son were no longer in complete harmony. In spite of Banister's promise to keep silent—the word of a man of honor—regarding the Parkers'

speculations, some rumor had crept out as to the true reason for their mutual resignations. But when questioned as to the truth of this, Banister declined all information even to Corrigan.

"Y'mean," demanded Corrigan bluntly, tired of fencing, "it ain't nothing to you whether we land your father's murderer or not?"

"Have I intimated anything so absurd?" countered Banister.

"Well, that's what it seems to come to. You ain't even offered a reward, you ain't done anything. If you know the Parkers are crooks——"

"Ah, yes, 'if.' A big word, Mr. Corrigan."

YOU should know if anybody should, Mr. Banister. If you can prove a motive by *any one*, why don't you? This case has got me in a pretty bad jam; I'm still doing my best but I gotta have some help. I've a right to expect it from you. If you can say anything that'll clear it up, it's about time you did. And it ain't no time for sentimental tripe, for trying to shield anybody."

Banister considered. "Apparently we look at this matter differently, our positions being different," he replied at length. "Unnecessary to say, I wish to bring my father's murderer to justice, for the sake of society if not for revenge, but, unlike you, it's not my bread and butter, as it were; consequently there's nothing to hurry me, nor is it my nature to go off at half cock.

"As for a reward, Mr. Corrigan, a mere monetary offer on my part would be no proof, for or against, of my affection for my father nor my eagerness to bring his murderer to justice; and by withholding such a reward I thought I was helping, not hindering, the authorities. I've been always under the impression—and indeed I was told so by Scotland Yard, following the death of that man Vivian—that the offering of a reward only succeeds in bringing an army of amateur sleuths whose crude investigations simply make the job of the police more difficult."

Corrigan admitted the general truth of this. "And I ain't looking for any special reward, y'understand."

OH, perfectly," said Banister. "I know your efforts aren't to be so stimulated artificially, that your stern sense of duty is your only natural nourishment, as it should be with men of your caliber. But, you may be sure, I shall know how to show my deep appreciation of those efforts in my own way at the proper time."

Corrigan, soothed by this fitting acknowledgment of his ability, made a deprecatory gesture with jeweled hairy hand.

"Nothing that I, nor any one, can do will bring my father back to me," pursued Banister with controlled emotion. "That point bulks large to me, if to nobody else. And I should be very sorry—indeed I could never forgive myself—if any hasty or ill-considered word of mine placed the innocent in jeopardy; I should have to be very sure of my facts, Mr. Corrigan, before saying anything even to you. Facts, that's what we must have, not suspicion and rumor. Facts, Mr. Corrigan."

"Yeah, you've said it," nodded Corrigan, approving his ancient motto. "Facts; that's right."

"Facts relative to my father's murder and nothing else," said Banister, tapping the floor emphatically with his cane. "And among all this irrelevant mass of rumor and gossip, what are the facts? Ah, that's the point. They aren't to be learned in a day, Mr. Corrigan.

"You know all the talk that's going on about various people concerned in this case; I can't add to it, make the burden of the possibly innocent more heavy. I've a great responsibility to bear; all these people were very dear to my father and, apart from my own feelings and desires, he would be the last to wish them to suffer through any ill-considered action of mine. A very great responsibility indeed; I feel it imperative to make no idle conjectures, hazard no guess, even in private.

"You may be sure, however, that once I'm satisfied of my ground, no false sen-

timent or even mistaken sense of chivalry shall deter me from my duty. No, nothing!"

Corrigan was impressed, encouraged, until analyzing the conversation he discovered it singularly devoid of nourishment. He knew no more than heretofore; Banister had wrapped up nothing in a beautiful collection of words and made him a handsome present of it. And as the days passed the hope of Banister's becoming "satisfied of my ground" and parting with valuable information flickered and died in Corrigan's manly breast.

I GUESS it's Miss Carruthers, all right," he said to Blunt, one day in the latter's office. "If it was MacDonald, Banister wouldn't keep mum; that'd be fitting him out with a harp and crown. But any regular fellow don't have to be an angel to save the girl he loves, even if he can't have her himself.

"Of course you were dead right about him being gone on her; that's been proved. And he'll never tell; all this about being sure of his ground is only bluff. He'll never be sure of it—for publication. My idea is that he heard her pass his door that night, saw her coming up from the library when she swore she was in her room. If he don't actually *know* she done it, he's pretty good reason to believe it. And so he ain't saying anything."

"Yes," said Blunt, "that's what most people are thinking—and content to leave the solution there. The girl, or MacDonald with her connivance. Content to leave it to the Almighty to punish them in His own good time, seeing the law can't. The misery of a guilty conscience and all that. But *they* aren't content. It has placed them in a horrible position, Dan."

It had. Carol had been forced to leave the Rialto and seek an obscure boarding house because of the whispers and glances that followed her. She was practically ostracized. The same with MacDonald. It was even militating against him in business, in his new situation.

They were afraid to announce their engagement, afraid even to be seen together

in any of their old haunts. As for marriage it was relegated to the obscure future. Marriage would only go to prove their guilt. Both had become hypersensitive, and both had come to Blunt, imploring him to succeed where the police had failed. If they must take the money left them by Maitland Banister they could utilize it at least in clearing their names and discovering the murderer. Blunt had only to name his price.

Blunt named it—nothing. Money couldn't make him do more than he was doing. Although he would hold out no hope of success he asked them not to abandon hope; the most complicated and obscure cases sometimes had a way of clarifying in the most unexpected and even marvelous fashion. His obvious belief in their innocence was in itself a great encouragement and, after a long confidential talk, they left in better spirits.

"They'd reached the point, Dan," said Blunt, "where MacDonald was going to chuck everything, go out to the coast and make a home for her—anywhere away from here. You don't realize all they've been through, made to suffer. Banister's a popular martyr. At the best, MacDonald's accused of robbing his blind friend of his sweetheart when, as a matter of fact, he'd no reason to think Banister ever loved Miss Carruthers. And she's accused of throwing him over because he's blind and disfigured.

IF Banister wanted a revenge, had plotted it, he couldn't have hit on a better than managing to convey in this way the suggestion that he knows more than he'll ever say. A direct accusation can be faced and maybe beaten; it has to be proved. But there's no meeting a thing like this, when you can't pin him down to a single word. A shrug, a look, silence—and the damage is done. I'm positive he hasn't a solitary thing against them; I'm convinced of their absolute innocence."

"Yeah, and why? For no more reason than that you still think him guilty. Oh, yes, you do, Jimmie; I know it, even if you don't say so."

Blunt frowned, toying with the inkstand on his desk. "His attitude has got me guessing again," he said slowly. "It has from the first. He never does anything you expect him to, anything you'd expect from the normal mind. He has proved all my theories wrong, one after the other. Now if he loved Miss Carruthers, yet thought her guilty, his conduct would be consistent; we can imagine his love turning to hatred when he learned that she loved MacDonald; we can imagine him hating MacDonald.

BUT Miss Carruthers still insists he never cared for her, even before his father's death. Women aren't usually mistaken about such things, Dan, and I believe her. According to what Banister told her he found out her true character after he came home, learned to dislike her. But why? He didn't know then that she loved MacDonald. If he had really cared for her he couldn't have acted the way he's done.

"Now she believes that his hatred for MacDonald is so great that he might even try to kill him. That's one reason why, without telling MacDonald, she encouraged him to leave New York. And I thought also that Banister's hatred would be bound to show itself in some way; I waited for that, took measures——"

"Confession is good for the soul, Jimmie. I guess you've been doing a lot without letting on to me. I heard you've been at Lafayette House more'n once quizzing Walker and the servants. And one of my boys saw you with that little French dame who got her walking papers from Miss Carruthers. Yeah, I've been keeping an eye on everybody—including yourself. And I've been waiting to hear about it from you."

Blunt met his friend's accusing glance with a look of bland innocence. "Of course the dredger's been working, Dan, the same as your own, but the buckets have brought up only the usual variety of mud. You had a fine enough collection of your own without mine.

"But, as I was saying, instead of Ban-

ister showing hatred, what happens? Why, it's just as if he'd never known Miss Carruthers or MacDonald; he goes about his business and lets them go about theirs. He simply has nothing more to do with them—no more than with the Parkers—and that's all. He seems to have forgotten they ever existed. And, now that the estate's settled, I understand he's going away."

"Away?" echoed Corrigan. "When did you hear that?"

"To-day, from one of my men who's been palling with Walker. Of course the butler doesn't know he's one of my operatives. It seems to be right enough. Walker says that he and the other servants are leaving at the end of the week, that Lafayette House is to be closed, and, he thinks, sold."

"Sold, eh?"

Blunt nodded. "After all it's only to be expected; there's nothing to keep Banister in a big place like that. There's nothing to keep him in the country, for that matter. He has no more interest in the estate, no job unless he makes one. He's got the house and, if he sells it, the income, added to his mother's money, will give him more than he ever had—make him mighty well off. It was worth coming home for, Dan."

"Aw! Ain't he lost over two million? Mean to say you still think he croaked his old man for *that*? And, if not for that, for what?"

I WISH we had that cartridge case," said Blunt meditatively, ignoring the question. "I wish we'd found the weapon. I wish we could say beyond all shadow of doubt that that mark on the wall was made by the bullet, fired from the window, after going through poor old Maitland Banister. I wish—oh, a whole lot of things, Corrigan.

"However, instead of staying to harry Miss Carruthers and MacDonald, he's going away, going to leave them in undisputed possession of each other and the field. A sensible, proper proceeding—and quite different from what he'd lead one

to expect. As I say, he keeps you guessing. Yes, a very interesting character, very."

"He's gonna beat it without telling what he knows!" exclaimed Corrigan. "That ain't right. It ain't fair."

"Well, fair or not, you can't stop him, Dan. He has a perfect right to go wherever he likes. You can't make him incriminate any one, even himself. You can't prove he knows anything. But, believe me, you won't be losing any valuable information where Miss Carruthers or MacDonald are concerned. He can't tell simply because he doesn't know."

CORRIGAN grunted. "If he goes away without telling, giving a hint, I'm done. I was kinda banking on him still. The case'll never be cleared up without him. I've fallen down on it hard, and so've you, Jimmie. Yes, you've had the biggest tumble of your life; no getting away from it. You can gimme nothing but this crazy old song about Banister pulling it himself. Aw! Unless a miracle——"

The door opened to admit a clerk with the afternoon mail.

"Excuse me a moment, Dan," said Blunt, slitting a long envelope. "This is from Arnold—Arnold of the Yard, you know."

"Why don't he cable if he's anything juicy to say?"

"Evidently he hasn't. But we're old friends, you know, and correspond regularly. But there may be something——"

But evidently Arnold had something interesting to say, judging by Blunt's expression as his eyes traveled quickly down the letter.

"What's the matter?" demanded Corrigan.

Blunt made no reply; he had placed the letter on his knees and his eyes were blank, unseeing. The silence lengthened, Corrigan fumed, Blunt still remained as though sunk in a stupor of thought. At length he arose and, going to a mirror, stared at his image fixedly.

"You poor fish," said Blunt softly.

"Speakin' to me?" demanded Corrigan.

"To myself," said Blunt, and turned from the mirror. "Kick me, Dan; I'm a damned fool."

"Many a true word spoken in jest, Jimmie."

"I mean it," said Blunt, and looked it. "During the past week or so I felt vaguely that I was a prize boob; now I know it. The truth has been hammered home. The proof's here." He tapped Arnold's letter. "This proves beyond all question of doubt the innocence of Hugh Banister. He didn't kill his father, no, nor even Henson. He was the victim, you may say, rather than the culprit."

It wasn't in Corrigan's nature to gloat, though he might have been pardoned now for so doing; he had seldom if ever scored at Blunt's expense. But the other's expression of chagrin was in itself enough to deter him. He was sorry for Blunt; he himself knew what it felt like to have a cherished theory demolished, to feel like a fool.

He was sorry, and yet he was glad; it solidified his own self-esteem which had become somewhat wabbly of late. If a man like Lipping Jimmie could make such a bloomer—why, anybody could. There had grown up a sort of legend that Jimmie couldn't make an egregious mistake, persist in one as he had in this. The truth was comforting; Blunt was only human after all.

WELL, I'm glad that that's one thing settled, anyway," he said. "And now that Banister's out of it, now that you've got your mind rid of him at last, mebbe it'll help. Is there anything in that letter to give you the idea who *did* pull it?"

"There is," said Blunt, to Corrigan's astonishment and delight. "There is, Dan; it gives me the idea if it didn't give it to Arnold. He didn't realize how important his information was; if he had, he would have cabled. But he got the information and I didn't; we mustn't forget that.

"Let me read you the interesting parts of that letter. You were speaking of miracles. I believe—but should exhaustive in-

telligent effort be called that? You see, Arnold——"

The desk telephone interrupted imperatively, and Blunt, busy scanning the letter, motioned Corrigan to answer. "Say I'm not in," he snapped. "Can't be bothered now."

But Blunt *was* bothered, and by Corrigan's first exclamation as he answered the voice at the end of the wire. "Dead!" exclaimed Corrigan. "You don't mean it! Say, listen here——"

He tabled the instrument and turned to Blunt. "It's Miss Carruthers. That guy Jevons has committed suicide! Can you beat it?"

CHAPTER XVI.

BRACELETS.

HISTORY repeats itself, and even criminal history is no exception. Blunt felt as though the past month had never been, as if the hand of time had turned back to that night when he paid his first visit to Lafayette House on hearing of the death of Maitland Banister. The scene was the same, the same curious throng in the foreground, the patrolman guarding the entrance, Police Captain Gorman and his men in possession, and even Miss Carruthers and MacDonald in the drawing-room. The Parkers alone were missing from the picture.

Miss Carruthers' hurried explanation of her presence gave Blunt and Corrigan the first details of the new tragedy that had come to her old home. "We came here, Mr. MacDonald and I," she said tremulously. "to see if we couldn't make it up with Hugh." She still referred to Banister by his Christian name, showing she had no real animosity toward him in spite of the way he had acted. "We heard he was going away and we wanted to make a final effort. We couldn't let him leave like that."

"We got here about half an hour ago, five o'clock. Hugh wasn't in; he had just gone out on an errand and we said we'd wait. Walker showed us in here——"

"And I went out to have a smoke," broke in MacDonald. "Then Walker came

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running downstairs saying that Jevons had killed himself in his room. Banister returned later. He's fearfully cut up over it and he hasn't seen us. I suppose he'll refuse, but we thought we'd stick around."

"We'll stay here," said the girl. "I know how he must feel. He thought so much of Jevons. I hope he'll see us. We're so anxious to be of use. You'll tell him, won't you?"

Walker's account, which may be related here, was as follows: He had been busy downstairs all day, getting the house ready to be closed. The two housemaids had been paid off already and, as Marie Brun had also gone, that left only himself, the chauffeur, Jevons and the cook. Banister and Jevons had been very busy themselves upstairs; the regular domestic machinery was pretty much out of gear and Banister had lunched in his study.

About half past four, while busy packing the silver for storage, the study bell rang and Banister asked for Jevons. It seemed that the latter had gone to his room—he always had an hour off from five to six—and Banister wished him to go on an errand. Walker went up and found the door locked; he knocked and received no reply. He thought Jevons had lain down and fallen asleep and so reported to Banister. The latter said if that was the case not to mind; he could do the message himself. It was only to the corner drug store and he needed the air anyway.

IN his usual touchy manner he rejected all offers of help; he could find his way there and back easily. He wasn't a fool. Evidently he liked the idea of getting away from Jevons' protecting eye and hand. He went out whistling, swinging his cane.

Asked at this point why he hadn't made a sustained effort to awaken Jevons, Walker replied that the other was notoriously a heavy sleeper. Also he didn't like to awaken him; Jevons hadn't been looking too well of late, he had been working hard and was obviously tired. Moreover he was entitled to his hour of ease. Banister had evidently thought the same.

"Why then did you try to awaken him afterward?"

Walker's answer to this was strange; one would never have thought him at all psychic, nervous or imaginative. After Banister had left, and Miss Carruthers and MacDonald had arrived, he went upstairs to dress. His room was on the same corridor as Jevons'; the two doors faced each other diagonally.

"I could see his door from mine," he explained, "and by and by it began to get on my nerves. No, I didn't hear anything, not a sound. I don't know; I'm not ordinarily nervous. But I couldn't keep my eyes off that door; I even had to open my own from time to time and take a peep at it as I dressed. It's funny; I can't describe or explain it. I began to feel that all sorts of awful things were behind it, that it knew, and was sort of chuckling, waiting for me to find out, daring me to come and see.

"It's silly, I know, but do you think things like that can be alive? I began to think so anyway. Maybe it was just the thought of the old master's murder that was getting me; I don't know, but ever since that night the whole house has got on my nerves and I'd have given notice if I wasn't leaving anyway. I felt I'd got to go and knock up Jevons, find out, if it was the last thing I ever did. So I went to the door—and then I *saw*."

IT was rather awful, enough to account, with what Walker saw a few moments later, for his running headlong down the stairs into the arms of MacDonald. One can picture that lonely corridor, full of the shadows of coming evening and this nameless fear; and among those shadows something that wasn't one, a thin thread that moved like a sluggish snake, creeping across the oak boards from under the locked door. Walker had slipped in it, thus explaining the rust-colored smudges that he had been able to remove from his hands but not his clothes.

"You're sure it wasn't there when you knocked first?"

Yes, he was sure, nor had he observed it

on first going to his room. Of course the light was bad, and it harmonized with the dark wood. And it moved very slowly. It might have been in the room all the time if not the corridor.

"The transom was open," he said, "and I got a chair and stool from my room. I felt I *had* to see though my knees were knocking like a Ford engine. I had to have one look. I could hear a sort of faint drip as I climbed up; it was soft and gentlelike and very slow. And there he was when I peeped over, laying across the bed. It was awful."

IT may be surmised that Walker found a certain morbid pleasure in his grisly recital; like Dickens' Fat Boy he seemed to enjoy frightening folk, even himself. He trembled and his eyes bulged as he dilated on it. When MacDonald and he broke down the door they found the razor, Jevons' treasured property, still clutched in his hand.

How long would it take that slow-moving stream to reach the corridor? Was the suicide an accomplished fact when Walker first knocked, or had it been done, say, ten minutes later when the butler went to his own room? According to Walker's statement his door had not been open all the time; he had merely opened it at intervals. Thus he hadn't Jevons' door under observation continuously and wouldn't have heard the other moving about.

Had Jevons refused to answer, when Walker first went upstairs, because he was preparing for the deed? Or had the advance guard of that dark creeping stain, harmonizing so wonderfully with the wood, entered the corridor before Walker noticed it? These were interesting questions for the medical fraternity if no one else.

Walker's volunteered opinion was that it happened after he admitted Miss Carruthers and MacDonald. The latter, saying he had heard Jevons cry out, was coming up the stairs as the other ran down.

Blunt and Corrigan at length joined Banister in the latter's study and listened

to what he had already told Captain Gorman. It was obvious that in a certain sense the death of Jevons affected Banister even more than the death of his father. He had lived intimately and long with the valet-secretary. And he was at a physical loss. It was as though, as he phrased it, he had lost his right hand. He could never get any one to replace the faithful and efficient Jevons; such servants are rarities.

BANISTER spoke as though some malign fate or influence were working against him, striking at his most vulnerable point; working against him ever since he came home.

"First my father and now Jevons," he said. "I've been robbed of the only two people I cared for, who cared for me. This house had become intolerable; I was going away, going traveling with Jevons. And now he'll never come.

"I stayed too long; the house has got him too. I feel it sometimes like an enemy; it turned me out and it hasn't forgiven my return. Forgive me if I seem to speak wildly. But no one wants me here, no one and nothing. Only my father and Jevons cared. And now I am—alone."

Though corroborating what Walker had said about Jevons' health, he could suggest no reason for the suicide. "As I couldn't see how ill or well he looked, and as he never complained, I'd no idea he was really ill. I thought he only needed a change; we'd both been working hard and required it. He seemed a bit despondent at times, but he denied being so or that he had any worries. Certainly I know of nothing that would prompt such a desperate deed."

"Yet," remarked Blunt, "are you prepared to say you knew everything about him?"

Banister admitted readily that he didn't, no more than the other had told him from time to time. "For that matter, do we ever know anybody?" he finished.

"It takes very hard work sometimes," said Blunt. "Jevons told me you engaged him through a London advertisement.

That's right? What references did he bring?"

"From his old employers in the City," said Banister, "and the head of his late department in Whitehall. As I couldn't read them, I had him do so aloud. That may sound credulous on my part but I was going on my judgment of voices, of men and character.

"No, I didn't trouble to verify the references. I was entirely satisfied with Jevons and have since proved I wasn't mistaken. I hope, at this late day, and at such a time, you're not trying to insinuate anything prejudicial to his character, Mr. Blunt?"

"I'm afraid it's my duty to do more than insinuate," replied Blunt. "You were entirely wrong about Henson, and no less so about Jevons. That wasn't even his right name."

"He was a crook," put in Corrigan. "One of the slickest going."

"What! Impossible!" exclaimed Banister. "Jevons a crook? Ridiculous!"

"In a sense," agreed Blunt grimly. "He certainly fooled us, made us look ridiculous for long enough. But I've just received some information from Scotland Yard which says—his right name is lost in the mists of obscurity—there's reason to believe his most familiar alias was 'Smug' Bradley. If that means nothing to you, it does to us."

"It means," said Corrigan, "that he was Lou Henson's right-hand man. There ain't no mistake either."

"What's that? Lou Henson's right-hand man?" queried Banister slowly, as though hardly as yet appreciating the significance of the statement. "Henson—Captain Vivian. And Jevons—it's unbelievable!"

"Yeah, pretty hard to digest," nodded Corrigan. "I ain't quite got it all down myself yet. You talked of your hard luck, as if there was a Jonah working, but it started *before* you come home, Mr. Banister. Henson did a croak too, remember. I s'pose you never thought it mightn't have been either suicide or an accident?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Banister, and struck the floor with his Malacca cane. "You mean that Jevons—no, no, you can't mean that! And yet—" His words trailed off and he sat thinking.

"But you believe he *could* have pulled it off?" said Corrigan. "This ain't no time for being charitable to the dead, and all that sort of bilge. Jevons or Bradley don't deserve any consideration like that; he was a crook of the worst type, and we'll prove it to you before we're done. We're giving you the straight goods on this."

"If that's the case—" Banister seemed unable to proceed. At length he continued: "If you're sure there's no mistake— And in the light of this astounding revelation, when I look back— Yes, he *could* have done it. I mean when we returned to my rooms that night, after leaving Vivian or Henson, Jevons—I can't call him Bradley—could have gone back without my knowledge. In fact he might have gone anywhere."

"He left me as usual, after helping me undress, and went ostensibly to his room and to bed. His room, as you may remember, was beside mine but they weren't connected. I shouldn't have seen him again that night—didn't expect to see him—if it hadn't been for what happened to Vivian. Jevons came in to say he'd heard some talk about a terrible accident, but at the time he claimed to be ignorant of the victim's identity."

"Yes, so far as I'm aware, he *could* have done it; he had the opportunity. But why should he do it? What was the motive? That's the point."

WHY should a man like that take service with you in the first place?" countered Blunt.

"Ah!" exclaimed Banister. "You mean my meeting with Vivian wasn't the accident it seemed, that I always thought it? It was cooked up between Jevons and him? Yes, yes, I see that now. They faked the meeting, eh? But why?"

"That question," said Blunt, "may become more obvious when you answer this: How long was Jevons—I'll still call him

that—in your employ? He told me he'd been with you over two years before you went to Switzerland, but I've every reason now to doubt the truth of that."

"Quite right," nodded Banister. "I can't give you the exact date, because I don't remember, but it wasn't even a year. I could have told you that if you'd thought of asking me. No, as time goes, Jevons couldn't be called an old servant of mine, though I may have spoken as though he were. He made himself so indispensable that it seemed as if I'd had him for years and years."

"He was planted with you," said Corrigan, lighting the inevitable cigar. "You gotta bear in mind how things were going with Henson; making government money was getting too risky, and the gang had scattered. Bradley, by taking service with you, wouldn't only be losing his identity but would be able to help his chief sign your name to checks. That was the whole idea—to rook you good and proper while laying low from the law."

"To rook me?"

SURE. A rich, blind, confiding sucker—meaning no offense. Could they have found a better? And Henson, by palling with you as Captain Vivian, also hides his identity. They had to earn a living, you know; and if they couldn't sign Uncle Sam's name, they could sign yours.

"You'd been marked down; it was a long-thought-out and cleverly worked scheme, like all of Henson's. He's gotta brain, or had. I'll say so."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Banister again. "And I boasted of my perspicacity, that blindness wasn't a handicap! What a fool! I'm beginning to see everything when it's all over."

"Yes, I could have been plundered wholesale; I trusted those two implicitly. And that the forgeries weren't executed was simply because those two rogues fell out and one killed the other. And then with Henson dead, Jevons, of course, wasn't able to carry out the plan alone. He wasn't able to forge like Henson."

"No, he was only a second string, a

tool," said Corrigan. "A darned good one, though."

"Perhaps he repented," said Banister thoughtfully. "There's some good in the worst of us, gentlemen. I'd prefer to think he repented. Perhaps he was a tool that turned in the fingers of the master hand. He may have come really to care for me."

"Perhaps he didn't want to go in with Henson at all and that's why they fell out. Henson, having a hold over him, might have been trying to compel him to help in robbing me. We'll never know, I suppose. But we can imagine how it all preyed on Jevons' mind, and then, perhaps suspecting you were closing in on him, he killed himself. Ah, yes, what a story!"

AND that ain't all of it," said Corrigan laconically. "There's your father's murder too."

"And you think that Jevons also—but why?" demanded Banister. "No, no, you're wrong about that; you must be. There would be absolutely no reason. Jevons, poor devil, has evidently enough to answer for without that. Of course, granting that he was such a character as you——"

"Yeah, that's it," nodded Corrigan, getting up to knock the ash from his cigar. "Supposing your father found out he wasn't what he pretended to be? You said that Jevons and you were together all that time, but just think again. You being blind and busy, couldn't he have sneaked down to the library without you knowing? Think it over."

The other, seated in the chair, hands crossed on the Malacca cane, appeared to be doing so. But whatever he thought, suspected, enlightenment came too late. Corrigan, passing noiselessly and with surprising agility behind the chair, leaned over and snapped the bracelets on those exposed wrists with expert ease. Then he seized and wrenched free the Malacca cane.

As the furiously struggling figure at length gave up the hopeless fight and sank back in the chair, Blunt leaned forward,

plucked off the dark glasses and exposed the solitary infuriated eye of Lou Henson.

CHAPTER XVII.

ELUCIDATIONS.

"IT'S remarkable," said Blunt later, "how the cleverest and most original of criminals—and Henson almost proved a bit too clever and original for us—always repeat themselves sooner or later. It's a weakness of the criminal mind, and, of course, we bank on it."

"Every criminal leaves his trade-mark, and you know, Dan, how often you can tell the author of a job simply by the way it's done. The lower the type of criminal, the more often he repeats himself, the less original he is."

"Henson will take an undisputed place in criminal annals—a great actor lost there, Dan—for versatility and fecundity of thought, and yet he worked on Bradley the door-and-transom trick that he'd worked on Banister. Same old stuff; but he thought he'd got away with the first and was safe trying it again."

"But you said he was blind!" exclaimed Corrigan injuredly, harking back to the one really sore point on which he had already expressed an opinion. "I took your word for it, Jimmie, and it throwed me all off."

"Didn't I ask you right at the start if he mightn't be faking, and didn't you say it would be impossible? Didn't you say he'd no eyes at all? Didn't you say you'd *seen* that for yourself? Did you or didn't you?"

"I did, Dan. You've every right to feel aggrieved. Haven't I said I ought to be kicked for a fool? I really believed, was convinced that I *had* seen them. It shows the power of a preconceived belief founded on repeated statements."

"Everybody had told me that Hugh Banister was blind, and at St. Dunstan's, where there couldn't possibly be any mistake, they assured me that both eyes were totally gone. And, of course, they were, just as the real Banister possessed an al-

most uncanny faculty for getting along without them. And then when the bogus Banister showed me—well, he showed me only one.”

“Whaddaya mean?”

“I mean that night at the hotel in London. The bogus Banister spoke of his disfigurement and loss of sight. ‘See,’ he said, ‘a pair of beauties.’ But he didn’t remove the glasses entirely; he simply exposed his right eye, or rather the empty socket.

“It was a clever, daring trick and it succeeded. I inferred naturally that the other eye was the same simply because I’d absolutely no reason to think it wasn’t. It never occurred to me until I got Arnold’s letter that I’d actually seen only *one* of Banister’s empty eye sockets. If I’d only known that Henson had lost an eye and was disfigured like that—but I didn’t, and I’d never have known most likely if Arnold hadn’t dug up the fact.”

ON carefully reviewing the extraordinary affair, bearing in mind Henson’s superlative histrionic ability and how circumstances aided him, one cannot justly concur in Blunt’s self-censure. It would have required a supernal intelligence or some great stroke of luck to penetrate that imposture. Blunt had been handicapped by ignorance, defeated by the conspiracy of circumstance.

In the first place he had never met either Hugh Banister or Lou Henson; the latter, it may be repeated, wasn’t even known to the police except by suspicion and repute, an amorphous, elusive, almost legendary character to which certain crimes might be attributed but never proved. Secondly, the remains of the putative Captain Vivian were so badly mangled by the terrible fall that identification might have been impossible by his closest friend.

“And Hugh Banister had no friend,” said Blunt. “There was no one who really knew him except Jevons and Vivian. Consider their brief life at the hotel; they had all their meals upstairs, and even the manager hadn’t seen them more than once

or twice. They had no part in the hotel life, and Jevons alone was familiar to the guests and staff.

“As I said long ago, Jevons was the whole crux of the matter, the pivot on which everything turned; he was a far more important pivot than even I imagined. Even if I had had some grounds for suspecting that Banister wasn’t Banister, that suspicion would have been dismissed by the fact that such an imposture couldn’t have possibly passed for a moment with Jevons. It would have been impossible. And naturally it never occurred to me that Jevons also might be an impostor—not, of course, that there ever was another Jevons. Jevons identified the remains as those of Vivian—of course everything apparently proved that too—and who was there to deny it? Who knew him like Jevons?”

Blunt then pointed out that Banister and Henson, if there wasn’t the remotest suggestion of their being doubles, approximated each other in height, build, and age.

“Moreover, there was the facial disfigurement,” he continued, “and the fact that Vivian was supposed to have lost an eye. Now you must understand that Arnold and I didn’t *know* that Vivian was Henson; we couldn’t even prove it when we examined his effects. Of course we’d no idea either that Jevons was Smug Bradley; he’d shaved his mustache and beard, been separated so long from Henson that their trails were widely divergent.

I MEAN that the mass of conjecture, a bit of information here, a guess there, which led us to believe that Vivian was Henson, didn’t touch Bradley in any way.

“If you’d seen, Dan, the putative Vivian—he struck on his head—after that terrible fall—well, there wasn’t any face, let alone eyes. Of course they’d dressed poor Banister in Vivian’s clothes, and we found the smashed eye shield. They overlooked no detail. I believe they used acid to further obliterate the features, and such trace as there was passed for Vivian’s disfigurement. Of course, as we’ve proved,

Henson added to his genuine disfigurement, made it like Banister's, by a little artistic faking.

"If in that awful thing, which once had been Banister's face it was practically impossible to distinguish anything, an internal examination, I suppose, would have revealed the loss of sight. I'm not a doctor so I can't say. But in any case no such examination was made, the doubt never being raised for a moment. It was only the internal organs that were examined for traces of hyoscine.

NATURALLY Arnold and I thought Henson's blind eye was a fake, part of his disguise as Captain Vivian. We knew, as I told you, that he'd come out of the war without a scratch. If he'd suffered any such injury it would have been on the record.

"We thought it a fake and that's what helped to fool me. I believed Henson had two eyes, Banister none; I'd seen for myself the bogus Banister's empty eye socket, inferred the other was empty too, and—well, there you are. I'd no reason to suppose that Henson lost an eye *after* the war."

Yet such was the case. A French lady, with her own ideas of justice regarding fickle lovers, had thrown a glass of vitriol and Henson hadn't quite dodged it in time. For reasons not connected with chivalry he had refused to make a fuss about it and thus court further notoriety. The patiently burrowing Arnold had unearthed this truth, connecting up the Mr. Stewart who had spent some time at a Bordeaux hospital, emerging minus his right eye and plus a terrible scar, with the subsequent Captain Vivian.

It was only surmise on Arnold's part, as everything connected with Henson was only surmise; and he had no more than suspicion that Jevons might at one time have used the name of Bradley. He simply mentioned it to Blunt for what it might be worth, as a possible line of further investigation.

These two items of unverified information, mentioned casually enough by Ar-

nold, had proved the all-important missing links in a chain of conjecture that Blunt had entertained tentatively for long enough. Supplied with them his mind at once leaped to the baffling solution, and, on their way to Lafayette House, he had explained everything to Corrigan and prepared him for the unmasking of Henson.

"I don't suppose," he summed up, "that an impostor ever found more favorable circumstances, though it goes without saying that no imposture would be attempted, let alone succeed, if the circumstances weren't favorable. But here they were exceptional. Here was a man who hadn't been home for eight years, who had cut adrift from all his friends, who, in the meantime, had lost his sight and been hideously disfigured.

"In fact the circumstances were so exceptional, just what adventurers would be looking for, that at the outset I suggested an imposture as the explanation of Banister's continued exile. Of course it hadn't happened at that time, and then when it did I missed the very solution I'd given."

YET, as has been said, Blunt had a vague doubt about the bogus Banister if nothing more. "I never told you, Dan, because it seemed so preposterous. Of course I'd no idea it was Henson or, in fact, any impostor. I thought rather of Banister as a changeling, something produced by the war. I couldn't reconcile my idea of his character, based on all I'd heard, with the way he affected me in the flesh.

"There was a fundamental falsity about him which I sensed but can't describe. Outwardly he played the part of Hugh Banister to perfection, but he couldn't mask his real inward self. Something sinister peeped through. Miss Carruthers felt it also, though we couldn't put a name to it.

"Then other little things came to support my doubt. For instance there was his skill at chess. I discovered that Banister had never been more than a mediocre player; he might have learned to play blindfold, but could he have developed

such a game? I questioned it; players of Henson's caliber are generally born, not made. A fine brain, Dan, gone wrong from the start.

"Of course his attitude to the Parkers, Miss Carruthers and MacDonald is now clear," concluded Blunt. "He knew that the greatest danger of discovery might come from them; if Maitland Banister was nearly blind, they weren't. Old Parker, Miss Carruthers and MacDonald, had known Hugh Banister intimately, more intimately than his own father, you may say.

HENSON, though well posted, couldn't be expected to know all that had happened in those early days, and a question might reveal his ignorance, arouse suspicion. Especially was there danger from MacDonald, a boyhood friend. So in his clever way he quarrels with one and all, makes it appear perfectly natural for him to have nothing more to do with them. He steered clear of MacDonald from the first and kept Miss Carruthers at arm's length. The Parkers, by their past conduct—I'm morally certain that they robbed old Banister and that Henson found it out—played into his hands. They gave him a club to hold over them, to use if they ever suspected the imposture."

"But I don't see why he cleared MacDonald," said Corrigan. "It'd have made him all the safer if he'd let MacDonald in for the old man's murder."

"There's some good in all of us, as Henson himself remarked," replied Blunt. "He didn't stop at murder, but that was in the nature of business, you may say. He would kill if he had to. But he wouldn't help to send an innocent man to the chair if there was no necessity. I believe that's how he looks at it, for even the worst criminal has a certain code. And, of course, he didn't hate MacDonald nor Miss Carruthers or the Parkers. He had no animosity; he didn't care what they did so long as he got rid of them. His real attitude was entirely impersonal."

"How'd you ever know that Malacca cane was a gun, Jimmie?"

"I didn't, not until we'd proved it. But there wasn't a trace of any other weapon, and gun sticks are common enough in Europe, if not here. Of course, as you saw, it's a single shot and doesn't eject, and it has to take a nickel-jacketed bullet and crimped shell like an automatic.

"That's where Henson fell down, the small mistake you find even in the most skillfully executed crimes. But I don't believe Maitland Banister was killed in the library, and Henson may have forgotten that an automatic ejects. Or the shell may bear a telltale foreign mark and so he daren't leave it."

"Well," said Corrigan, "we may never know the inside story of how he killed Banister, the old man, and Bradley. We've still gotta prove it. However, Jimmie, I take my old tile off to you. It's gettin' a familiar gesture and I'll be doing it in my sleep. You got me outa a bad jam with the commish. You were right all the way through even if you didn't know it."

"Compliments aren't in order, Dan; I'd still be groping if it wasn't for Arnold. It just goes to show that success in a thing like this isn't a one-man job. I played the fool, and the experience has been chastening.

"Why, I played chess with Henson and never suspected he could see almost as well as I! Not once did he arouse suspicion in anybody—except perhaps his putative father. Perhaps Maitland Banister wasn't so blind as Henson thought. We'll see. As you say, we've still got to prove a whole lot."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIGHT AT LAST.

THE trial of that remarkable personality, Louis Henson, has become famous in the annals of the bar and needs no elaboration here. It became a cause célèbre. Aided by the best legal talent he fought the case with all his great skill and cunning, admitting no more than he must and even then laying the entire blame on the dead Bradley who, he claimed, was the master hand rather than tool.

So far as he was aware Hugh Banister's death was the accident it seemed, he knew nothing about Maitland Banister's murder, and Jevons or Bradley had committed suicide. He, Henson, was an impostor, a forger, if you like, but nothing worse. In spite, however, of his ingenious arguments, he was convicted on the circumstantial evidence and the verdict carried with it the extreme penalty.

IT was only when the last hope had gone, when the sinister trousers with the split leg had been brought to his new cell, that Henson admitted the justice of the verdict and volunteered a full confession. One can hardly think it weakness on his part; to the last he retained all the strange vanity of his type, and he seemed to think mainly of the sensation such a confession would make, to be actuated more by a morbid craving for continued notoriety than any thought of repentance.

Indeed, the boastful, even gloating, note is apparent throughout. His whole life had been a gamble, he had staked his biggest throw and lost; one can imagine him thinking that at least the public and posterity should remember him as no common criminal. At least he would have the satisfaction of showing how he had made fools of the world police, including the implacable Arnold and the redoubtable "Lisping Jimmie."

One may skip over the previous triumphs on which he dwells with gusto, including booking passage on the *Lusitania* in a false name and then sailing on another boat in a different name, and come down to his meeting with Hugh Banister whom, of course, he hadn't known in the U. S. A. On the whole his statement that, in a sense, the meeting was accidental, may be credited.

"Bradley," he says, "got the job on his own hook after we separated on the Continent. I guess he had no more in mind than the establishing of another identity, going straight while getting his keep until we felt safer. We were hard up for funds, and, when he learned how Banister was fixed, he wrote me that here was

an elegant chance to make some easy money.

"It was too good to pass up. That's all we thought of at the start; it wasn't until later, when we learned more of Banister's affairs and things were getting hot for us, that I saw I could just as easily pass for Hugh Banister, fake his letters home as well as his checks."

Thus Banister's death became inevitable from the conspirators' standpoint. They were unaware, of course, that Blunt had come to find Banister, but Henson felt that Scotland Yard wasn't far behind him. The imposture became imperative and everything had been planned. Henson had acquired the hyoscin on the Continent long ago. "An easy dope," he explains significantly, "that I meant to go out with if the bulls ever crowded me the limit."

Passing to their arrival at the London hotel, Henson goes on to explain how Banister unconsciously aided them. "Of course I wanted a room away upstairs, the higher the better, and he even agreed to have one there too. Everything we did for his bumping off seemed to suit him down to the ground. He was a prime sucker, all right."

But was he? Was his aid unconscious? The question troubles Henson, this apparent unconscious complicity of Banister's in arranging the stage for the final tragic scene.

HE began to tell me about a guy called "Carter," says Henson, describing that night's events, "whom he blamed for what happened to him in the war. He got all steamed up over it. I wonder if he thought I was Carter."

The question remains unanswered in this world, though it has been easily proved that Henson wasn't Carter. His British army record at least was an open book, and Carter wasn't the name he enlisted under. Nor had he ever served in Egypt.

Blunt knew that. But did Banister, with his pathetic misplaced confidence in his own acuteness and ability, think him Carter? Did he contemplate for Henson

the very death he himself met? Yet it was Henson, not Banister, who possessed the hyoscin, not that the latter would have found it necessary to use it; he might have successfully engineered an "accident" without that. But Henson had first to dress Banister in other clothes before throwing him from the window; the drug permitted that, obviated a struggle that might have been heard.

LEAVING the bottle was a bloomer," says Henson with the expert's frank acknowledgment of an error. "It was dark and, after doping that last drink, I thought I slipped it back in my pocket. It must have fallen out."

Coming down to the death of Maitland Banister, Henson, while deploring the necessity and censuring Bradley, still admires his own cleverness and coolness and the way he met such a totally unexpected situation.

"Of course it wasn't planned," he says, perhaps unnecessarily. "I knew the will was to be changed that night, and why should I be chucking away two million? It was all Bradley's fault; things were going so well that he was getting uppish.

"I had to talk to him more than once, and that night we had a row—and old Banister wasn't in the library as we thought. He came upstairs just after MacDonald left; the door was shut so we didn't see him pass to his room, and the noise of the storm kept us from hearing. We were in my bedroom, where I was dressing, and the first thing we knew the door of the connecting bathroom opened and there was old Banister as large as life."

With no great difficulty one can visualize that last scene, the old man coming to his room, perhaps for some forgotten paper connected with the contemplated will, and, attracted by the raised voices, entering the bathroom and listening. He must have heard enough to astound, to bewilder, but not convince. Conviction came when he opened the door and discovered the half-dressed Henson minus the dark glasses. Nor was this all.

"He pointed to my bare shoulder," proceeds Henson, "and said I couldn't be his son. Hugh Banister, you see, had a big purple birthmark on his right shoulder; I knew that, but nobody else in London did. If they had, they would have known at the post-mortem that it was Hugh Banister; at least it would have given grounds for suspicion even if nobody knew that I hadn't such a birthmark.

"Of course I could have faked one, as I faked part of my disfigurement, but I never contemplated being caught undressed like that. I don't admit it an error of detail; it was merely the sort of luck that nobody can provide against. So you see that though if I'd been able to explain to the old man about my having a good eye, even if I'd been able to explain away what he'd overheard, I couldn't explain the loss of the birthmark. A thing like that is never lost, removed, destroyed. The game was up."

HE describes how while holding the excited, incensed and still bewildered old man in conversation, while protesting ignorance and innocence, he picked up the gun stick. It was always loaded, always at hand, ready for instant emergency. It had been for years, and he knew the risk of carrying the ordinary type of concealed weapon. Unnecessary to say, it wasn't the stick owned by the real Hugh Banister.

"The bathroom is tiled," says Henson significantly. "Easily cleaned. I waited till he turned, saying he was going to phone the police. I knew they'd think it thunder. We fixed the mark on the wall where the spent bullet struck."

They had no more than fifteen minutes, perhaps less, in which to set that scene in the library. They had to carry the corpse downstairs, running the risk of detection by Miss Carruthers or the servants. They did it boldly, Bradley scouting ahead to see if the road was clear. "There is nothing like audacity," says Henson, perhaps remembering the old French quotation, and explains minutely the grewsome details, dwells almost lovingly on them.

Considering the time at his disposal, the difficulties overcome, the hazards run, he is entitled to proclaim himself a criminal genius by this affair alone. "Of course Bradley's help was invaluable," he concludes, "but the whole idea was mine. And in fifteen minutes, without previous preparation, taken unawares like that, we set a stage that Belasco couldn't better, that even Lipping Jimmie couldn't prove a flaw in, whatever he might suspect. I call it good work. We'd no more than sneaked back to my room when we heard Miss Carruthers going downstairs."

The pathos of the tragedy doesn't appear to him, any more than he evinces qualms at its cold-blooded brutality. He might be a butcher slaughtering pigs. That the father and son never met each other again in this world, that all the old man's effort at reconciliation was lavished on a stranger, that stranger the murderer of his son; that one was totally blind, the other almost so, two helpless victims—nothing of this deters him, even brings subsequent remorse. Necessity drives and he is ruthless; the criminal bent on self-protection, preservation, spoliation. Beyond question had it been necessary to send MacDonald to the chair he would have done so without hesitation.

THE same characteristics are displayed in his account of Bradley's death. "He had become impossible," he says, "and for some time I'd been forced to consider his ultimate removal. Fundamentally a small-time crook, as I've said before, with all the failings that that term implies. It was the first time I'd placed myself in the power of a minor confederate.

"Because he could prove my guilt in this affair equally with his own, he lost all sense of proportion, forgot I was still the master, he the man. The old story. Not content with his fair share of the spoils, his demands kept increasing, backed by veiled threats. Impossible to trust my future security to such a character. There

is honor only among the higher members of my profession, and blackmailers and snitches deserve no mercy.

"Of course I patched up our quarrel and never let him suspect. And he didn't know I'd another vial of hyoscin. I always kept it sewed in my vest. I've an idea that Blunt searched my room in the hotel in London."

SO Jevons or Bradley made his exit in the same manner as Hugh Banister, in a glass of bootleg brandy, following the lunch upstairs in the study.

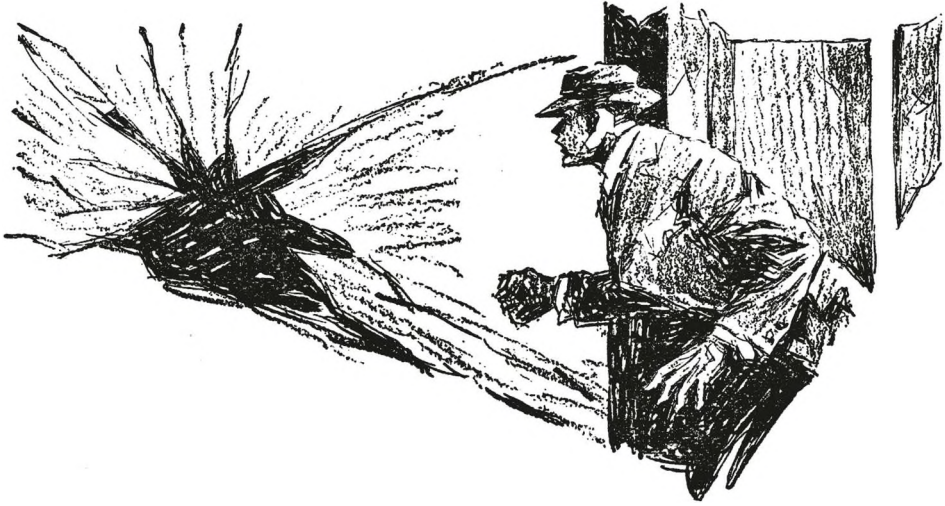
"We drank to the successful conclusion of our enterprise," says Henson, "and the good time we soon meant to have in Europe. It was funny to see him when at length he realized he'd drunk his death. He took longer than young Banister, and I half led, half carried him up to his room. Hyoscin is such a quiet, useful drug.

"Then I locked the door and finally called the butler. I couldn't run the risk of completing the job before that; there was the time factor to consider, the chance that he might look through the transom—as he subsequently did. And if Bradley was conscious enough to make a drowsy answer to the knock, so much the better.

"It seems, however, that he wasn't. I waited until Walker returned to the kitchen, then went upstairs again. Afterward I locked the door and threw the key through the transom, not knowing that Blunt had suspected the same procedure in Hugh Banister's case. Then I went out."

It will be recalled that Henson left the house whistling. Yes, a criminal genius of the worst type of whom society is fortunately rid. He met his own death with seemingly as little emotion as he had promoted and accomplished that of the Banisters and Bradley. And but for Arnold and Blunt, those crimes, and the great imposture he effected so successfully, might never have been brought home to him, the Banister mystery never solved.

The complete book-length novel in the next issue will be "Head Winds," by Bertrand W. Sinclair.



Fires of Fame

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "The Diamond of the Diplomats," "The Christmas Spirit," Etc.

According to the King of Koola-Pop, the test of American aristocracy is no longer: How well-born are you? Nor is it: How well fixed are you? It is: How well-known are you?

IT used to be that a man who put up at a New York hotel became in the very nature of things a man in the public eye. From the minute when Mr. Henneberry Gimlet of Godolphus, got tangled up in the revolving door with his hand luggage booting him at one step and tripping him the next, he was something under glass.

Great windows of flawless Pittsburgh plate gave an unobstructed view of all proceedings from the street. Mr. Gimlet could be seen flourishing his cryptic bank signature into the register; raising his eyebrows in lofty amusement at the suggestion he might stand pressure to three dollars for room and bath.

Later other views of the traveler at his ease would be afforded to passers-by, to wit: Mr. Gimlet diving through a gently oscillating door beyond the cigar counter; Mr. Gimlet reappearing through same, with his handkerchief to his lips and a sudden-born vast kindliness warming his eyes; Mr. Gimlet enjoying the Blue Plate

Business Man's Luncheon at forty-five cents in yet another section of the glittering showcase; Mr. Gimlet—rear view—at the swinging door; Mr. Gimlet in a capacious leathern chair studded with tacks of burnished brass, boring into the news of the day; Mr. Gimlet at the swinging door—again, again, *again*.

Yes, and if one chanced to be going by once more toward midnight, the guest from Godolphus might even be observed on his way to the elevator with an arm thrown fraternally over the shoulders of the assisting porter, his hat upon his eyebrow and song upon his lips.

Those were the times of the open-faced hotel, good old-fashioned times that have gone the way of the good old-fashioned cocktail.

Nowadays hotel life in New York has become a secret, almost a furtive thing. A man steps into the face of a wall and is seen no more. The desk at which he makes himself and his wishes known is hidden from the profane gaze. His reac-

tions to the tariff—and perhaps that is as well—are no more to be witnessed. He takes his meals in seclusion. The hotel restaurant is now called the Crystal Room. It has been removed to the twenty-seventh floor, and has no windows.

And the lobbies—where are they? They've been withdrawn into marble-bound fastnesses. It's a trick to find them, an impossibility to enjoy them. The architects planning modern hotels draw their inspiration from the Valley of the Kings; the lobby is that innermost masked chamber, the place where they hide the body.

I liked the Royal Edward for its lobby, and I admired the Messrs. Bimbein & Greef, its managers and proprietors, for their sturdy stand by tradition. During those years when the Open-Face Period was merging into the Egyptian, they kept the Royal Edward as it had been.

It pleased me to think that these two resolute men took a peculiar pride in keeping available to the traveling public a lobby that was a lobby. In my mind I gratefully coupled Bimbein & Greef with the gallant sea captain who nailed his colors to the mast while his ship was sinking beneath him.

I don't mean exactly to say that the Royal Edward suffered by reason of the management's policies, or was in any sense a sinking enterprise. But here was the last of the lobbies, and Bimbein & Greef were its stalwart defenders. I've even felt myself choking up, and more than once, on hearing Mr. Bimbein remark that the gleaming lobby window through which the Royal Edward looked out on New York's busiest square and the whole wide world looked in on the Royal Edward was the biggest area of Pittsburgh plate ever manufactured and transported in one piece.

Along that magnificent window eight chairs would be drawn up in squads-front formation, always eight. They were upholstered in leather, fastened in brass. Between them were ranged tall cylindrical metallic vessels useful to the smoker and indispensable to the more direct consumer

of tobacco. Seated in one of them—in one of the chairs, that is to say—the guest of the Royal Edward at once saw and was seen. He was both exhibit and spectator. The city was on parade before him.

For a man who wouldn't be coming to New York more than a couple of times a year it was certainly a treat to lounge back behind a perfecto and look on; particularly at evening, when the lights began to flare up and the electric signs got into action. The glamour of old Burglarburg, and its mystery, got to you hard then. People hurrying by; thousands of strange faces that you'd never see again; minds full of plots and plans and memories all hidden behind the same kind of tense, get-there-or-bust expressions—it was a sight, I'll tell you, for a man with imagination.

SITTING there that night of the accident—if accident is what you want to call it—I spoke out a thought that had come suddenly into my head. My conversation was aimed at a sort of friendly looking fat man who had just plumped himself into the chair at my left. He didn't seem to get me.

"Movies!" he said, in a strangling kind of voice. "Not interested. Bought stock 'n 'em once, and that was enough. Good night to you, sir!"

I couldn't see that I'd said anything out of the way, so when the fat man had gone I addressed myself to my right-hand neighbor. That thought absolutely had to get itself into words; it craved a sympathetic, understanding audience.

"If I were a moving-picture director," said I, "yes, if I were a moving-picture director, d'you know how I'd whang over my big picture of life in the Big Town?"

The young man lifted his eyes and studied me. They were saddish eyes, it seemed to me, but they brightened a little when he smiled.

"No," he said, holding up an arm and looking carefully into his coat sleeve, "I don't happen to have an answer for that one. Tell me, Mr. Bones, how, if you were a moving-picture director, would you whang——"

"It isn't any riddle," I told him. "I'm serious. Just listen, and I'll give you the idea, my friend. First there'd show on the screen, of course, the title of the play, and the name of the director and the author and the adapter and the continuity writer and the continuity writer's stenographer and the costume designer and the property man and the cast and the rest; but can you imagine how I'd start the picture itself?"

He was looking out across the square, and came to with a start.

"Oh, pardon me," he said very politely. "I'm afraid I'm lacking in imagination."

"Give up, eh?" said I. "Well, get the drama of this, if you can. What you see, getting into the film proper, is one great big giant mouth. It'll have jagged teeth in it, behind thick cannibal lips. Get me? And the mouth'll open and close, open and close."

I cottoned to the young fellow right away. He fell into the spirit of the idea, and no mistake. His own mouth opened, and he brought up a hand to cover it.

"Very interesting," he said. "I see. A giant cannibal, opening and closing."

"A cannibal mouth," said I. "And how do we know it is a cannibal mouth? Wait a second. Don't try to answer that. I'll explain."

"Do," the young fellow begged.

"Very good," said I. "Right off the reel we've got that hungry mouth and those champing jaws. For a couple of seconds that's all there is on the screen. We let it sink in, see? We don't give 'em any high shot of the Woolworth Building, or long shot of the sky line or plane shot of the streets—nothing of the kind. The mouth is the Spirit of the City, voracious, cruel, all appetite and no conscience."

"I knew one just like her—before I left college," murmured the young chap, and I knew from that he hadn't been giving me his undivided attention.

"This is allegory," I reminded him. "Then we have more allegorical figures coming upon the screen. Men, stripped to the buff. One after another they go

into the mouth. And that's the end of them. They vanish. They've been swallowed. *That's* New York."

This mere boy who had engaged me in conversation was still peering out into the dusk.

"There are better places for men to go who want to be swallowed," he hinted darkly.

"Name one," said I.

"Morocco," said he. "I know a fellow who's on his way there. He's enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion. He goes by train to Baltimore to-night and takes ship in the morning. That'll be the end of him. But maybe one of these days you'll see his name in the newspapers."

"What name?" I asked. "I'll be looking for it."

"Tucker," said the youth. "Thomas Tucker. He hasn't got anything special against the Moors, but he's made up his mind that the best thing that can happen to him is to be—swallowed. And taking service with Spain seems to be a good sure way. Men don't last long in the Foreign Legion. They bear the brunt of the fighting; form a shield for the Spanish levies, you know."

"I dare say they'll gobble up Tommy Tucker soon enough. And then, like as not, the state department'll raise hell, for this Tucker chances to have an uncle in the cabinet and another in the Senate. Yes; you'll see his name."

"Ah, the hot blood of young manhood!" I sighed. "Too bad, too bad! But I really, my friend, cannot concede that Morocco rivals Manhattan as a swallower of men. The case of Tucker which you cite is an isolated one. A hundred Tuckers may vanish in the blowing sands, but there are millions who fall into step with the rushing crowds here and are lost."

"Every day trains bring in scores of them to the bestial banquet, from down South and down East, from the West and from the North. They come from little places and they bring with them identities and dreams. But their identities are crushed out, their dreams fade."

"Back home the postman or the police-

man could point the way to their homes; go ask a postman or a policeman how to find them in New York! For that matter, ask even the people in the flat across the hall.

"Some few of them achieve a line in the telephone directory. That is a goal, a shibboleth of success. But how many, many thousands fall short of even that. Bolted whole, they lie like living dead men in the stomach of the city."

A wrinkle came between the young man's eyes.

"Got you thinking, haven't I?" I said.

"You have."

HE could have been a little more enthusiastic. Personally, I thought I'd dressed up my idea pretty well; I felt I was entitled at least to a word of appreciation.

"Well," I said, "what *do* you think of my picture of the city as a swallower of men?"

The young fellow looked up at me and smiled.

"Oh, it'll do," he said. "But I was thinking of a man who swallowed the city."

The smoke from his cigarette kept me from getting a whiff of his breath.

"Anybody's a damn fool to buy stuff from a bell hop in this town," I told him. "If you've got any left, take my advice and dump it."

He looked hurt.

"I am somberly sober," said he, "and sadly sane. The man to whom I allude is an acquaintance of mine, if not a friend. His name is Bagshott. If you are a resident of New York you will recognize the name and realize you have wronged me."

"My home is in the West," I admitted. "But Bagshott—Bagshott? Certainly the name is familiar."

"It could scarcely be otherwise," remarked the young man, and looked out again into the square.

"You tell me," said I, "that this man Bagshott *swallowed* the city? Oh, come!"

The young fellow grinned wanly.

"I wasn't intending to put it just this

way," he said, "but New York simply looked like three squares to Amos Bagshott, and he helped himself."

"Yes?"

"Precisely," replied the young chap with unction. "Three squares—Madison, Herald and Times."

"Oh," said I, and drew back from him.

He reached for my arm.

"Please accept an apology and hear me out," he said. "I won't try anything like that again. On the—whoa! that expression'll never do! On my word, I won't. Let me explain about Bagshott. He's Bagshott's Koola-Pop, you know."

Immediately I forgave him.

"That's different," said I. "So you're acquainted with the Koola-Pop Bagshott, are you? An interesting and important man to know. I see the light."

"You'll see it if you sit where you are for another fifteen minutes. It goes on promptly at six thirty this evening. If this were last week it would have been six forty. The days are getting shorter, you see."

I nodded, and glanced down at the newspaper on my knee.

"Thanks," said I, "for the information. But it happens I was reading about the new Koola-Pop sign before the beginning of our pleasant chat. My profession is that of statistician, and figures once seen stay with me.

"I am aware that Mr. Bagshott's latest sign is the largest in the world, being illuminated by one hundred and sixteen thousand two hundred and twelve fifty-watt lamps and covering an area of more than fifty-one hundred square yards. The heroic figure of the soda clerk is eighty-seven feet in height and will make one hundred and ten trips to the hour around the circular framework. On clear nights the moving letters of light describing and extolling the virtues of Koola-Pop will be visible from all points of the compass to a distance of eleven and one-half miles, and——"

"And the free publicity the newspapers are giving Amos Bagshott to-day," interrupted my neighbor, speaking with what

might have been bitterness, "will cause forty-nine thousand six hundred and seventy-eight new victims to take a first fatal taste of Koola-Pop. After which they'll be lashed for life to the Bagshott chariot wheel. The concoction's like dope. Babies cry for it, and elderly gentlewomen throw hysterics when it's denied to them. *Faugh!*"

"I find an occasional glass of Koola-Pop refreshing," said I. "You're wrong about the dope. Does your acquaintance, I wonder, include Miss Mildred Bagshott—the daughter?"

The young man turned to face me. His voice was cool.

"Why do you ask?"

"A beautiful girl," I said. "Her picture is in the newspaper this afternoon. If the advance report is accurate, she will have a leading part in ceremonies which have been arranged——"

"That's like Amos Bagshott," gritted the youth. "He'll do anything to increase the disgusting notoriety he enjoys—even capitalize his own daughter, the motherless child he should be protecting. Since she was a baby he's been trying to model her in his own image."

"I take it you do know her."

"Tucker does," said the young man. "To his sorrow." He tapped a cigarette on the back of a browned hand. "If you knew what he's been through on account of her—his love for her—you'd understand why he's ready to fight and die under the standard of the don, and to forget the *Maine*."

"I had a late lunch," I remarked tactfully, "and won't be thinking seriously about dinner before half past seven."

He saw what I meant.

"It would be impossible," said Thomas Tucker's friend, "to find two men more different than Bagshott and Tucker."

"When Bagshott came to New York, with one trunk and one small daughter, Tommy Tucker was a kid in rompers. Tommy's playground was a park that was as close to private as anything outdoors can be. The park's still here, but I'll bet that though it's in the very heart of town

not one New Yorker in a thousand has ever so much as laid eyes on it. Tommy Tucker had a key to it.

"One way of describing the difference between Tucker and Bagshott is to say that Bagshott outgrew the trunk, but Tommy never outgrew the park. That's to the point, and the truth of it.

"Bagshott had been a drug clerk somewhere up State. He got a job in a drug store here. In a couple of years he bought out his boss. Then he had a chain of drug stores. I can remember them. They were about the first to put in hardware and furniture departments.

"Maybe the art of advertising had been invented before Bagshott came along, but Amos certainly did a better job of painting the town than ever was seen before. Particularly after he took an afternoon off and invented Koola-Pop and the Koola-Pop campaign.

"I told you that this man swallowed the city, didn't I? Well, I guess even a visitor can guess what I meant by that.

"Within five years after Bagshott arrived, and that includes the preKoola-Pop period, you couldn't look to right or left or up or down anywhere in New York without seeing the name and the face of Amos Bagshott. It's a little better now, of course, since the police began arresting his men for painting advertising matter on the sidewalks. But Amos made up for that by sailing heavier than ever into the air.

"Just you stand in Times Square or Madison Square or Herald Square and see what you see. Even way down in Union Square, it's 'Bagshott' all over the sky, isn't it? And over the sides of buildings and the fronts of buildings? Can you tell me the city hasn't been swallowed by the man?"

"There is an element of justice in the assertion," I conceded; "although for the purpose of the motion picture we are discussing, it would naturally be the punch to——"

"Forget the picture for a minute," urged the young fellow. "Tommy Tucker's story would never fit for the movies.

It's pure tragedy. I'm going to tell you how Bagshott and Tucker came to meet. Maybe you've noticed that Mr. Amos Bagshott has a passion for having things named after himself?"

"A friend of mine," said I, "has offices in the Bagshott Building, and if the place had any kind of a lobby I wouldn't mind putting up at the Bagshott Hotel. Then there's a Bagshott Boulevard somewhere out Bronx way, I believe."

"That," said Thomas Tucker's biographer, "cost a fortune. Amos had to elect his own mayor to make the boulevard grade, and there were plenty of others to be seen. But it was profitable advertising. So were the Bagshott Memorial Hall and the Bagshott Terminals and the Bagshott Baths.

"Every once in a while, between his other building operations, Amos would run up a new house. He started on a grand scale that got grander, and he jumped from neighborhood to neighborhood like a man trying to keep ahead of the installment collectors.

"If you travel around much on the sight-seeing buses you'll be asked to observe the famous Bagshott residence in Washington Square, and the famous Bagshott residence in Fifth Avenue, and the famous Bagshott residence in Riverside Drive, and—well, there are six of 'em, all told, outside of the country place and the Florida place and the jolly little thirty-room Bagshott shooting box on Mr. Bagshott's private Adirondack.

"It was on the matter of the shooting box that Tucker and Bagshott got together. Tucker's an architect, or was; a junior member of a firm with which Amos had had many dealings. Tommy drew the Adirondack job. He met Bagshott and he met Bagshott's daughter.

NOW we'll skip a year. That brings us up to one year ago. Tucker went to Bagshott.

"Sir," he said, "I have the honor to love your daughter. I also have her permission to say that she will be my wife if you will consent."

6B—POP.

"Be good enough," said Amos, "to tell me who you are."

"Tommy Tucker always had prided himself on being able to respond to persiflage. He gravely reintroduced himself to Bagshott.

"So you're a member of that Bow-bridge & Allbury gang, eh?" grunted Amos. "Why don't they stick your name up along with theirs?"

"That," replied Tommy, "comes after years."

"Damn bad system," said Bagshott. "What else are you?"

"If the question is intended to concern my social position," Tucker told him, "I will say in all modesty that the family from which I come is one of the oldest in New York."

"I don't see your name in the newspapers at all," remarked Amos.

"The Tuckers," said Tommy, "are not interested in society columns, nor in those appearing in them. They move in a circle to which climbers aspire, but which to climbers is forever closed. I have said we present Tuckers trace the line directly back to one of the oldest New York families. Let me be more specific. Ours is one of the *ten oldest*!"

"Damn bad system," remarked Amos Bagshott for the second time. "Too old to be news, hey?"

"Tommy ignored the irony.

"So far as money goes," said he, "I am already so well provided for as to be utterly uninterested in the expectations of Miss Bagshott. It is not as her father's daughter that I love her.

"If she were penniless, my feelings would be no other than they are. She is, very briefly, the dearest and the only girl in the world. I am proud to open to her the home of the Tuckers, and the homes of the Tuckers' friends."

"Amos Bagshott appeared to give consideration to Tucker's proposal. But when he spoke again it was only to repeat, moodily, his twice-expressed earlier words: 'Damn bad system!'"

"To what system do you refer now, Mr. Bagshott?" asked Tommy.

"To the system of false standards on which you've been raised," answered Amos grimly. "You are living, my boy, in the twentieth century and in a republic which daily grows more democratic."

"America will always have an aristocracy, of course, but the aristocrats of today are not the aristocrats of yesterday, nor of their kind. They are aristocrats of achievement now, virile men. Their names shout from the billboards and blaze in the sky."

"Two phases of American aristocracy lie behind; the ultimate aristocracy is here. Once domination was measured by the question: How well-born are you? Then the question became: How well fixed are you? Now it has become: How well known are you?"

"You ask me, Amos Bagshott, how well known I am—and I refer you to the man in the street. Nine times out of ten you'll get an answer. The man in the street knows me. But how many people must I ask before I find some one who's heard of Thomas Tucker? Thousands, hundreds of thousands perhaps."

"No, Thomas, I cannot give my daughter to you. Mildred Bagshott will never marry beneath her. She will remain a Bagshott until one of her own caste rises to claim her. He need not offer her a fortune, but he must endow her with a name!"

"Amos Bagshott was in deadly earnest; Tommy Tucker pleaded his cause in vain."

"Come back to me with your question," said the old man, "when you have bathed in the fires of fame. Come back when the name of Tucker is emblazoned against the background of night beside the name of Bagshott. Come back when you have lifted yourself out of the black abyss of obscurity and can look down with me from the heights. In brief and in the vernacular, go get yourself a reputation. I'll give you a year—one year to the minute."

"And to prove he meant exactly what he said, old Amos looked both at his desk calendar and at his watch."

"To the girl Tommy Tucker turned for

sympathy. He asked her to elope with him.

"I love you more than all the world, dear," she said, "but I have loved daddy longer. We must bow to him. He has set you a task. Try, Tommy!"

"Young Tommy Tucker tried. The quickest way to fame seemed to lie in pursuit of his own profession. Previously, he had never entered into architectural competitions, for he had shrunk from the notoriety which might accrue to him as the winner of a great award."

"Plans were being sought for a new museum of art in an Eastern city internationally known as a seat of culture. Leading architects in Paris and London as well as in New York were after the commission, the most glorious prize of years."

"For nine months Tucker labored, abandoning all other interests. On the day the award was announced he went in triumph to Amos Bagshott."

"Amos sat at a desk piled with newspapers. He selected one of them, and pointed to a three-line paragraph on an inside page. It told the news of the sensational award. The winner was said to be a New York architect, by name T. Tucker."

"I wondered if they could have meant you, my boy," said Bagshott. "No, there's not a word in the other dailies. Why, Tucker, couldn't you have tackled something worth while? One of these days, mark my words, some young genius is going to give the world a new form of throat pastille that will make him. Aim higher, boy, aim higher!"

"Tommy Tucker went directly from that interview to an advertising agent."

"I want to splurge on a campaign," he said. "The product? Well, I'll let you know what that is later. In the meantime, I want you to contract for billboards and electric-sign space covering every busy avenue and square in town."

"When do you expect to start your campaign?"

"At once. It must be got under way and got over inside of three months."

"The agent smiled pityingly."

"'Impossible,' he said. 'Don't you know, Mr. Tucker, that virtually every available foot of space has been gobbled up by Bagshott's Koola-Pop and accounts of that magnitude? I couldn't start you off in less than a year. Contracts are contracts. It's only as they expire here and there that we could pick up space, and then we'd have to fight for it inch by inch.'

"Tucker was in despair when he turned in that night; when he arose in the morning it was with new hope surging in his breast. As he tossed sleeplessly an idea had been born. With the sky closed to him, he had reasoned out another road to a place in the thoughts of men. He would do the last thing which a Tucker could be looked for to do, and thus enjoy that extra notoriety that is the breed of the unexpected.

"That afternoon Tommy Tucker mounted a packing case in the shadow of the Metropolitan Tower and began a harangue against the rich and the powerful. He told the crowd who he was, who his father and grandfather had been, who his distinguished uncles were. Soon a thousand men were listening, but nowhere among them did Tommy see the hoped-for pencil and notebook of a reporter.

"A policeman came to Tucker when his audience had drifted away.

"'I'd be careful using names if I was you,' said the officer. 'Maybe you'll be getting yourself in trouble.'

"'Don't you think I'm Thomas Tucker?' asked Tommy. 'Then arrest me.'

"'Aw, go chase yourself,' said the policeman. 'Would you think I'd be wastin' me own good time in court for the likes of you?'

"Despair settled again upon Tommy Tucker. A week went by before he was struck by another inspiration. A newspaper that claims a million readers was clamoring violently for seats in the subway for all.

"Next morning, during the downtown rush, Tucker appeared at the Forty-second Street station. He walked up to two

large platform guards who were standing shoulder to shoulder.

"'If you fellows don't get me a seat on the next express train there'll be trouble,' he said.

"Trouble came ahead of the next express. It arrived then and there. An ambulance took Tommy to Bellevue Hospital. When he heard what the patient had done, the reception clerk in the hospital office assigned the new case to the observation ward. Alienists found large interest in the man who had spoken roughly to a Forty-second Street subway-platform guard, nay, had struck one.

"A noted specialist who visited the bedside recognized Tucker. For the family's sake he caused the name on the hospital records to be changed, and the character of the unusual case to be kept secret.

"There was no publicity. Over and beyond the damage done by the platform guards, Tommy left Bellevue a broken man. He could think of nothing——"

Above the roar of traffic in the square rose a sound as of the screeching of a thousand flat wheels on a hundred curves. It caused a break in the biography of Thomas Tucker.

"What's that?" I gasped.

MY young friend scowled and shrugged.

"Bagshott! Bagshott's Bagpipes! The old man contends that the pipes are the most public instruments in the universe, and he keeps a troop of pipers on the Koola-Pop pay roll. See the crowd of 'em in their kilts over the way—giving folks the elbow? The band is officiating at the opening of the new Koola-Pop sign."

"That's it, eh?" said I. "Speak just a little louder, and I'll hear you in spite of them. Tell me more about this Tucker. Surely Miss Bagshott couldn't have closed her heart to him. If she had really loved him——"

"You don't know Miss Bagshott. Old Amos has filled her with his new-aristocracy propaganda. She stands pat with dad. Iron is present in her soul more markedly than in the Koola-Pop formula. She won't listen to Tucker. Many times

during the year she has assured him that there will never be another man for her, but——"

Another pause eventuated. The young man in the next chair was staring once more through the great lobby window of the Royal Edward, staring harder than I had seen him stare before.

A limousine had nosed to the curb across the square. A momentary rift in the traffic afforded us a view of the splendid motor and the passengers descending from it. They were passing, between ranks of pipers rendering piercing notes of homage, into the building opposite us.

"Miss Bagshott and her party, I suspect," said I.

The young man nodded.

"That fussy thin man leading the parade," he said, "is Amos of the ultimate aristocracy. On his way to tend his fires of fame. Rum vestal!"

"I can understand Bagshott," I mused, "but not the daughter. Is it possible that your friend Tucker has let her know of his intention——"

"He has," replied the youth harshly. "He told her a week ago that an agent of Spain, here seeking new blood for the Moors to spill, had accepted him for service in the Legion of Death."

"Was she not moved to pity?"

"She was moved to laughter. 'Going to fight in Morocco?' she said. 'Why, Tommy, I know as well as you do that those Moroccans are just poor bookbinders. They'll run at the first shot. Are they striking, or something? It's a shame not to make allowances for them. They do really beautiful work. You've seen dad's library, dear.'"

Darkness had been seeping swiftly into the square. Now from the roof of the building into which the Bagshott party had vanished came a sudden blinding torrent of light.

"Look!" said I. "Thar she blow!"

"She—she sent Tommy Tucker away," muttered Tommy Tucker's pal. "Cold!"

"Oh, well," I consoled, "Miss Bagshott will probably suffer for that. If I know women, she'll make a few inquiries con-

cerning the health rate among troops campaigning in Morocco. And when she finds out—— Now look, will you!"

Mr. Amos Bagshott's brand-new Koola-Pop sign was telling the world. Giant letters had been pursuing one another around the shining circle, while Mr. Bagshott's eighty-seven-foot soda clerk raced above them with his brilliant apron flying and a mammoth bottle of Koola-Pop clutched to his breast.

Thus far the operator of the sign had been ladling out statistics concerning the sign's consumption of kilowatts and the public's consumption of Koola-Pop. What I had directed my young neighbor's attention to was an announcement just flashed around the circle. Proceedings to the moment had been informal, a mere testing process. After thirty seconds of darkness, the greatest electric-advertising sign ever built would be opened officially by Miss Mildred Bagshott, only daughter of the creator of Koola-Pop.

Blackness enveloped the roof chartered by Amos Bagshott; light came again. I fancy that Miss Mildred Bagshott had received only a sketchy coaching in the operation of the greatest sign. It may be that nervousness accounted for everything. However that may be, here's what the sign started to say:

TOXMZ TOQMY TICKAR COMZ
BACK TO ME TOMMY MHIS IS
W CRY FRJM MY——

I missed the rest of the incomprehensible sentence. There was action at my right. The young man who had been sitting there was on his feet. Fires as bright as Bagshott's burned in his eyes. He fastened a painful grip on my shoulder.

"Listen!" he said. "In about a half hour a little fat man with a black loop-the-loop mustache will be along here. You tell him to cancel Thomas Tucker's passage for Morocco. If he wants to know why, just tell him, 'Remember the *Maine*!'"

As suddenly as he had risen, the surprising youth was gone.

I saw him struggling for exit at the Royal Edward's door—an old-fashioned revolving door it was then.

A person with too many bags was finding difficulties in winning his way into that glorious old-timey lobby. He had become wedged in the door. Exit there was blocked.

The youth who had left the message with me reappeared at my side. He appeared to have forgotten that we had met. In the light of his subsequent conduct I was glad of that. He picked up one of the polished brass receptacles which I believe I have enumerated among the furnishings of that window of the Royal Edward's pride.

THERE was a crash. The biggest area of Pittsburgh plate glass ever manufactured and transported in one piece went out in a million fragments.

The vandal went out too. He plunged recklessly across the square. A line of

taxis closed behind him. I never have seen him since.

Behind me I heard the familiar voices of Mr. Bimbein and Mr. Greef, custodians of all I held dear in the hotel life of New York. They had rushed forward to inspect the damage. My heart went out to them. But what were their words?

Said Mr. Greef, "That's that!"

And said Mr. Bimbein, "Thank Gott!"

"Now," said Mr. Greef, "we modernize."

"Here a nice wall," said Mr. Bimbein. "On the corner Consolidated Cigars. Next maybe a haberdasher. Then one of them orange-drink stands. They pay big, Greef!"

"How about the lobby?" suggested Mr. Greef.

"Lobby!" echoed Mr. Bimbein. He was drawing rapidly on the back of an envelope. "Gott! Lobby! Ain't I allowing plenty standing room outside the desk?"

Mr. Rohde will have a story in the next POPULAR.



TRUE ORIGINALITY.

The most original thing is unflagging application. It is another name for genius.

THE TWO WAGONS.

The water wagon, which is the nation's band wagon, is in some localities the banned wagon.

WHY THEY RUN.

Unfortunately for this country, we have two schools of political candidates: those who run for office so that they may make laws, and those who run for office so that they can make a livelihood.

A CAMPAIGN BELIEF.

There are political stump speakers who think they can always step on the gas by blowing it out.

THE MODERN TEST.

A successful farmer is one who, when it rains steadily five days, worries about the condition of the golf greens instead of the harvesting of his crops.

EXCESSIVE OPTIMISM.

Too many women consider themselves fit to vote as soon as they learn that a political movement isn't a new dance step.



The House that Black Built

By C. S. Montanye

Author of "Jack and the Jills," "Once Every Year," Etc.

Ottie Scandrel, the hero of this tale of ludicrous villainy, really should go in for sculpture—it's marvelous the way he does a bust.

POSSIBLY in an idle moment when toying with some best seller of a century or two past you might have chanced across a certain pearl of wisdom, to wit: *Do one thing well!* At this writing the source of that choice expression as well as the identity of its author escapes me, but at that there's a lot of good stuff in the remark, now isn't there? If everybody shot at one target consistently, sooner or later they'd be bound to score a bull's-eye. The trouble is nobody has the patience to keep plugging away at one thing so the majority of wage slaves remain wage slaves from the cradle through to the floral offerings.

Investigate your own past if you don't believe me.

It's Chinese kronen to tapioca pudding that Shakespeare would never have led the literary league if he had fussed around with bartending, bootblacking and what not on the side. Columbus would never have been the pride of Naples or the Circle at Fifty-ninth Street if he had passed up the sea to peddle bananas and it's a cinch that he never would have gotten an edge on the queen's best jewelry if he had hung

around the back yard of the palace pitching horseshoes, playing tennis or fooling with the pasteboards.

Mr. Ottie Scandrel, whom you've probably heard from and of, never did any *one* thing well and in consequence this master mind of egotism and Napoleon of nonsense never landed anywhere within the enchanted boundaries of Fame. It's perfectly true that Scandrel in his rounds of adventure and mad dashing from one occupation to another had glommed a tidy bank roll, but money to him was like taffy to a child. It never lasted long. In no cents a spendthrift and always as close as the axle and front wheel on a new flivver, Ottie in his eager pursuit of the elusive dollar frequently strayed from Prosperity Lane and landed somewhere up Broke Boulevard.

Like the magician with the mysterious egg—now Scandrel had it and now he didn't have it.

A summer and fall spent at such watering places as Saratoga, Belmont Park, Empire City and Aqueduct, where he played the game of guess, had left him as flat as a pancake smoothed out by a steam

roller. Really, it was cruel the way the ganders kidded him. Mudders he played on heavy tracks won when the going was fast and the stags that liked their dirt hard never copped when he had the shekels riding on a sunny day but ran like greased lightning when the path along the rail was hock deep in mud. Doping them had the big numskull as perplexed as a Western millionaire with a French menu. Ottie went around shaking his head witlessly and claiming that all the jocks were as crooked as a spiral staircase.

In a way it was amusing, for if Scandrel tabbed a goat in a hop that was twenty to one or better the turtle was sure to be stuck at the gate. And if he bet on a hoss that was itching to run they were certain to scratch him!

When the local chase season ended around the port of New York and the ducks went south my ludicrous boy friend was sleeping up at the gym in the Bronx and dining only when invited out. He did have one grand tied up in a Wall Street stock entitled Stretchless Rubber but he had bought this trash for a dollar a share and two days after the purchase it had sunk to ten cents a share—take all you want.

AS usual, Ottie figured there was a conspiracy against Rubber in which all the money barons of the Stock Exchange participated and he had the greatest faith in the stock bouncing back to par and then clicking for the large profits. That he had obtained the tip from the proprietor of a bucket shop whom the government had subsequently given a free ride to Atlanta meant little or nothing to the clown king. Even the knowledge that the proprietors of Stretchless Rubber possessed merely vest-pocket factories bothered him little. Ottie knew that the minute Morgan and the Rockefeller interests let up on him he was going to broom heavily!

Ridiculous, what?

Two weeks after the Rubber stock had touched the ten-cent mark with no takers I arrived at the gym one fair morning to find Scandrel deep in conversation with a

shabby number who looked as if he might have stepped directly out of a slapstick-comedy strip. This individual had hair the same color as ink, a head with a shape to it that would have interested a tack manufacturer, an expression as vacant as the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and a neck which required three collars to cover it up.

Tasty was hardly the word!

He wore one patent-leather shoe with a cloth top and one oxford, a pair of trousers, a waistcoat and a jacket that had never associated until he had put them on, one striped cuff and one plain one and a green dicer that had holes on either side. Whenever he removed his shed, which was more frequently than seldom, he gave the world a peek at a nifty boyish bob.

Ottie, once he glimpsed me entering, tore himself away from the mysterious stranger long enough to greet me with a cough.

"Er—one minute, Joe. I'd like you to meet Izzy O'Connor—call him Ben for short. Here, kid, give your cleanest hand to Joe O'Grady. He owns this here gym as well as all the fixtures."

Master O'Connor pushed out a fin and yawned.

"So you're the party who's stuck with this lay? It's all wrong, cull, all wrong. I just happened to notice these floors ain't fireproof. There are too many steps to your stairway—and why didn't you throw another story on it before they put up the roof?"

While Ottie giggled, I looked the newcomer over coldly.

"Do I understand that you're an architect?"

O'Connor took off his hat, pulled the label out and tore it up.

"No, I ain't claiming that, but I've got ideas, I have. For example——"

"Take a gallop around the corner and get your breakfast," Scandrel interrupted. "Here's a nickel for a cup of coffee."

"Coffee's a dime," O'Connor muttered.

"Then get a demi-tasse!" Ottie hissed, pegging a coin at him. "On your way now—come back but don't talk back. Er—can we use that private office of yours for

a while, Joe?" he asked, when his shabby playmate retrieved the five pence and fled.

In the office, he put his feet on one chair and sat down in another. I dropped down at the desk and gave him a curious look.

"Tell me two things. Who is O'Connor and where did he get his trousers?"

Scandrel snickered.

"Now you're asking something—as the husband said to the jealous wife. This O'Connor baby is just a natural half-wit who's so dumb that if he takes a bath on Wednesday he asks for the Sunday newspapers the next morning. But listen. You can laugh or you can cry but the truth remains that O'Connor's going to line the poke and fill up the currency kick again. I'm going to tell you all about it whether you want to hear it or not."

He did.

First of all it appeared that Looie Pitz, now the proud proprietor of a slug stadium known as the Regent A. C. which was located somewhere on Staten Island, had, for the sake of auld lang syne, offered to allow Scandrel to put a socker in on of the prelim bouts on some Saturday night card at his new opera house. I knew that Ottie, overcome at the prospect of getting a piece of a purse, had been scouring the underworld in search of some one who could stand up and swing for him and as he rambled along with his narrative I began to sense the plot.

"Two days ago," he explained, "this O'Connor guy stopped me on Third Avenue with a request for car fare back to his old home in Yonkers. When I got through sniffing I made an appointment to meet him here this morning, which I just did. Take it from me, I've found out enough. For two dollars O'Connor tells me he'd fight the New York police force and, if I throw in a quart of Old Granddad, he'll either win from here to Hollywood or lose like a come-on playing a crooked roulette wheel. I ask you, what would be fairer than that?"

"In other words," I put in, "this O'Connor is the one you've been seeking to send down to Looie's Staten Island clubhouse?"

Ottie grinned.

"Honest, I'll bet you talked when you were three weeks old, Joe. You're right the first time! 'Cannon Ball' O'Connor is the way the label will read from now on. I'd like to stop and talk to you more but I can't just now. It's going on eleven o'clock and at half past ten I've got an appointment with Barry Black—you know whom I mean? If it's O. K. for you I'll let O'Connor clean the furnace and sweep up the cellar just to keep him around the premises until I get back. As Mary, Queen of Scotch, said to her bootlegging husband—until we meet again!"

With that he found the door and made a hasty exit.

The Barry Black that Ottie had mentioned I had reason to know was a race-track bookmaker and the one who had taken away most of the big dumb-bell's money. Starting out with a bicycle at the beginning of the racing season at Jamaica, Black owned two Cadillacs, a Packard and a Rolls-Royce when the curtain finally fell on the dizzy season of metropolitan scrambles.

The brotherhood of bookmakers naturally expected Black to cushion down to Latonia and New Orleans, but Ottie's Nemesis, as cautious as a nighthawk husband with his shoes in one hand and a bowl of goldfish in the other, had done nothing of the kind. A shining example of the "do one thing well," Black had invested a large piece of his profits in a model East Side apartment building.

The house that Black built was in the pushcart section of laughable Manhattan, it covered one entire square block and it offered to the public five hundred suites of rooms, and safety of fireproof construction, sanitary safeguards and boasted every modern improvement at a rent that was no more excessive than that charged for tenements no self-respecting fly would dream of entering.

This property was known as Barry Court and had been completed some ten days previous. According to the gossip I had overheard in sporting circles, Black was as fond of his house as Adam had been of apples and expected to be as popu-

lar with the East Side multitude as the man who had invented vacations.

For the next two days in order the shabby Izzy O'Connor did odd jobs around the gym that were odd, and carelessly squandered the tips I gave him in a speak-easy down the street, whose owner had run out and hit him with a cane. O'Connor proved to be a patriotic lush by looking upon the wine when it was red, white and blue and even went so far as to bring a pint of the shellac around to the gym where he sipped it through a straw until Scandrel heard and saw him.

"Listen, Silly," he snarled. "Trap intelligence! You'll ruin your stomach drinking that stuff!"

"At's all right," was O'Connor's cheerful answer. "It won't show with my coat on!"

OTTIE took the flask away from him, threw him out, locked the door and finished the pint himself.

"Well, Joe, it's settled now," he began, dropping the empty bottle in a convenient trash basket. "I've got Cannon Ball O'Connor set to open the card a week from next Saturday night at the Regent A. C. He's to step seven chapters with a welterweight whose front piece reads 'Cincinnati Stuyvesant' Maloney. This Maloney nozzle is so old that you can sit around and hear his arteries harden. Pitz tells me that he's a Civil War veteran and that he lives on his pension and what small change he can pick up stopping punches.

"The go ought to be a holler with the world's two worst fighters staging it, hey? I got Maloney's address off the secretary at the club so the first chance I get I'll stop around and see him. Maybe we can do a little piece of private business together. Who knows? Meanwhile, find a hat that fits you and come with me. I want to take you down to my new office."

"New—whom?"

He made a careless gesture.

"Get a plumber to look over them things you call ears, Joe. New office is what I said. I got a job now and I'm working. I had lunch with Barry Black and his

hard-boiled daughter the other day. I guess Black's conscience was bothering him, because he offered me the situation of renting agent down at Barry Court and I took it the same as a chorus girl takes a pearl necklace. I'm drawing a crooked ten-per-cent commission on each flat I rent and already I've moved three families in and am nine dollars to the good. Er—shall we step?"

In no more or less than an hour we came up out of the subway and delved into a region that was somewhere between the East River and the Hudson. Peddlers who sold everything from herring to pianos populated the neighborhood, future presidents made the gutters a camping ground, ladies who purchased the world's supply of shawls gossiped together while somebody's wash hung on every roof and fire escape.

We went two blocks this way, one block that way, and then came face to face with the house that Black built.

In a dingy setting of drab and dusty tenements the dazzling new white stucco, the gabled roof and the English-timbered architecture as well as the arched entryway and the huge center court where a bronze fountain splashed, made the property stand out like a bandaged beak at a prayer meeting. Really, Barry Court looked as if it should occupy a couple of Westchester acres with trees, a brook and one or two hills to set it off to proper advantage!

"This is what the bangtails done for Black," Ottie mumbled.

"This," I murmured, "is ample proof for any skeptic that a rolling stone gathers no moss."

"Who the heck wants to gather moss?" was Scandrel's sneering answer before he suddenly straightened up. "Er—tidy your necktie and lace your shoe, Joe. Do you see that little gal over there? She's Beatrice herself, Black's daughter and the heiress to all this property. She was with us at lunch the other day and while her father had to tell her which was her fork and which was her spoon and while she claimed the flatter the plate the fewer the

soup, she looks pretty fair to *me*. Chickie now—here she comes!"

Miss Beatrice Black joined us.

While there was nothing about the young lady that might have been called dainty, her striking dark eyes, her brilliant red lips and her Junolike countenance had certain qualities that were highly attractive. In the vicinity of interesting twenty-two and as modishly gowned as any of her sex who used Fifth Avenue to stop and shop on, the daughter of the wealthy bookmaker resembled Paris, France, and Eighth Avenue, New York, combined!

Scandrel, always in peril when pulchritude was about, pushed his chest out like a gangplank, introduced me with a flourish and used his only handkerchief to wipe off his chin.

"You're out early," he began with a cough. "Any future tenants shown up yet? I expected to knock the time clock one at nine bells exactly, but a little business up at the Bronnix prevented, Bea."

Miss Black's look was as chilly as a pail of ice.

"Call me Bea again," she drawled, "if you want to get stung, fellar. I'm Miss Black to you to-day, next week, next month and next year. See? By the way, the old gent hired you to work here and not up in the Bronx. Nine o'clock don't mean ten after eleven. Slip up once again and I'll tell pa to gate you. Make me?"

"Don't we get along fine together, Joe?" Scandrel whinnied. "To hear her talk you wouldn't think we were the best of friends, would you? This is just a little way of hers. You'd be surprised if you knew what a disposition she's got."

"Them Eyetalians," Miss Black went on, "to whom you rented apartment 3-A checked out last night with all the chandeliers, so pa is taking the cost of them out of your commission. That Irish family you dragged in had a gun fight, the cops brought a wagon around so the rooms are to rent again, and you don't get no three dollars for that lease. Right now I've got to snap over and see my dress-maker to find out if there's any truth in

these rumors about high waist lines, so I can't tell you everything I'd like to. Here's the key to the office. Don't let your friend put his feet in any of the furniture."

With that she handed Ottie a latchkey, pushed a couple of peddlers who were trying to sell her some East River sable out of the way, and stopped a taxi with a cry that made six laborers drop their shovels and rush toward the nearest fire-alarm box.

"Ha-ha!" Ottie giggled. "Ain't Bea got cute ways? Right now she thinks she's giving me a pushing around. But wait and remember—he who laughs last laughs after all the others. I'm just hungry for a beautiful girl who won't be too hungry for me!"

The renting office proved to be on the ground floor and once Ottie had unlocked the door and ushered me inside events began to transpire.

The first of these came when the janitor resigned because a family had accidentally dropped a pot of geraniums down the dumb-waiter on him. Scandrel tried vainly to make him see that it was all a joke but was unable, and a minute after that a couple of neighborhood boys stepped in to try to rent a twenty-dollar apartment for nineteen fish a month. After Scandrel threw them out a representative of the board of health called around to warn him that tenants could not keep chickens in their kitchens, and following his visit Ottie was forced to rush out into the courtyard and prevent a family on the third floor from using the bronze fountain as a shower bath!

When he got back to the office and was seated the door opened and the next minute he had a stitch of laughter.

"Look at this jobbie, Joe! If he ain't one of them emigrants who come to this country with a pair of roller skates and own a limousine before the year's out, I can make a diamond scarfpin out of an ordinary milk bottle!"

I glanced across the room and saw an undersized gentleman with as many whiskers as the law allowed. He appeared slightly damp and the only difference be-

tween himself and a tub was that a tub didn't have a couple of arms and a pair of feet. Rubbing his hands and bowing like a prima donna on an opening night he shuffled over, introduced himself as Reuben Schmuckie and would have taken a chair if Ottie hadn't pulled it away before he could get to it.

"Stand up until you're invited to sit down! Keep 'em on—I know you. You're the guy who rented 5-J directly off Black when I wouldn't split my commission with you. Well, we're waiting!"

The other was on the verge of tears.

"Listen, please, gentlemen. The Irishers what got it arrested last night forgot to turn the water off by the kitchen sink and all day we got to sit around under an umbrella. First the ceiling by the bedroom fell down. Then the ceiling from the hall fell down. Then the ceiling in the kitchen fell down. Then the ceiling over——"

LAY off!" Scandrel screamed. "What are you trying to make me do—a buck and wing to that jazz? Any bim so low as to skin a hard-working boy out of his commission deserves to get drowned. The ceilings fell down, did they? It's too bad one of them didn't hit you a knock on the top of that thing you call a head. Get away from me before I kick you in the teeth!"

The fifth-floor tenant pushed most of his beard down the front of his coat.

"Don't I get no justice, gentlemen? What shall I do? Please tell me where I shall go?"

"I'll tell you where you can go!" Ottie bellowed. "I'm a renting agent, not a plumber. Hand me that dictionary, Joe. Maybe if I hurl a little language at this parsnip——"

Reuben Schmuckie took the hint and beat the book to the door by inches. He had hardly left before a pale blond girl in a plain blue, inconspicuous little suit entered demurely.

Hot diggity!

The little stranger from nowhere had downcast blue eyes, a short nose, the same

kind of an upper lip and a fascinating complexion that would have made an ordinary peach quit like a dog. One look was enough for Ottie, who rushed to the washstand in the corner, cleansed his hands twice, brushed his hair, shined his shoes and changed his necktie before returning.

"I beg your pardon," he began chummily, "but isn't there something I can do for you? The name is Scandrel and while I don't exactly own this building I've got the say-so here and I run it to suit myself. The party on my right is Joe O'Grady from uptown, so that makes us all friends. You can speak freely."

Our blond visitor smiled.

"My name," she explained, "is Mary White. I'm a settlement worker and I came——"

"In that case," Ottie hollered, "settle here! Honest, you can spend the rest of your life looking for a flat, but you'll never find the brand we're featuring in this here building. Think of it—rooms with closets, running water, two kinds—dirty and clean. All for twenty dollars—count 'em—a month and just to show you that my heart's in the right place I'll split my commission with you. What floor shall we look at first?"

While Miss White was making up her mind there was a slight interruption in the direction of the doorway. Reuben Schmuckie shuffled in again, tears in his eyes.

"Listen, please, gentlemen. Already the ceiling by Moycha's bedroom just fell down——"

"Tell him!" Ottie bawled, waving a hand in my direction while he used the other to escort the blond Mary White to the door. "As I was saying, Cunning, we've got parquet floors here that the Prince of Wales would love to throw a dance on. Our windows actually open and——"

To go on with the story.

Three afternoons later I exchanged Forty-second Street for the Bronx, reached the gym and discovered Cannon Ball O'Connor, in ring garb, cooling out in a corner under a bath robe while Scan-

drel, as pompous as a head waiter on New Year's Eve, was in the act of concluding a speech delivered to some four or five pencil-pushing young men whom it was not at all difficult for me to recognize as being sport writers connected with an equal number of Gotham dailies.

"The Cannon Ball," Ottie was saying as he stole a surreptitious glance at a type-written paper in one pocket, "believes that the fight fans in this town were all born in Missouri. He don't come among you blowing his horn and telling you that he was the contender for the welterweight championship of Australia, his native land. He don't do this, do you, kid?"

"Nope," O'Connor chirped. "Some girls talk too much with their mouths. I sit quiet, I do, because I've got ideas, I have. Lemme tell you about the kangaroos——"

"The Cannon Ball," Ottie interrupted, hastily going back to his notes, "asks merely a square deal and merely an opportunity to prove his ability. Instead of shooting at the champ in this here country he has decided to gradually work his way up the ladder and prove—now—conclusively that he's got the stuff. For this reason he will fight next Saturday night at the Regent A. C. as a preliminary attraction and from that minute on I request you gentlemen of the press to watch his upward progress. Remember, next Saturday night he ain't Cannon Ball O'Connor, the logical champeen of Australia. He's simply Cannon Ball O'Connor, an unknown welter from Australia. That is all. I thank you."

"Much obliged," O'Connor added. "Say, do any of you guys bulge where a gentleman should? Honest, my throat's so dry——"

The sport scribes took their kelleys and the air; and, foiled, O'Connor hungrily smelled the cork on an empty quart bottle he had under his chair. Ottie, after cuffing him, drew me aside.

"What's all this apple sauce about Australia?" I asked.

The peer of fools curled a lip.

"What do you mean—apple sauce? If

the newspaper crowd took it without question where do *you* get off to twitter? Offer me credit. I freely admit that Mary—little Miss White—wrote that speech, but I ask you, did Lincoln deliver the Gettysburg address any better?"

"What does it mean?"

The self-satisfied smirk on the celebrated Scandrel pan disappeared and he became both confidential and serious.

"Here's the way the music goes, Joe. I'm building the kid up so I can sell O'Connor to the public. I'd be crazy to think that the pencil push will give him a big puff, but you know how this foreign-champ stuff gets across with the mob here and the boys will be sure to say *something* about him. Get it?"

"I can't say I do. Suppose the papers do give O'Connor a spread? What good will that do you?"

IN order to make himself thoroughly understood Ottie got a hand around my left lapel and tried to force the point of his granite chin down my throat.

"Honest, you're so thick that I bet you believe a sardine is a whale that never grew up. Listen. I've been shopping around among the slate-and-handbook gang on Longacre and I find that with Maloney and O'Connor it's a case of take your choice at even money. That's why I'm building the kid up to sell him to the public. One of the handbook boys, a party who calls himself Perry Austin, tells me he don't care what odds he gives on prelim fighters if there's any reason for making some battler a sharp favorite.

"Figure it out yourself. If the papers work this Australian jazz out, as I really believe they will, the odds on O'Connor will sink less than even while I can get anything I want on Maloney. And let me tell you this. I seen Maloney yesterday at his boarding house and for fifty dollars he'll promise to keep on his feet if I bet on him and let O'Connor lay down in round one, two or three. Is that too complicated for you?"

I began to see light.

"Oh, so it's O'Connor who's to flop and

Maloney who's to win—if the newspaper stuff goes over and your handbook man gives you an interesting figure on the Cincinnati scrapper!"

Scandrel shook hands with me.

"And Coolidge hasn't called you to Washington yet, Joe! Positively, a wonder like you ought to be operating the navy. Yes, that's the whole idea and it's a darb if I do say so myself. Plug for the papers to put O'Connor across and then watch me slap five hundred Dublin crowns on Maloney, watch my kid quit like a crab and me take my winnings.

"Speaking of five hundred dollars," I cut in. "I'm sorry but I'm a little short just now. You know that if I had it I'd be only too willing——"

Ottie's expression was as penetrating as poison.

"Don't whine until you're touched, pal. From experience I know how short you are, Joe. You wouldn't pass a thin dime to a beggar if he stood up and starved in front of you. Here's once I fool you proper. I've got a way to raise the five hundred bucks and it don't require no rubber-soled shoes nor brass knuckles neither!"

He giggled at my open curiosity, refused further information and borrowed my watch to find out what time it was.

"Ten minutes to five, hey? When did you wind this clock last? I'll have to duck right down to Barry Court in order to be present at six o'clock when I quit for the day. Er—it's useless to ask me out to dinner to-night. I'm eating with Black and Bea, and if that ain't honey tell me what is?"

"How are you and the young lady getting along?"

Ottie used a finger to find out if he needed a shave.

"Never better. She ain't threatened to tell pa to can me since Wednesday. No fooling, I think she's getting cuckoo about me. But ain't it strange how many gals in this town don't want to get married?"

"How do you know they don't want to get married?"

"I've asked them!" he answered. "Olive

oil for the time being. Do me a favor—keep an eye on O'Connor and don't give him no silver, Joe. Every time he drops in at that blind pig down the block he gets balled up and tells the world he was the contender for the welterweight championship of Austria instead of Australia. He's got ideas, he has!"

IT might have been that Madam Luck, I tired of frowning upon Scandrel, was beginning to smile again for the speech that Mary White had prepared and which Ottie had read to the reporters had gotten more attention than he had hoped for. Doubtlessly figuring that the dear public was just gullible enough to love it, the sport scribes had given plenty space to the Australian near champ who had come to America to begin at the bottom of the ladder and work his way to the top!

A day after the sheets broke out with the bunk a visit to the bet shop of Perry Austin proved that the guff had gotten over nicely. Austin had priced Cannon Ball O'Connor as a one-to-two choice while fifteen to one could be obtained against Cincinnati Maloney with no takers.

"Here are the five hundred kisses," Ottie said, once he learned the change on Austin's slate. "I dasset lay it myself with him because he knows that I'm handling O'Connor and he might smell a colored boy in the fagots. So you get this dough down with Austin at fifteen to one, every nickel on Cincinnati Maloney to win from here to the Gulp Stream. Right?"

I did this little thing a couple of hours later and immediately the champ of all chumps dragged out "What the Classy Gents Will Wear" and for two hours sat in a trance, staring spellbound at a plaid frock coat!

To resume.

Kept penniless and therefore sober, Master O'Connor, for the benefit of the curious who had read and believed the newspaper stuff about him, was forced to go through a burlesque of training and this, if nothing else, was hysteria in itself.

Any one of the studio chair heaters who

loitered around the gym could have murdered O'Connor with one slap. Each sparring partner who entered the ring to perform publicly with him had advance instructions. O'Connor, in his daily afternoon bouts for the gallery, knew what to expect and dropped six or eight of these adversaries in the course of a thirty-minute frolic. He became so adept at it that a dozen times or more he would scratch his knee with one glove and merely swing the other at an opponent, turning carelessly away as the other spun around and toppled for the court. And the way he acknowledged the terrific applause of the Gotham hicks put every one in stitches who had an angle on the know.

Barnum would have enjoyed the exhibitions.

Trying to run an alleged pugilist who was more interested in a bottle than a battle, trying to retain the portfolio of renting agent to Barry Court and endeavoring to melt the frosty heart of Beatrice Black, had Ottie as busy as a rum runner at high tide. He romped around from one scene of activity to another, he beat O'Connor up once a day to keep him in line, he rented apartments down on the East Side whenever he had the opportunity, he threw Reuben Schmuckie out of his office twice and he took Miss Black walking in his spare time. These rambles were almost always along the East River docks where, like a dentist, Ottie took pleasure in pointing out the bridge work.

"What did you do to inspire Miss Black's interest?" I asked, one afternoon two days previous to the Staten Island affair.

Scandrel made a careless gesture.

"She's beginning to absorb my personality, Joe. Listen. This here is a secret between the both of us, so don't tell a soul. It was Bea that came through with them five hundred clinkers that you bet on Maloney for me!"

I stared in open wonder.

"You mean she loaned you the money?"

Ottie shook his head.

"Honest, you'd be worth a dollar to any dime museum, Joe. No, she didn't lend

me the money. What she did do was to buy them thousand shares of Stretchless Rubber off me and if I stuck her don't blame me because she bought the shares with her pin money. Anyhow, all is fair in love, war and box fighting. After I clean up on the fight down at the Regent A. C. maybe I'll buy the rubber back. Some idea, eh?"

About to continue on in the same vein, Ottie was interrupted by the appearance of Cannon Ball O'Connor, who tottered in, a banana in one hand. The imitation contender for the welterweight championship of Australia had found a shoe somewhere that was a better match for the patent-leather kick, but still wore the same mis-mated trousers, vest and jacket. Scandrel had saved forty cents by giving him a hair cut and O'Connor had found a discarded safety-razor blade somewhere and had shaved one side of his face.

"If I had a quarter——" he began.

"If you had a quarter," Ottie laughed, "I'd take it off you. You and that private distillery down the block are a public menace. Lap up the redeye if you want me to make you a present of a black eye!"

"For fifteen cents——" O'Connor went on with a sigh.

"For nothing at all I'll give you a smack in the lamp, Dizzy!" Ottie howled. "Let me tell you something. From to-morrow morning through to Saturday night you and me are going to stay together like we were friends. When I go to work in the morning down to Barry Court you'll come with me. When I go out to lunch you'll go out to lunch—even if you don't eat nothing. When I quit for the day so do you. Go ahead now—moan about it."

O'Connor shook his head sadly.

"Why should I? I don't care where we go or what we do. A little rye would make a new man of me, so——"

"We're going out to dinner now!" Scandrel yelled, collaring him. At the door he stopped and looked back at me over his shoulder. "Er—I forgot to tell you what Bea said to me the other afternoon, Joe. Just to show how well I stand

with her I'll mention it. She told me that my face was my fortune."

"Don't mind that," O'Connor chirped. "The richest people ain't always the happiest!"

Thus the prologue.

The finale of the opéra bouffe happened on Saturday night when, chaperoned by half the Bronx, Scandrel, Miss Beatrice Black herself and all of his handlers, Cannon Ball O'Connor took a yacht cruise to the shores of the tight little island down the bay and a bus ride from the dock to the portals of the Regent A. C. where we were met by Looie Pitz, the half-portion ex-fight manager, who was as fond of Scandrel as a cold in the head.

"So this is the Australian wizard?" Pitz began, looking O'Connor over through his own monocle. "Right out of the bush, eh? I believe it. Shoot him up to the scales and let Rafferty find out if he's a welter or a light-heavy boiled down. Then slip him into his dressing room and get his costume on. Him and Maloney open the card and the curtain rises sharp here at eight thirty."

WHILE O'Connor went up to weigh in and Ottie departed to seat Miss Beatrice Black at the ringside, I wandered around and looked the Regent A. C. over.

This charming edifice was constructed entirely of wood and an ordinary match would have caused more destruction than an inebriated taxi chauffeur. Pitz claimed that he could seat six thousand people in his club and this was undoubtedly true—if his clients weren't particular about sitting on each other's shoulders.

As it was, a crowd composed of the best and worst people of Staten Island filed briskly through the turnstiles, the soft-drink pirates were beginning to get in their deadly work and the air gradually grew blue with the reek of tobacco smoke.

Finished appraising the mob I went down to the cellar tier of dressing rooms, hunted up the boudoir being used by Cincinnati Stuyvesant Maloney and cornered a glimpse of him through an open door.

Not so good!

In addition to being as fat as a well-fed porker, Maloney had a comic-opera countenance and an expression as silly as a hall full of flappers. His eyes were crossed, he had more wrinkles than a new shirt back from a cheap laundry, his feet were two sizes too large for his legs, his nose had been broken in three places and what hair he still possessed had been dyed so many times that it was a rich blue-green in the glare of the electric lights.

After glancing in at O'Connor and finding that the Scandrel hope was in ring garb and had his hands bandaged, I sought my chair upstairs and discovered it was directly across from the one occupied by the dark-haired Beatrice Black, who, displaying scant interest in the building, its occupants and the ring itself, was deeply engrossed in a fashion periodical that was entitled the "High Waist Line Number." As I sat down I lighted a cigar Looie Pitz had made me a present of, took one puff and handed it to a youth in front of me who wore a pepper-and-salt suit decorated with a little egg on each lapel. Twenty minutes elapsed with the crowd still coming in.

Then the amusement began!

Cincinnati Stuyvesant Maloney, all wrapped up in a pink bath robe, was the first to make his appearance. At the sight of him the crowd jeered loudly. It took Maloney several minutes to bow an acknowledgment to this greeting after which he went directly to his corner where some one handed him an evening newspaper.

An instant later, Cannon Ball O'Connor, with Ottie leading the parade, showed up and, gaping witlessly, stumbled between the ropes and peered around with an expression as empty as a politician's promise. It was easy to perceive that the only rings O'Connor had ever seen before were worn under the eyes or on the fingers!

His dumb look made the crowd roar before Ottie took his shoes over to the resin box and led him to his own corner.

There was a slight delay while the gloves were adjusted, the ring was finally cleared and Ottie dropped down beside me as the gong sounded and O'Connor, mis-

understanding the handshake, took a wild punch at Maloney.

"Don't miss a minute of this, Joe!" Scandrel mumbled. "The kid lays down in the second stanza, but he does it so nifty that even an art dealer wouldn't know it was a frame. Watch him!"

I did.

The musical-comedy stage had never known a burlesque-boxing bout with more rare humor and laughs to it than the Cincinnati Maloney-Cannon Ball O'Connor scuffle.

Really, it was slapstick comedy at its highest degree!

Lowering his head, shutting his eyes and gritting his teeth, O'Connor charged at his opponent. Maloney swung at him so hard that when he missed by a mile the force of the misdirected blow threw him on his face. Still with his eyes shut, O'Connor collided with the referee, clipped him one on the chin and went into a clinch!

With the house in hysterics, Ottie climbed up in the ring and pried his boy away from the referee. O'Connor apologized, Maloney got up and the round continued. Two swings from his adversary that came nowhere near him had O'Connor looking for the nearest exit and covering up like a baby in a cold crib.

"What'll I do?" he hollered down at Scandrel.

"Fight him, you monkey!" Ottie roared back.

Rushed to the ropes, O'Connor dropped the minute Maloney pulled back his glove, took the count of nine and then bouncing up tore across the ring, swinging like a maniac. Maloney saw him coming and, tripping over one of his own shoes, fell heavily. Unable to check his own furious onslaught, O'Connor tripped over him, dove headlong into the circling referee and crashed to the canvas.

When all three were on their feet again the bell ended the round!

"Don't forget," I overheard my boy friend whispering when O'Connor came back to his corner. "Watch me in the next round and when I wave my hand,

flop! Don't be coarse or show raw work. Maloney will cross with his right to the jaw and you kiss the canvas——"

"Don't be talking to me," O'Connor moaned. "I'm taking an awful beating off this guy. I think he's got rocks concealed in his gloves!"

"How can you tell that?" Scandrel shot back. "He ain't even laid one on you yet! There's the whistle. Don't forget—take the full count and keep laying out there until we carry you back here. Go in and lose now, kid. Good luck!"

It was obvious that the strain of the first round told heavily on Maloney, who puffed like a secondhand boiler on a steep hill. They clashed in the center of the ring and sparred for an opening. Maloney feinted O'Connor's guard up and hooked a right to the knees. O'Connor promptly slashed a left jab to his opponent's glove and they went into a clinch. The referee pried them apart, warned them about holding and they boxed again.

Maloney was short with a right and a left, overshot a right that was aimed for the jaw but caught O'Connor on the elbow and then they mixed briskly while Ottie, with an eye on his watch, marked the fleeting seconds.

"Now!" he hissed at length, in his excitement putting his watch in the pocket of the man who stood beside him and waving an arm.

As he flashed the fatal signal O'Connor got through Maloney's guard with left and rights to the body that made the other cover up hastily. They stood toe to toe and slugged away until Ottie, unable to stand it longer, climbed halfway through the lower ropes.

"Lay down!" he hollered. "Lay down before I get up there and knock you cold myself! What are you trying to do—double cross me, you dumb ox? Get down and stay down!"

Paying absolutely no attention to these instructions, O'Connor let fly with another left and right. The right missed the panting Maloney by the length of a yardstick but the left grazed the other's shoulder and the relic from Cincinnati waited for

nothing more. Letting both arms slump to his sides and with his knees sagging, Maloney rocked like a hobbyhorse before he reeled around and, deciding upon the softest spot on the floor, picked it out and collapsed on top of it.

The referee counted him out while O'Connor, with a look over his shoulder at the raving Scandrel, left the ring with rapidity and made a wild dash for the nearest exit!

SOME fifteen minutes after that I made a way to the cellar dressing rooms and discovered the curtain on the joke drama was slowly falling in O'Connor's chamber. There, in addition to the boiling Ottie and O'Connor was Miss Beatrice Black and a stout, red-faced gentleman who wore a plug hat, a diamond scarfpin, two gold teeth and a walrus mustache that failed utterly to disguise the fact that he was no other than Barry Black, the wealthy real-estate-loving bookmaker, himself.

"Don't be picking on me," O'Connor was whining when I stopped, looked and listened. "It ain't my fault that I sold you out, fellar. Blame it on *her*!"

He indicated the chilly Bea and Barry Black stepped forward, chuckling.

"No, blame it on *me*! When I discovered that Perry Austin, one of my hand-book men, had taken five hundred bucks in at big odds on Maloney to win I got ahold of Cincinnati Stuyvesant, had a little

gabfest with him and reframed the bout. It wasn't at all difficult. Maloney promised to do a fadeout for an additional twenty-five dollars while my daughter bribed O'Connor the other morning at Barry Court with that fake stock you stuck her with and——"

"*Fake stock?*" O'Connor giggled. "Don't kid yourself. I've got an uncle who knows more about the market than the boy who invented tickers. He give me two cases of genuine Scotch for the thousand shares of Stretchless Rubber and already the stock is up twenty points——"

"You've got an uncle?" Scandrel mumbled witlessly.

O'Connor nodded.

"Yeah—but I ain't seen him in years. I run into him the other morning when you took me down to work with you. The name is Reuben Schmuckie, so maybe you've heard of him before, eh? Well, Uncle Rube had quite a lot to say when he heard I was working for you and——"

Five minutes exactly after that Ottie drew me aside in the corridor, mopped his brow and tapped me on the shoulder.

"Listen, Joe. Do me a favor. I—er—asked Mary—little Miss White—to meet me upstairs so that I could take her out to celebrate at one of these here Staten Island lobster palaces. Er—just slip around to the front door and tell her that you can't find me nowhere while I leave by the back——"

Another story by Mr. Montanye in the next number.



STILL TALKING.

Recent investigations, it seems, have involved congressmen in every sort of trouble except throat trouble.

A COMMON MISTAKE.

Many a woman thinks she has reformed a man when, as a matter of fact, she has merely revamped him.

LOSING TACTICS.

No man can win a political race by spending all his time jockeying for position.

THE INTERESTING POINT.

The public debt will be an absorbing campaign issue only when the people realize that the private citizen has to pay it.



Scrambled Heroes

By Holman Day

Author of "When 'Temperment' Came to Baldknob," "The War of the Wrong Pig," Etc.

The North Woods kill a romance to make another.

DAY after day, Eloise had been going around in circles; night after night, for that matter!

If she had possessed a spoonful of brains she would have been dizzy. But her head was absolutely empty. She was connected with motion pictures.

Wait, wait! Please wait! This is not another of those banal slams at the much-abused artistes of the films.

Eloise was crouched in the middle of a canoe, clutching desperately the gunwales. The canoe was afloat in the great eddy below Hockamock Falls. Her face was beautiful in spite of a strained expression—with eyes wide set in fright.

Alone in that canoe she had been flung through the white-water hell of Hockamock and that experience would account for the expression she wore. But after a few days of torpid circling in the slow carrousel of the flotsam of the pool below the falls it would have been entirely natural if the frozen horror had melted down into something nearly approaching resignation. However, Eloise was not able to change her expression; she was obliged

to register permanent terror; she was a motion-picture dummy. She had been fashioned with meticulous attention to detail to represent the heroine in the North Woods drama, "When Woman Dares." The heroine in the picture, by the way, was not named Eloise.

Behind the creation of Eloise and the selection of her name were a few facts not without interest.

Briglett, technical director of the De Forest Productions, was a fanatic regarding details; artistic verisimilitude was his bug. Repeatedly he had lost jobs with big productions because he allowed his fad to run away with him. The producers spent money foolishly enough, goodness knows, but they were not willing to let Briglett be a perfect dampfool.

Having been kicked out of his last job with a concern that had all kinds of money, he fell a long way and hired with the De Forest Productions, a company making outdoor pictures on a shoe string and using mostly the sets which the god of nature provided.

However, in the painstaking creation of

Eloise the finicky Briglett had the hearty and whimsically humorous coöperation of Director-leading-man Edgar de Forest himself.

An assistant camera man, summoned to location in the remote region of Hockamock in order that two machines might shoot certain touchy water stuff, brought in a copy of a New York Sunday newspaper.

Director de Forest appropriated the society section. He had no particular interest in any other kind of reading. He always studied himself in the nearest mirror after looking at the pictures of society beauties. In the mush printed about them he took the same interest that most of his fellows took in the sports news.

Actor de Forest's sole sporting proclivity was directed toward the possible capture of an heiress. He believed in using the asset of good looks in something else than the uncertain picture game. He was over forty years old and was finding it mighty hard to stick to his lie that he had not yet turned thirty. The trouble in his case, he reflected sourly, was his inability to get any nearer to an heiress than her picture in the society news.

Now, at last, he perceived a possible opportunity.

It was suggested by something on the printed page.

Before he settled himself to read he glanced carelessly over the top of the page and beheld Miss Adail Astair; but she did not suggest any opportunity to Hero de Forest, the orb of whose universe was himself; moreover, his powers of divination were distinctly limited. He remained impassive when Miss Astair smiled, even though there was a hint of approval in the smile.

Director-leading-man de Forest was careful to avoid too familiar contact with extras. And Miss Astair was an extra-extra, added after the company had arrived in the woods. She had come alone into the motion-picture camp, gaitered, knickered and astride a fine specimen of the horse kind.

She declined to furnish any information

about herself—except the name. She laughed frankly when she gave out the ridiculously romantic sobriquet. Director de Forest had scowled; he did not relish the idea of anybody making fun of motion-picture people; the choice of such a name suggested irony. But Miss Astair was a handsome girl of the athletic type and she soon ceased to be a joke when she found an opportunity to double for the heroine in long-shot scenes where a girl in the woods really needed to do something beside pose and look pretty.

Miss Astair was unmistakably a woods girl. She could ride, shoot, swim and paddle a canoe—and one day she beat all the love-making notions out of a simpering actor with the handle of her riding crop.

AS for De Forest, after that exhibition, professional hauteur was helped out measurably by his misgivings in regard to what Miss Astair might do even in the case of a presumptuous leading man. Moreover, his pursuit was concerned only with heiresses. He gave Miss Astair a curt nod and returned to the newspaper page.

He sat in the shade of a spruce tree, brushed away at clouds of pestiferous, biting black flies and noted the news that Miss Eloise Damaren, daughter of the financial magnate, Aaron Damaren, was accompanying her father and friends on a trip into the North Woods. The society writer, as usual, had elaborated this hint of the expedition into a sappy statement that Miss Damaren was turning her back on shams, frivolities and social trammels and was seeking the truer things of life in the honesty of the great woods. There was a hint of a broken engagement or, at any rate, disillusionment in the case of one who had failed to come up to her ideas of what a Great Love should be.

It was intimated that Miss Damaren, brilliant, intense in her emotions, scorning pecuniary conventions and hating golden shackles, was wondering what might be the manner of men in the great open spaces, in the domain where a man was a man—and so on and so forth.

Mr. de Forest, reading, felt consider-

ably drawn to Miss Damaren. The two of them seemed to be on common ground. She talked, providing she had said what was written as her statements, like a string of motion-picture titles. She looked directly into his eyes from the newspaper page and he beamed back at her.

Briglett came along and flopped down beside the director. "I've got to get to work on that shoot-the-falls dummy, Ed! Seeing it's only a long scenic shot I suppose it'll be straw stuffing in a meal bag, to match along with other items on our cost sheet!" Briglett never did try to keep the sarcasm out of his tones whenever he mentioned the cost sheet.

De Forest slowly removed his gaze from the picture; the gaze seemed to be plastered there; the effect of looking away was like peeling off an invisible poultice. Then he tapped his finger on the page and passed the paper over to Briglett. "How near can you come to copying that with your plastic stuff, do you suppose?"

"I can make a dead ringer, of course! You're talking to an artist, Ed, remember that, even if I haven't been able to do myself justice on this tin-knocker job up here! What's the deep-laid plot?" He showed quick interest.

But the vapid De Forest had no plot. A sudden whim had taken possession of him, that was all. He had a hankering to see what impression Miss Eloise Damaren would make on him in some guise approaching the actual flesh; her features molded into true form from the flat roto-gravure and tinted with the hues natural to youth and beauty.

"Then if she looks like something really worth going after," reflected the self-complacent heiress seeker, "I may be inclined to hunt her up, wherever she makes camp, and take a chance. The hero part in 'A Woods Wooing' wouldn't be a bad rôle for me!"

To Briglett he said, "It's only a little notion of mine, Brig. It'll be worth the trouble if something that looks like the real thing going through the falls helps me get over more grief and horror in my close-ups. Go to it!"

Briglett did, with enthusiasm, and achieved Eloise. He gave the name to the dummy and everybody in the company adopted it without knowing the source of the inspiration or asking whether Eloise was entitled to any last name.

Eloise was securely lashed to the thwarts of a condemned canoe which had been patched and repainted. She went down through the torrent of Hockamock and kept right side up as if she were anxious to preserve herself for further work in the films after all the careful effort which had gone into her creation. But her zeal was unrewarded; she suffered the lot of so many aspirants in the cinema field; she never got another chance in the movies.

Hero de Forest rescued the real heroine for the close-ups. Eloise was abandoned and began her melancholy cruise around and around in the great eddy. Nobody took the trouble to bring down a boat and break through the barrier of flotsam and salvage her or set the canoe into the thrust of the current which would carry her down the flood. Eloise, after doing her stuff, was not worth bothering with.

De Forest, peering at her under his palm, opined that close inspection would reveal that her color had run under the beating of the spume. He had fallen quite in love with Eloise's face when she was fresh from the hands of her Maker. De Forest felt that he had a sensitive nature and he did not like to have his illusions tampered with. He had made up his mind to seek contact in the woods with the real Miss Damaren, if he could accomplish it. He must prevail in the woods or never; he had striven too often and vainly in the cities to thrust himself into the magic circle that surrounds an heiress in society.

He let it be known to woods wayfarers that he would welcome any hints as to the whereabouts of the Damaren party.

II.

THERE was some ground for the society writer's slush about Miss Damaren; the gossip of an incautious tattler had supplied a hint for the guesswork. It

hardly need be said that Miss Damaren was not talking for the newspapers, although she did express her sentiments to Doctor Harley Masterson in flaming speech, and afterward reiterated the opinions to certain intimates.

The situation resolved itself into a succession of interesting interviews à la duet, starting with Aaron Damaren and Doctor Harley Masterson.

Banker Damaren reversed the usual procedure by which the lover goes formally to see papa. The papa beat the lover to it in seeking an interview.

The modern banker proclaims as his principal tenet that he puts character above mere collateral in dealing with clients. Damaren was on familiar ground when he dealt with Doctor Masterson in that fashion. The financier was frank, amiable and appealing.

"I know you love my daughter in a most high-minded way, doctor. You're an admirable young man. No doubt Eloise loves you—at present. But you're a practicing psychoanalyst as well as a physician, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you're especially well qualified to diagnose the mental and emotional qualities of young women in these hity-tity, high-strung days. Speaking frankly, as a professional man, not as her lover, don't you find Eloise rather ready to fly off at tangents under provocation?"

"She is temperamental—yes!"

"Doctor, I shall be grieved to the depths of my soul if my plans for her marriage are upset. She knows my views. I shall take no harsh means to prevent your marriage to her; fathers do not lock daughters up in these days. But the fact that you and she do get married will not convert me. Never! I shall continue in grieved disapproval. She shall be made aware of my state of mind constantly. Blood is thicker than the wine of the wedding feast, my dear doctor. My girl will turn to her own, after the flush of first love, and she'll be mighty sorry."

Banker Damaren was dealing with a man of honor, discernment, good sense

and decency—and was fully aware of the fact.

"Doctor Masterson, considering Eloise's nature, as you must understand it, can you look ahead and predict permanent success for such a marriage? A man with your character, as I know it, banks on the stability of his home; if there's a rift he will look through that rift into hell.

"I have explained my attitude. I shall not change it under any circumstances. I hope you don't think I'm acting in a merely selfish way to gain my own ends. I'm cautiously building for her future of contentment. Ultimately her real comfort will come from her comprehension that, as an only child, she has pleased her father. That's all, my dear doctor! Think it over."

And in spite of his great love for the girl Doctor Masterson, in thinking it over, simply could not get away from his professional attitude of thought in a psychological case.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later he went to Miss Eloise Damaren. It was duet Number Two in the succession of interviews. It promptly became stormy. Miss Damaren furnished all the elements of the tempest; the lightning of flaming resentment; the thunder of invective; the rain of tears. The lover had merely attempted to present to her the fruit of the ponderings developed from the seed sown by the father. Or, to change the metaphor, he tried to turn a page in the book of Love and show her the sober countenance of serious Hymen. But she insisted on flipping back the page to view only the gay smile of uncalculating Cupid.

"Harley, my father sticks up one finger and you look cross-eyed at it and let it blot out sun, moon and stars!" She looked him up and down—his six feet of vigorous young manhood. "You're a coward!"

He endeavored to argue, using Banker Damaren's text and elaborating on it. She broke in.

"You're looking at me as if I were one of your mentally disordered patients!" It

was a sharp thrust; he was just then unable to dissociate the truer love, which anxiously sacrifices, from the ardent, though fleeting, impulse which urged him to take her and let the future go hang. He was conscious that he must be looking distinctly professional as he estimated her and pondered.

She advanced, her little fist vibrating, self-willed, impatient of restraint, intolerant of the repressions which had dominated damsels in the old days, a flushed, fiery, end-of-the-age rebel. "Damn a city-trained man, anyway!"

He wagged his head reprovingly; but the expletive did not startle him; he always advised patients to throw the shackles off repressions. She caustically reminded him of his professional attitude as to the venting of emotions, questioning his frown.

"I love you, Eloise!" he protested. "I don't mind how other girls curse; but I place you on a pedestal."

"And you have climbed up on your own! Stay there, and pose! Be a statue dedicated to social conventions, careful consideration of whatever any meddler advises, and always calculate whether the neighbors will be pleased when you select a wife! Harley, I'm going out and find some man who isn't trammled. My father eloped with my mother. They both bragged about it as long as she lived. And now, when she isn't here to take him down a peg, he stands up and preaches about cautious consideration!"

"He's an old bluff about sentiment. But he wants to tie me up with J. Warren Boone's money so the combined capital can swing big deals. He's willing to pawn me so that he can hold a mortgage on Russia or Timbaktu or some other busted nation. I refuse to be laid in a vault as collateral."

He could not keep from rebuke. "You're impetuously off with an old love all too suddenly, it seems to me, Eloise, dear! Honestly, I've been wondering whether I could depend on you if I should adopt this 'True love won and the world well lost' policy."

"Isn't it worth trying? But no! There's no room for doubts in love. We would be everlastingly arguing. I won't marry J. Warren Boone. I'm going to look for a man who will plunge into love without making the picture you do—standing there and shivering on the brink. I'll show you, Harley Masterson!"

There was more talk after that, but her declaration practically ended the interview.

Psychologist though he was, Doctor Masterson found it hard work to analyze his own state of mind when he went away and took thought. He was not sure whether he was a true hero or a blooming idiot.

Interview Number Three gave a new slant to affairs.

Mrs. Arlen Doane, though not particularly weighty in the matter of cogent reasoning, tipped the scale decisively and definitely; it bumped hard on the utter-fool side. She was one of the doctor's patients and a close friend of the lovers.

"You have been telling me all about what's the matter with my mental processes, Doctor Harley Masterson! But after this you'd better stick to your surgery and medicines. I have a good mind to pass the word and ruin your psychology branch of practice. Where love is concerned you've got all the fool repressions that are laid down in the main text and attended to in the footnotes and the appendix.

"Eloise had to say only two words—and they were objections—to start her father with her off to the big woods. He thinks he is getting her away from you, in case you should change your mind. But what he is really doing in his folly is turning her loose in the outdoors to find that untrammled spirit of truly great and uncalculating love she keeps raving about.

"She is a fool, too, right now! You dropped out from under her and she doesn't know what's the matter with her! If ever a girl needed a guardian, she needs one right now! Her father? Why, Aaron Damaren at this time in his life knows less than a hippopotamus how to handle a

girl's heart affairs for her good. And he has taken along for a chaperon 'Silly Susan' Leduke—another result of the crafty Eloise's objections. Susan Leduke is so soft she'll sit down and fan away the mosquitoes while a woods hero makes love to Eloise."

"This is a damnable position I'm in!" raged the doctor.

"Yes! I don't blame you for being worried," placidly retorted Mrs. Doane. "Eloise has confided in me. She is simply furious in this new mood of hers. I wouldn't be a mite surprised to see her come back to town towing a timber jack, if he's tall and good looking and doesn't make love mechanically like we'd work out a stupid puzzle or something from an algebra book.

"Between father and chaperon, Eloise is headed straight toward trouble, or I'm no prophet! Furthermore, there'll be a goad to hurry her. Eloise guesses that J. Warren Boone will appear to them somewhere in the woods—some more of father's fool tactics. He is reversing everything in Eloise's case. He came to you before you had a chance to go to him, didn't he? Well, instead of absence making the heart grow fonder for you, he figures that Mr. Boone's propinquity in the lonely forest will melt a maid into the mold designed for her.

"Melt! Boone melt any girl? Harley, dear boy, she'll get as far away from that icicle as she can, and she'll run straight into the fire. If you're fool enough to give her up as a wife, at least you ought to be lover enough still to save that poor girl from her own folly in this upset of her emotions!"

One who had heard the arraignment and observed Doctor Masterson as he sat in agonized meditation after Mrs. Doane's departure, his fingers clutched into his crisp, tawny hair, would not have been much surprised by what he did later. He telephoned for a Pullman-berth reservation, hung his sign of "Out of Town" on his office door and hurried to his apartments with the lines of resolution etched deeply into his countenance.

III.

MISS ELOISE had guessed shrewdly in regard to the father's tactics.

J. Warren Boone did appear to the Damaren party in the Hockamock region where the guides had pitched camp for an indefinite stay. He had detoured and by coming down the river made the pretense of having been in the woods for some time on a trip of his own.

"Come up and be a man of the open," the father had counseled the suitor. "Eloise is going through some infernal fool notions about this motion-picture, sap-gag-story stuff about 'where men are men!' Dress the part, put on some swagger and hand her a line of talk. You'll have her all to yourself. Damme, if you don't make good after my trouble in coaxing her up here I may turn against you, too!"

Mr. Boone came down ostensibly from the wilds, sitting straight as a cob in the bow of a canoe which was paddled by Dawse Corson, a disgusted guide who had encountered furtive jibes along the way from other river wayfarers. Mr. Boone had brought a big trunk into the woods and it loomed in the middle of the canoe, almost as big and fully as incongruous as a meeting house.

When Boone straddled ashore at the Damaren landing place, wholly absorbed in shouting his cheery greetings, acting out surprise at meeting old friends, he managed to upset the unstable canoe and dumped the guide into the shoal water. A young chap, one of the Damaren guides, contrived to snap a photograph of the event to serve as a permanent record for ironical purposes; he was chased away into the woods by the rancorous Boone servitor who left to others the task of salvaging the trunk.

The aspect of the new arrival produced something like the effect of a hurrah in the hush of a sylvan solitude. His new yellow high boots shrieked an actual obligato for the metaphorical noise of the rest of his costume. He bent low and kissed the hand which Miss Damaren reached to him; her dudgeon was over-

coming her sense of a hostess' courtesy; she did not rise from her hammock chair.

"Boone, who'n'ell picked out that rig for you?" raged Damaren as soon as the two were closeted along with a bottle of Scotch.

"I left it all to the tailor. He knows his business," stated the imperturbable Boone. "I have six more woods suits in my trunk. I am sure to hit Eloise's fancy."

"Hit? You have stunned her! No man can make up to a girl when she finds him ridiculous!"

"On the contrary, I'm sure I'm quite all right in apparel," insisted Boone complacently. "It's well enough for you to be slouching around up here in these old duds, but for me—I have a captious young lady to impress by dressing the part."

"I will act the part, too! If she feels a fancy for men of the open I'll try to please her. I think I'll go out and shoot a deer or a bear, or something."

"It's close time on game—and nobody can find a bear by tramping through the woods," snarled Damaren. "Damn it, Boone, you look all artificial! That girl of mine is hunting around for something real. She confides in Miss Leduke, and it's all reported to me, of course."

"I'm afraid of what Eloise will do, Boone! The girls in her set are all rebels these days. Thank God, she has developed a first-class disgust for that Masterson! But unless she is handled right she'll be flying off to some other extreme. I'm worried! I had no trouble in getting the better of Masterson. But somebody else may not be so much of a gentleman."

The conference in progress in Miss Eloise's camp revealed that the daughter had a perfect understanding with the chaperon, even though the latter's sincerity as an agent of the father might be questioned.

"We have dad nicely worried—there's no doubt about that, Suky! Suppose we start him guessing! You may tell him that I find Warren Boone perfectly stunning, now that he is in the woods. But I'm disgusted with the woods—and that's

between us! Where are all these wonderful men we read about and see in the pictures? I've come across nobody who shows any real spirit except that queer-looking guide of Boone's who went chasing one of our men off into the woods, swearing horribly. He seemed so determined—and it looks as if he got what he went after!"

Corson came out of the forest which fringed the clearing, banged a camera against a tree and jumped on the thing when it fell to the ground.

Later, the young chap who had been pursued sneaked out and joined his fellows. "You've got to be mighty careful how you rasp Dawse Corson!" said old Zeck Tute, head guide. "He has crazy spells come on him every now and then. I hope you haven't started him off into one."

"I've heard of 'Crazy' Dawse, but I didn't know that was him," faltered the youngster. "I hove him the camera after he had run me up a tree—and I reckon I'm lucky to be shet of him so easy!"

"Where your real luck comes in, young feller, was when he didn't fall into one of his reg'lar loony fits and take you for the chap who run away with his wife. That's the only subject he's really crazy on!"

"Oh, that's what happened to make him crazy, hey?"

"Only it didn't ever happen, son! If it had, he wouldn't be specially crazy for wanting to ketch such a renegade. But Dawse never had no wife to be stole. He simply thinks he had, when he has his spells."

"Some day he'll flip onto his skew-angled idee when he's on a guiding trip—and he'll scare a city sport to death. That feller he brought down river must be even more of a greenhorn than he looks. Else he'd have found out more about Dawse before hiring him."

Corson, who had been plodding to and fro in a slow promenade at a little distance, came striding to the group; he was sullen, scowling and muttering. "Ye're talking about me!"

"Well, what of it?" snapped the testy

Tute. "You never ought to take a guiding job—and you know why!"

"I wisht I hadn't taken this one. I had to tigger-lug that damn fool's trunk down around Hockamock Falls. He's up here to tog out and pee-rade and perform in front of some woman, I'll bet ye!"

He looked away and squealed an oath. Boone had joined Eloise and once more kissed her hand gallantly. "There 'tis! See for yourselves! That's how the cussed city dudes primp and palaver so as to fool women. I had him sized in a minute. If he had looked the way of my wife to-day I'd have knifed him."

"Say, looka here, Dawsc, you never had no wife—and it's time for you to wake up. You get a brace on yourself if you're going to stay in this camp. If you're starting on another of your crazy whoops I'll run you over the ridge in front of a forty-five seventy."

"You come here by the reg'lar way from down the river, didn't ye?"

"Yes!"

"Well, what do you know about what's up the river? I see my wife paddling around in the eddy at the foot of Hockamock. What's she back here in this section for? She's follering a man. When I find out which one it is, then him and her—the two of 'em—better telefoam hell for rooms on the shady side."

Guide Tute tossed up his hands and walked away. "Off again! Gone again! And he has got a new slant this time! When a man begins to see things that ain't so and never was so, then trouble is on the skids and the taller grease is being heated."

Old Zeck stopped in his tracks and squinted at what his woodsman's sense told him was trouble actually operating. Mr. Boone, debarred from slaying game to show his forest prowess, had picked up a camp ax and was jauntily stalking a tree at the edge of the clearing.

The old guide yelled a warning and ran toward the amateur but was too late to prevent what he knew would happen. Boone made a few wild clips, the ax glanced off the "slyver" of the pine when

the bark had been penetrated, and then gashed through the yellow boot into the chopper's foot.

After Tute and a helper had bound the wound, it was evident that Boone was doomed to lead a sedentary life for some time.

Miss Damaren showed no kindly impulses as companion or nurse. She made up a face at her father when he suggested such duties.

"Tie myself up here with him? I should say not. I'm thanking Heaven for one piece of good luck; he can't tag me every time I start for a walk in the woods."

"You're running a risk, going into the woods alone—you two girls!"

"Oh, I feel quite reckless these days, my dear father!" she drawled. "One of the guides says that perfectly tame house cats grow half wild after they've been in the woods for a little while. My feline nature may be developing up here."

IV.

DIRECTOR DE FOREST did not go back to the city when the picture was finished and the company broke up and departed. He intended to stay and do some fishing, he said.

And fish he did—though he never touched a rod. He fished for whatever he could catch in the way of news about the Damaren party. Angling in the gossip flowing from a fire ranger, De Forest learned that the two young ladies of the party took long walks every day along the tote road to the Blaikie clearing and return.

Immediately De Forest went into conference with six men who were peeling poplar in the vicinity. He was on excellent terms with them though he had repeatedly attacked them single-handed and had beaten them senseless and piled them in a heap upon which he mounted as a victor. He had used them as picture extras on those occasions and the odds against him were only such as a movie actor regularly overcomes when he means to appear as a real hero.

In the latest enterprise which he planned—without the camera—he did not need to have a rehearsal. They knew just when to fall and how to feign insensibility and when to struggle up and skulk away in defeat.

He led them to the Blaikie clearing and masked them with handkerchiefs knotted about their chins, not so much in the way of disguise but to hide their uncontrollable hilarity in the stress of combat; they had spoiled many scenes, which required retakes because their untutored minds found picture faking the height of humor.

Therefore, when Miss Damaren and her chaperon were feasting on wild raspberries in the Blaikie clearing, they suddenly found themselves in the clutches of six savage bandits.

Their screams were answered. The hero came leaping to the rescue. He looked the part. He more than acted it! Though he carried two guns in his holster he disdained to waste cartridges. He attacked the miscreants with his fists, mixing it fearlessly.

There was a dizzying swirl of combat and the eyes of the women, filmed with terror, did not perceive the details. It was only apparent that the lone-handed champion was more than a match for his six antagonists. He felled them right and left. One or two lay motionless for a time. The others fought on, dropping one by one. When they scrambled to their feet he felled them again. Finally, they all crawled off through the bushes, rose and scuttled away.

The victor confronted Miss Damaren and swept her a low bow, his broad-brimmed hat in his hand. His victory against such numbers was transcendent enough, so her frantic thoughts ran, but his perfect poise after battle, his serene self-restraint in the moment of triumph and his deprecatory smile were the elements which swept her into the most profound admiration she had ever entertained for a man.

He broke in on her stammered gratitude. "I really am the one to feel most grateful—for this opportunity to serve. I

apologize, in the name of the honest woods, for your annoying mishap!"

Pretty good, that, reflected Mr. de Forest!

She gasped. She exalted him still higher when he belittled such an adventure. "But you saved us from being murdered, sir!"

His smile broadened. "I know all too well the breed of such rogues. They would have taken good care of you—holding you for ransom, only that! They may have had reason to think a ransom would be paid gladly."

"My father is Aaron Damaren, the banker. I am Eloise Damaren."

He bowed respectfully, but he did not seem to be impressed by the announced importance of the father. "I regret to say my knowledge of financiers is limited. But evidently those rascals took the trouble to inform themselves. My name, Miss Damaren, is Edgar de Forest—of the North Woods."

"Where knighthood is still alive!" she cried enthusiastically. She presented him to Miss Leduke and delightedly accepted his offer of escort.

"I'm afraid the forest aisles are closed to me after this," she lamented. "My father will keep me in camp—and the camp has become hateful. I have grown to love the peace of this clearing."

"I'll personally guarantee its safety from now on," he promised. "Please don't think me presumptuous in suggestion—but if I were you I wouldn't make Mr. Damaren uneasy and spoil his pleasure for the rest of his stay by telling him what happened to-day. To-morrow and other days, if you choose to come this way, I'll meet you on the road and accompany you and Miss Leduke to the clearing—standing your faithful sentinel, if I am permitted."

He was a bit aloof in manner and stilted tone, careful to avoid any appearance of taking any advantage of his start in her good graces; he had rehearsed his speeches and carefully confined himself to his rôle.

With warm alacrity she accepted his proffer.

He parted from them before they came in sight of the camp, gently declining her half-hearted invitation to join her in refreshments. She beamed her appreciation of an attitude which relieved her of embarrassment and helped to shield this charming meeting with the veil of romantic secrecy.

When they were alone Miss Eloise addressed her chaperon tragically. "At last I have found him—my true hero—my man!"

"But, good gracious, you don't know a thing about him, except that he's an awful savage fighter."

"I don't need to know any more than to see him—hear him talk!"

"But he didn't say much of anything while we walked along."

"His eyes talked for him! Now, Sukey, forget this foolish chaperon stuff! You're all for romance—and you know you are! Isn't my man perfectly marvelous?"

"Yes, he is!" declared Miss Leduke.

"I simply won't be able to act my natural self in camp with all this excitement raging round in me. When father calls you in for those famous reports—the daughter laughed scornfully—"you must play upon my growing recklessness. I have already given him a hint of it. It'll cover a multitude of emotions which he'll notice, I'm afraid."

"And, of course, you'll make it your first business to have the hero tell you all about himself!"

"Nothing of the sort! If he tries to tell me I'll shut him up. I've had too much of this realistic stuff, all my life. How much a man is worth, who his grandfather was, what business the man is in——" She tossed her arms above her head, as if throwing off trammels. "I'm in the big woods. I have found romance here. I'm going to drink my fill of it. I'm taking that wonderful man just as he stands, on his two feet—just himself! He's my true knight."

The chaperon wagged her head dubiously. "It's dangerous! But I don't much blame you, Eloise! I'm getting an awful kick out of it, myself!"

"Not a girl in my set has been married until the lawyers have gone over the property settlements and everything has been cut and dried. And every girl I know is miserable. You have said it, Sukey! There's such a kick!"

"If I'm making a mistake it's no more than what the other girls have done, after all the adding up of figures and dotting Is and crossing Ts. I'm having the grand satisfaction of the wonderful kick while making my mistake, at any rate!"

"Oh, he must be somebody important," acknowledged Miss Leduke. "You can see that plain enough! I hope for your sake he isn't hiding in the woods to get rid of a wife."

"I'd rather he were an escaped outlaw than a married man," declared Eloise with fire. "He's my wonder knight—and I won't allow the curtain to be drawn away from the beautiful mystery—not for the world!"

Therefore, with "woman in that humor wooed" Eloise was won before two days had passed. She consented to elope—taking along her chaperon. She thankfully surrendered all the details to her resourceful lover.

Mr. de Forest had been giving much thought to those details. The river was the sole waterway: elopers following that avenue would be promptly reported. On the other hand, elopers going out of the woods by the Telos tote road, sole artery of overland travel, might elude interested observers but would need a long start in order to arrange a marriage. Attention must be diverted from the fleeing Eloise!

"Folks make a lot of nasty cracks about Fate not running things for human beings," so ran Mr. de Forest's ponderings, as he planned. "But when Fate handed me that Sunday paper and put an idea for a dummy into my head, the old dame certainly had it well doped for me. Much obliged, Fate! I'll give 'em your Eloise to chase!"

Therefore, while he waited at the Blaikie clearing, with a driver and a buckboard, he commissioned one of the "popple-peelers" to go to the great eddy and

start the counterfeit Eloise down the current of the river.

Ten minutes after the agent had gone on his errand Mr. de Forest placed the real Eloise beside him on a buckboard's middle seat and started her, also, out of the monotonous eddy of a trammelled life. Miss Leduke sat on the rear seat—attentively chaperoning.

Mr. de Forest figured that at least two hours would elapse before the dummy would be swept past the Damaren camp. Below the camp the Screw-auger Falls rioted for a mile of twisted flood. There was no telling how long the attention of frantic searchers would be taken up by the task of combing the gorge.

The woodland knight had urged Miss Damaren to harp strenuously on her new mood of absolute recklessness during her last night in camp with her father. Such a preface would certainly lead to Damaren's shocked conviction that this recklessness had caused her to adventure on the river! It was callous disregard for the feelings of an anguished father—but De Forest had at last found his long-sought opportunity and kicked all scruples sky high.

V.

DOCTOR MASTERSON, not liking the cramped confinement of a canoe for his athletic legs, decided to tramp overland to the Hockamock region and did not bother with a guide. The Telos tote road was the only main avenue, and he could not miss the way, he was assured at the jumping-off place. He took his time, stopping nights at sporting camps.

On the third day he was on the last stage of his journey and had encountered nothing worth calling an adventure.

When he halted at Oxbow Flats, a camping site at the intersection of various trails, a girl rode into the clearing on horseback and dismounted to prepare her lunch while he was making rather poor shift with his tea pail and skillet over a fire which he had kindled in one of the little stone ovens.

After she got busy with her own equip-

ment she cast amused side glances. He was an amateur in woods tricks, he knew it, and was nervous under the eyes of one who was so manifestly wonted to outdoor life. He tipped over the tea pail and allowed his bacon to scorch while he was tinkering with the pail.

She laughed and called him over to her fire, with the unconventional camaraderie of the woods. "Bring your knapsack, sir! We'd better join drives."

He responded delightedly and became her cookee—a hewer of wood and a drawer of water from the near-by spring. They ate their lunch and sat for a time while he smoked his pipe, not bothering to give names or reveal identities. They dealt merely with the casuals of forest life and affairs. He found a wholesome maid, frank, a bit blunt in some of her opinions, wholly self-reliant.

From his city man's viewpoint he expressed a bit of wonderment because she was adventuring into the woods alone. Making little of the thing as adventure, she informed him with a bit of pride in woman's part in the new age's industries, that she was a scaler and timekeeper for certain scattered timber operations. She pointed to her calipers hanging from her saddlebow. "And I feel easier while ranging a hundred miles of woodland alone on my job, than I would in one of your city subways, sir. It's all very commonplace, very friendly, very peaceful here in the woods in these modern days."

Immediately, by action, he negated that calm assurance from her.

He leaped to his feet, gazed over her head and muttered curses. A buckboard was in sight, entering the clearing. On the middle seat he saw Eloise Damaren and a strange man, their arms about each other.

Masterson strode to meet the outfit.

Miss Damaren had been nervously pondering on possible mischances, but by no stretch of her imagination had she figured on such an incredible rencontre as this.

"Eloise, what in the devil's name does it mean?" Doctor Masterson demanded wrathfully.

The girl flung up her head, more imperiously rebellious than ever before, and retorted: "You have no right to put any questions to me!" She tightened her arm clasp on her knight of the forest and with the other hand held his arm about her.

Masterson flinched but he did not quit. "I've hurried up here to tell you I have come around to your way of thinking."

"You are too late, sir! I have found my real hero—my true lover. I have no interest in a calculating convert!"

Masterson turned his gaze upon this accepted lover, endeavoring to estimate him, trying his best to dismiss rivalry's flaming thoughts and judge of fitness out of professional knowledge of men's characteristics. He found an evasive quality in the stranger's demeanor.

"Who are you, sir?" he demanded. "What's your standing and your business? What are your intentions regarding this young lady?"

Eloise clapped her palm over her companion's mouth. "You shall not tell him! The dear secret is for me—only me!" She stormed at Masterson. "This is not one of your calculating, cautious, cheese-paring, conventional affairs! It is love which does not question. I have chosen this man—I have not allowed him to tell me who he is."

"Well, I'll be damned!" exploded the doctor. "Such being the case, your father hasn't sanctioned any such jump in the dark, I take it!"

"I haven't consulted my father! And most decidedly I'm not consulting you! How can you claim it's any of your business?"

"Perhaps it isn't—not now," admitted the doctor ruefully.

"Start along those horses," she commanded the driver. The man obeyed and the vehicle resumed its slow, jolting progress over the rough tote road.

Masterson paced beside the buckboard for a short distance, deep in thought, unable to frame more speech or to light upon any sensible plan. The girl was plunging into absolute folly, but what were his rights in the way of interference? He

sought aid from the chaperon. "Surely, you are not condoning this crazy thing, Miss Leduke!"

"I think it's a charming adventure—and that Eloise will be very happy!" declared the coconspirator. "You're showing atrocious taste, meddling with what doesn't concern you."

Doctor Masterson lifted his hat and bowed, halting till the party had passed on its way. The rebuke caused him to realize that he had been making a fool of himself. His pride was pricked.

When he turned and faced the girl of the woods he was considerably comforted by the sympathy and understanding which he found in her expression. But her face quickly hardened into grim resolution. She hurried to him so that her tense whisper might be heard by him alone.

"If you are interested in that girl—and I can see you are—you must get her away from that man. I know him. He's a movie actor—not that it's to his discredit. But I have heard him boast that sooner or later he'll catch an heiress. He is selfish and shallow—and no girl could be happy with him!"

There was no time for a discussion of the subject.

Masterson hurried in pursuit of the buckboard and the driver halted the horses, helped by the doctor who grabbed the reins.

"I'm not going to argue about my rights in this matter, Eloise! But if this man hasn't talked with your father about marriage he's a coward or a knave." He bored the lover with a fiery, challenging stare. De Forest remained in his seat.

Considering the provocation, Miss Damaran stared at her escort's display of equanimity with amazement. To be sure, she had found her hero self-restrained on a previous occasion, but this present, mute endurance of direct insult had the appearance of cowardice, and she was determined to have her knight of the woods show this city chap the best side of true manhood.

"For Heaven's sake, Edgar, assert yourself!" She set her hands against the lag-

gard champion and violently pushed him off the seat.

In the case of six combatants the hero had used only his fists, and made light of the conflict. But in this affair with a lone man from the city De Forest acted in a manner which shifted Eloise's mental state from utter amazement into something like bitter scorn. He pulled both of his guns and covered Masterson, muttering vengeful threats and looking none too sure of himself in spite of his armament.

Masterson yelled a sharp command and got the eyes of his antagonist. The psychoanalyst whipped the hero, using only blazing eyes and a scornful tongue. "Why, you cheap faker, you wouldn't dare to shoot a man even if those guns were loaded!"

The doctor marched straight to the actor, yanked the weapons away and threw them far into the bushes. Then Masterson satisfied his rancor in quite human fashion, according to the masculine impulse. He cuffed De Forest in hearty style, grabbed him, whirled him about and kicked him along the tote road.

Promptly the doctor came back and ordered the driver to turn the buckboard around. The driver recognized a real master and obeyed.

Masterson mounted beside Eloise when she tried to leap from the seat. He held her firmly and paid no attention to her stormy protests.

"I love that man—I shall keep on loving him. I love him all the more because he has suffered for my sake. He was too much of a gentleman to descend to your vulgar level of fisticuffs! Do you think you're winning me back by acting like this?"

"I'm not trying to win you back," he retorted brutally. "My trip into these woods is a bigger success than I had dreamed it would be in the way of straightening out my ideas. I'm sorry to find you still twisted!"

"Miss Damaren, I'm handling you merely as a psychopathic patient and I'd deserve to be discredited as a practitioner

if I did not return you into the hands of your father, to be put under proper restraint till you recover. If you don't stop that screaming I'll be obliged to bandage your mouth!"

The woods girl, packing her kit into her haversack, exchanged glances with Masterson when the buckboard rolled past. She gave him a look in which sympathy and wonderment were mingled; he gave her a wry and deprecatory smile.

"I cannot leave my patient," he said. "If you're going by way of the Anderson camps will you be kind enough to leave my knapsack there? I'll be coming along very soon."

She nodded a promise. He looked back from the turn of the road. She stood watching the buckboard out of sight.

The knight of the forest had disappeared.

VI.

MASTERSON, arriving at the Damaren camp with his browbeaten party, found one man holding the fort alone. This was Mr. Boone, who could not walk. When he beheld Miss Damaren he could not talk. His mouth stayed propped open as well as his eyes, and out of the eyes tears streamed.

"We thought you had gone over the falls—that Screwdriver or Gimlet place, whatever they call it. We got a glimpse of the canoe—there was a girl in it—she looked like you, Eloise! Your poor father was frantic. He ran down the river road. They've all gone to rescue you."

"I seem to be quite safe, don't I? Furthermore, I haven't the least idea what you're talking about. I haven't been near the river to-day." Her manner was haughty—her tone chilly. She walked away with Miss Leduke and the door of a camp was slammed significantly.

Doctor Masterson found no head nor tail to Boone's ravings about the canoe which supposedly had carried Eloise to her death in the gorge. Only one fact stuck out clearly—the frenzied father and all the guides had gone racing to the rescue. To stop that pursuit—to carry

news which would relieve Damaren from his agony of despair—that was the duty which clamored, and the doctor went to it on the run.

He heard men shouting to each other down in the gorge when he arrived there. But he was more concerned by a sound off at one side in the woods; unmistakably somebody was in trouble. The sound was a combination of squeak and bleat. He trailed it and came upon Damaren tied to a tree while in front of him a queer-looking man mowed and gibbered.

"Masterson, thank God! Kill that man! He has gouged and hammered me! He'll murder me!"

"Keep off!" raved Dawse Corson. "I've spotted the right one at last! When my wife went past in that canoe he was the first to howl blue murder about his darling. He was the first to start chasing her! Now I've got him—and he's got to suffer. On your way, stranger!"

"This infernal lunatic accuses me of stealing his wife," bellowed the banker. "As if I haven't enough horror in me already—losing my Eloise! You know what has happened, don't you, Masterson?"

"Your daughter is perfectly safe at the camp, Mr. Damaren. I had the great pleasure of escorting her back from a little stroll she was taking with Miss Leduke. I just heard Eloise assure Mr. Boone that she had not been near the river to-day."

"But I saw her with my own eyes in a canoe—flying past—her hair streaming in the wind."

"Lunacy seems to be raging in this section right now," said the doctor. He turned his attention to Corson, who had picked up a cudgel. Masterson dodged a vicious swing, closed in, downed the attacker and tied the man's hands behind him with a belt stripped from the waist of Corson's trousers.

"He evidently needs keepers," averred the doctor, releasing the banker. "We'll call in the men from the gorge and have them attend to him."

"You're a savior!" protested Damaren. "I owe my life to you. And the news

you have brought about my girl! The effect on me is just the same as if you had saved her from death."

The doctor saw it coming! He could not repress a smile at the thought which flashed! The story-book stuff—the movie happy ending!

"I have changed my mind about you and Eloise," faltered the father. "In the last few minutes I've been through hell—and I think it was a punishment, just as the Almighty punished Pharaoh for his hard heart. If you and Eloise——"

"Just a moment, Mr. Damaren!" The two were walking away together. "I'll frankly confess I came up here for another talk with you and Eloise—away from the influences of the city. As it so happened I met your daughter before I reached camp—and we have had our talk. We have agreed in the most friendly manner to call it all off," he lied suavely. "The best of feelings all round, you understand! But we both are convinced that our temperaments are not congenial."

"I was really hoping you two could hit it off, Masterson! That's how much I have changed! At any rate, I want you to take Eloise in hand professionally. She needs to have her notions toned down."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Damaren. If you'll allow me to suggest, I urge you to give your daughter the closest attention from now on."

When the two arrived in camp, Eloise put her father resolutely away from her after she had indulged him in a short period of demonstration of his half-delirious joy. "I don't understand all the stir," she drawled. "I was in no danger, at any time."

She looked over her father's shoulder and challenged Masterson with her eyes.

"I was able to reassure Mr. Damaren quickly on that point," said the doctor. "Two young ladies could hardly be in a safer place than in the woodland aisle where I found you listening to the birds."

Eloise was holding some kind of a shot in reserve—he could see that!

She tilted back her head, narrowed her eyes and fired recklessly with all the am-

munition left in the magazine of her general resentment—trying to wound him, willing to suffer for herself the hurt of the recoil. "I am announcing my engagement to Mr. Boone!" She stepped to the hammock chair and patted the head of the beaming invalid. "We have discovered that we are very, very fond of each other."

"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!" chanted the father, leaping forward with glowing countenance and outstretched arms.

"Say," called the driver of the buckboard when the affair of congratulations had been in progress for some time, "where do I collect my pay for the use of this hitch to-day?"

Masterson broke his handclasp with Eloise as they stood studying each other—she defiant and hoping she had hurt him, he with amusement slyly shading his rather cynical gaze.

The doctor hurried to the buckboard, muttered to the driver a command to shut up, jumped into the middle seat and ordered him to drive away to the Anderson camps.

Damaren ran after the doctor, shouting protests, appeals and arguments in regard to staying on for a visit. But Masterson did not turn to look behind; he merely shook his hand over his head in parting salute.

VII.

NOT only did Doctor Masterson find his knapsack at the Anderson camps—but he found there the girl of the woods who surveyed him with a mixture of quizical interest and curiosity until he could restrain himself no longer.

It was boyish—almost inexcusable—babbling to a stranger; he knew it and was ashamed of his indiscretion as he talked, but he was unable to control his tongue while he strolled with her in slow circling of the Anderson clearing, waiting for supper. However, was there ever a man who did not yearn to unload his mind in stress of feelings when he found a sympathetic listener in a girl of sanity, good

sense and poise? Furthermore, the girl of the woods had gently pressed him for an explanation of the scene at Oxbow. He told all the story of his disillusionment.

After supper they walked again. And when that interview was near its finish, while he held the girl's hand at the door of the camp where she lodged, Masterson was sure that he had joined in the general lunacy which he had found rampant in the forest. He found himself eagerly proposing marriage.

She did not withdraw her hand from his. She smiled mischievously but tolerantly. "You astonish me, Doctor Masterson! You now are doing rashly what you have blamed with so much bitterness in the case of Miss Damaren. You do not know my name, my status or my connections."

"I don't care! I am a student of character. You are you—and that's enough for me!"

"You have spoken very disparagingly of picture actors, sir! I must confess that I have been a movie actress."

"I don't care!"

"I am quite alone in the world, without father or mother."

"That makes it all the easier. My experience with a father has been unpleasant, as I have told you."

"You have been much upset by what has happened to-day," she said gently. "After a night's sleep things may look different."

"Not where you are concerned!" he protested ardently. He raised her hand to his lips. "I ask your pardon for unloading all my troubles on you—but I couldn't help it!"

"You have complimented me by your confidences!" She opened her door, then turned to him. "It's only right to soothe one of your worries, Doctor Masterson. I have been in only one picture—in De Forest's company—just for a lark and to satisfy my curiosity. At any rate, it gave me some information which you found of value—so the experience wasn't wasted. Good night!"

HOST Anderson was sitting on the porch of the dining camp, smoking his pipe, when Masterson walked that way looking up at the stars and finding them glorious.

"Excuse me, sir," said Anderson, "but I can't help saying to you what I say to all that meets her—she's the handsomest and smartest girl in the State, ain't she?"

"You're right!" agreed the young man with enthusiasm, entirely willing, in his mood, to include two or three more States.

"And never putting on no airs with nobody, sir! Right on her job since old Robert died! Adding more to the millions he left."

Ice tossed on glowing embers—that was the effect of that casual remark! The chill of consternation replaced the fires of love!

"Seeing her pick out my smallest camp to sleep in, and eating as she does, all common with the folks," maundered Anderson, "a stranger would find it hard to believe how Miss Ruth Sturges owns this township of timber—the ground where you're standing, sir—and three other townships as well—all them thousands of acres!"

"Nobody would guess it," faltered Masterson, stumbling away to his lodging.

In the morning she came to him where he paced, his limbs twitching, his countenance gloomy.

Another North Woods story by Mr. Day in the next issue.

"Is it possible you did not sleep well in these blessed woods?" she inquired anxiously.

"I don't think I slept a wink! Your prediction about the morning has come true, Miss Sturges! You see I know your name at last! And things do look different. I have been a presumptuous fool. I thought you were poor—working for your living. I thought——"

Her quaint bubbling of laughter checked him. She surely was making fun of his silly audacity of the night before—and he did not blame her.

"I have had some thoughts of my own, Doctor Masterson! I was occupied with them for a long time in the night. I'm sure you're too kind to allow me to struggle through another night with an unsettled matter. I don't ask you to repeat your proposal of marriage. That's out of the way! I have accepted it! But—you know what I mean—I want you to say again what you said last evening, 'You are you—and that's enough!' And for goodness' sake, don't continue to look like a mourner at a funeral!"

There was a long pause, during which he steadied his legs and blinked the blur out of his eyes! The staring camp windows were all about them. "Ruth, dear, will you allow me to say it over behind that row of little spruces?"

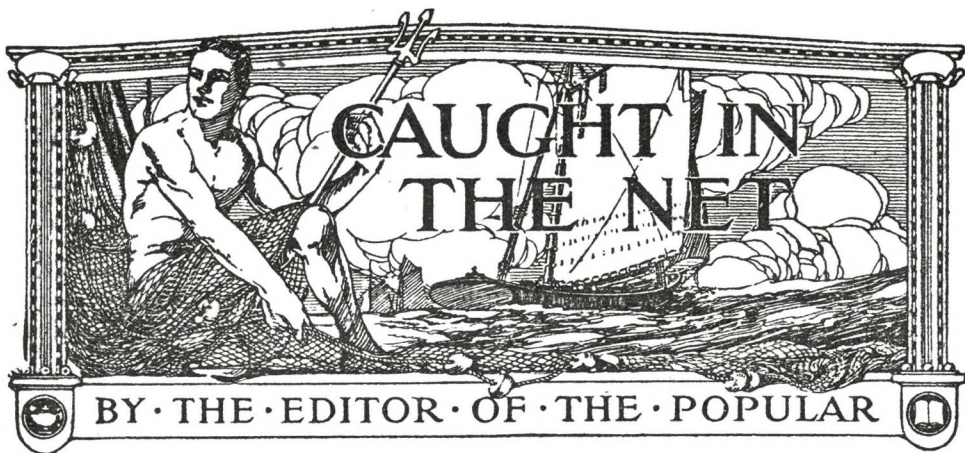
THE BIG MAN

WHEN Major General Leonard Wood, now governor general of the Philippines, was stationed in Washington as chief of staff of the army, he made a trip early one morning to Fort Myer, Virginia, which is just across the Potomac from the capital city. Soon after going into the main entrance of the fort, Wood passed a private soldier, who was evidently a green recruit, sitting on a rock by the roadside puffing voluminous smoke from a cigarette.

Seeing that the new man had failed to salute him, the general, a stickler for discipline, turned back and, tapping him on the shoulder, asked in a kindly tone: "My friend, don't you know you're required to stand at attention and salute all officers who pass you?"

"Yes, sir," the recruit answered, "but I haven't seen any yet."

"Well, of course," commented Wood, "I'm only a mere general, but one of these days, my boy, a second lieutenant will come along and reprimand you very roughly for your lack of observation."



THE AIR FOR AIRMEN

IN his last official report as retiring chief of staff of the army General Pershing discussed the potentialities of the aerial arm and recommended a policy of expansion for the army air service. Considering the lamentable state in which that service finds itself—unable because of lack of men and equipment fully to discharge its mission in any respect—he could scarcely have done less. He also touched on the much-debated question of giving the air forces of the country complete autonomy under a distinct department of the government. And he concluded that the day is not yet for allowing our air troops the freedom of the air. They are still, as General Pershing sees it, to be considered one of the auxiliary arms—the eyes of the army, but not the army of the air.

To the contrarywise, Representative Curry of California recently introduced a bill in Congress calling for the amalgamation of the three government air services—army, navy, and air mail—and their reorganization into a single and sovereign air force headed by a member of the president's cabinet. Representative Curry does not agree with General Pershing that the air above the earth is the province of the army, and the air above the seas the domain of the navy. He believes that the air belongs to the men and the ships of the air. And he has discovered what every airman has known for a long time—that the preparation of America's future in the air must be given over to airmen if it is ever to achieve its logical destiny.

For the time being General Pershing's thesis will prevail. America is not yet in full sympathy with that very small fraction of its sons who are pioneering the high blue wastes. But in the end Mr. Curry's viewpoint will be indorsed. It is inevitable that airmen will come into their own. Because nobody else can do the work they do and realize the dreams they dream. The air service will not always be an auxiliary arm. It differs from the auxiliary services of both navy and army in a fundamental principle. *It does not operate in the same medium as the other branches of the organization—sea or land as the case may be—to which it is attached.* Artillery, cavalry, the engineers, all move upon the face of the earth, along with the rest of the army. Submarines, destroyers, all move in the same water with the battleship of the line. But the airplane works in an element of its own where none of the rest can follow. This is its unique quality. This is the quality that puts it out of the auxiliary and into the capital class.

WHAT EVERYBODY KNOWS

OTTO H. KAHN is a man qualified—if anybody is—to instruct in success. From stamp lick in the mailing room of a commercial house he has risen, rank by rank, to eminence. He has more fingers on his hands than peers in the field where he has flourished. He is a rich man, a great banker, a distinguished intellect, and an honored citizen. He should know what matter makes success, for he has produced a masterpiece in that line. Accordingly anything he has to say on the subject is of peculiar interest, and should be of high value.

But what does he say? Has he anything new to add to the lexicon of enterprise?

Recently he told a gathering of graduate collegians, on the threshold of business, what ingredients he considered essential in the making of success. If his ambitious auditors hoped that some new and magic formula would issue from the lips of the master they were disappointed. He revealed nothing. For there could be nothing to reveal. His advice was a confirmation of precepts that wise men have advertised and advocated since the beginning of wisdom.

Success is a science whose principles—fixed by the experience of ages in the laboratory of life—are more rigid than the laws of mathematics. Nobody can add anything to what is already known on the subject. And all the knowledge extant is accessible. There is no secret, esoteric priesthood of success, no mystic inner shrine, no holy of holies from which all but the favored initiate are excluded. The ritual of success is an open book.

But between reading and believing it there is a mighty difference. The laws of success are simple and few, but they are stern and exacting. We forever try to evade and abridge them. So, while men who have approached heart's desire by well-trodden paths have nothing new to tell us, they need not fear to waste their breath in futile repetition. The truths that are good for our souls are mostly homely, and we are prone to turn from them in favor of such fair fallacies as, for instance, the famous Royal Road, until the reiterated exhortations of unquestionable authorities persuade us to face about. Mr. Kahn's audience heard only what everybody knows—but cannot too often be reminded of.

HUMOR IN CLOTHES

THE kind of fun I like," said Oliver Cromwell once, "is the harmless joke of sitting on my hat."

It is safe to say that most people enjoy such a comic catastrophe, only it is funnier when some one else sits on his hat. And speaking of hats and their relation to laughter, Doctor C. W. Kimmins of the University of London, recently announced before the British Association for the Advancement of Science that the hat was the funniest of all articles of apparel. For many years Doctor Kimmins has been engaged upon a statistical study of the whys and wherefores of laughter in children, and his conclusion about the preëminence of the hat in clothes humor includes both the juvenile and adult mind.

However that may be, slapstick comedians are fully aware of the humor power residing in hats, and without them a large percentage of our vaudeville performers would be at a loss to maintain popular favor. We recall seeing a headliner who, if deprived of his hat, would have ranked below mediocre. His patter was moss grown, his personality nil, but the hat he wore and his manipulation of it were irresistible. There was no other article of clothing that we could think of which could have lent itself to such high risibility.

Shoes, we are told, come close to hats in arousing laughter: that is, they are ahead of coats, trousers, shirts, collars, gloves, et cetera. Give a man a fantastic or ridiculous pair of shoes and merely in the simple act of walking he can evoke much merriment.

Charlie Chaplin was wise when he developed his hat and his shoes in his screen characterization.

THE FLYING FINN

FOR those followers of sport whose interest lies in the realm of the spiked shoe, the New Year starts auspiciously with the visit to the United States of Paavo Nurmi, the record-breaking Finnish distance runner whose victories in four Olympic races last summer gave him an honored place in international sport's hall of fame.

Usually the chief element of interest in the invasion of our shores by an athlete of great foreign reputation is in seeing how he will fare in competition with our native sons. But in the visit of Nurmi that interest is somewhat lacking. Unless some runner of superlative quality has developed overnight—which is decidedly unlikely, for the making of a distance star is a business both long and painful—there probably is no man in America who can hope to run stride for stride with the flying Finn.

In spite of this lack of competition the visit of Nurmi is intensely interesting to track fans. The fact that he was able to chip over two seconds off Norman Taber's nine-year-old record for the mile is quite enough to make the athletic public anxious to see him in action; and his achievement in winning four Olympic first places, an achievement never surpassed and equaled only once—by Alvin Kraenzlein, the American who won four events at Paris in 1900—will make his competitive appearances in America interesting to many people who are not regular followers of the track game.

Already Nurmi's visit has aroused interest in distance running—a branch of sport in which we are decidedly weak. To most Americans the interest in a foot race is all in one spot—the finish line. This being so, they prefer that the finish should come a few seconds, or at most a very few minutes, after the start. The plodding, heartbreaking grind of a distance race appeals neither to competitors nor spectators—unless a superathlete like Nurmi lends color to the event. But distance races will remain on the Olympic program, and in view of the increasing athletic strength of our rivals in international sport it would be well for our athletic authorities to do what they can to encourage this form of competition.



POPULAR TOPICS

Now that the wireless wizards have succeeded in sending some highly complimentary photographs of prominent people across the Atlantic via radio, members of the ear-phone fraternity are talking forward to the day when it will be possible for a good dry American citizen to sit at his radio at home and watch his friends who are abroad knocking chips off the eighteenth amendment—provided he wants to make himself unhappy.

Television is the name they give this newest horror of science. Professor A. M. Low and other wireless experts say that within ten years it will be an accomplished fact and that radio users will be able to see things that are happening thousands of miles away.

To our mind, this will be an improvement over the present order of things that will be a lot more bother than it will be worth.

For one thing, it will spoil the myth of the overworked business man. To be on the safe side he will have to do his prevaricating in disguise.

Mr. Jones, for instance, is fond of telling his wife how hard he works. Mrs. Jones says nothing, but decides to check up on hubby through his business day, via television. This is what she sees:

Mr. Jones leaves the house in a great hurry at eight o'clock. At eight ten he boards his train for a fifty-minute ride to the city. On the train he plays bridge, improving the shining moments while he is dummy by absorbing the Mutt-and-Jeff cartoon. At nine o'clock he leaves the train with every evidence of extreme haste, and Mrs. Jones begins to believe that it was all true, after all. At nine five he meets his old friend Harry Whyso on the street, and they engage in a twenty-minute argument about the latest baseball trade. At nine thirty Mr. Jones enters his favorite cigar store and spends ten minutes in conversation with the clerk. At nine fifty-five Mr. Jones rushes into his office, casts his eagle eye around to make sure that all his hirelings are on the job, slams open his desk, lights a cigar, and spends the next half hour in reading those less important parts of the paper that he didn't have time for on the train. At half past ten Mr. Jones goes out to wash his hands, becomes involved in a political argument in the office next to his own, and does not get back to his desk until eleven fifteen. He then attacks his morning mail with every evidence of extreme industry, skimming rapidly through most of the letters, but spending ten minutes chuckling over one with a Paris postmark that ends with: "Wish you were here, Jonesy, old hoss. You're missing the time of your life. Bill."

MR. JONES then calls his stenographer and prepares to answer his letters. Just then his friend Jack Humdizz blows in and invites him to lunch. Mr. Jones protests that he is busy, but allows himself to be persuaded.

At the Girder Benders' Club—Mr. Humdizz is in the girder-bending line—various acquaintances are encountered, and the luncheon party doesn't break up until two thirty. Having eaten too much, and having drunk too much of a liquid served in teacups after a whispered conversation with Gus, the steward, Mr. Jones and Mr. Humdizz decide that they will be able to do much better work during the afternoon if they play fifty points of billiards before returning to their offices.

Reaching his place of business at three forty-five in a tearing hurry, Mr. Jones again attacks his correspondence—Mrs. Jones still televisioning from home. After dictating three letters of twenty-five words each, Mr. Jones is interrupted by the office boy, who brings the card of Mr. George V. Goodmark. Mr. Jones and Mr. Goodmark having been classmates at old Insertnameof away back in 1902, Mr. Jones dismisses his stenographer and greets Mr. Goodmark with boisterous affection. Conversation regarding old times fills the gap until four fifty, when the steno brings Mr. Jones his three letters to sign. This business cleared away, Mr. Goodmark suggests dinner and the "Scandals." Mr. Jones agrees, and calls up Mrs. Jones, explaining with deep disappointment that an important business conference will keep him in town until the midnight train—Mr. Goodmark meanwhile making encouraging gestures.

At one ten, composing his face to an expression of fatigue and burdensome responsibility, Mr. Jones enters his home. In the hall his wife greets him—and then, as they used to say when Napoleon was a second lieutenant, the battle is joined.

There's one thing about these new inventions—you want to be able to take them, and make your wife leave them alone.

Temescal



By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "The Ridin' Kid from Powder River," "Sunny Mateel," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

If you have missed the earlier chapters of this story there is no reason why you should deny yourself a great narrative. The story of Temescal is not dependent for its romantic spell upon any one of its incidents. To know the gallant, the stern, the whimsical Temescal at any point in his mysterious career is to fall victim to his personality. If you have read your Dumas you will see in this fascinating character a composite of the four heroes of "The Three Musketeers." In Temescal is the impulsive audacity of a D'Artagnan; the wife of an Aramis; the dignity and honor of an Athos, and the strength of a Porthos. He is a man born ages after his time. He should have lived in the days of romance when men cut and thrust their way to eminence with the cold steel. Like Cyrano de Bergerac, he makes it his study—no matter what befalls—always to be admirable. Mexico is the scene of his adventures. He speaks the language of that distressful land with grace and fluency. Yet sometimes he swears strange gringo oaths, and occasionally there falls from his lips a phrase of flawless English. In Cabazon, where he first appeared, he was a man of mystery, for he had gold—and nothing to account for its possession. Cabazon knew him for a time and then he disappeared, being driven thence by a military gentleman of no great consequence whose army he had refused to join. Shortly afterward that gentleman—a colonel—disappeared. The colonel's aid, Lieutenant Juan Sepulveda, also disappeared. The colonel had died violently, and Temescal had appropriated his aid. Together they rode—Lieutenant Juan and his new master—to further adventure. When they entered Santuario they were three. A baby girl, rescued from the smoking ruins of a devastated ranch, accompanied them, cradled in the arms of Temescal. When they left Santuario they were two again, and the baby, Temescalita as they had christened her, was lodged—the lodging well paid by Temescal in broad pieces of shining gold—with an ample mother who had so many niñas of her own that one more or less could make no difference. They left Santuario in great haste. For Temescal was not the sole possessor of his name. There was another Temescal, a bandit—the Thief of Cabazon—who visited the place at an inconvenient time. And inasmuch as Temescal, the wicked, had many retainers at his back, while Temescal, the righteous, had but one, the way of wisdom was clear. It led to the desert, which makes nothing of what a man may call himself.

(A Five-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER IX.

LA LUZ.

MEANWHILE the desert sun, with brazen disregard for all such atoms as Temescal and Juan, for peons chopping wood or hoeing beans, or lawless horsemen

journeying here and there across the spacious reaches of the land, for horses, cattle, sheep and stolid burros, drew up majestically from the far, misty rim of the world and swept the long morning shadows back toward the concrete shapes from which they had ventured.

There are those who would find it difficult to associate the silvery tinkling of a tiny bell with sheep. And these—not the sheep, but the others—will declare scathingly that sheep are not belled in old Mexico. And *por Dios!* they are correct. Were Temescal and Juan then at fault? Possibly Temescal and Juan knew that it is the custom for shepherds to bell the pack burro, not altogether that he may be found easily—doubtless some of “the others” have jumped at this conclusion—but that Señor Burro in his nightly meanderings may discourage by bell, if not by book and candle, his untimely assimilation by Señor Mountain Lion, Señor Black Panther or Señor Lynx.

Far up the barranca there was shade, and toward it plodded Temescal and Juan, the latter with a carbine in the hollow of his arm, not anticipating hostility, but prepared for it. Presently the barranca grew narrow, the footing rough. Temescal climbed its southern bank, following the tracks of their horses.

Juan delayed to kneel and drink from the shallow stream. Temescal kept on across the almost level bench land which sloped gently toward the foothills. Arriving at a tree which cast welcome shade for one whose eyes suffered from the white glare of the sun, Temescal raised his hat and bowed.

“I greet you, my friend,” he said whimsically to the tree. “You offer me rest without disturbing your household arrangements, and hospitality without effusiveness. I accept both, and may no woodsman’s ax sever you from your gracious mother, the earth.”

And straightway Temescal sat down, pulled off his boots, which, though a perfect fit under normal conditions, pinched a little in the heat. With his broad back against the friendly tree, he leisurely surveyed the pleasant bench land, reaches of brown earth marked here and there by spots of shade similar to that which he enjoyed. A painter would have delighted in sketching him thus, Temescal’s immobility that of one who contemplates a pleasant theme, yet does not slouch but takes his

ease with dignity. His shirt was open at the throat, disclosing and concealing the arch of his broad chest. His ungloved hands rested lightly on his thighs, brown hands both firm and supple—Temescal was rather vain of his hands. And above all—most naturally—his fine head, neither small nor large, well modeled in that happy balance which denotes both physical strength and intelligence; his face that of one who knows life yet is not burdened with the knowledge—the features positive, yet not exaggerated. Even Temescal’s swollen eyelids could not altogether mask the benign tolerance with which he viewed all objects, either animate or inanimate—at the moment he was observing a brilliant-hued lizard sunning himself on a smooth, gray boulder—and one would not have imagined that Temescal’s eyes were a dark blue, although at times they seemed black, especially when he was in anger.

A PARAGON, then? Indeed no! There are a thousand men who *look* like him, yet there was, and is, only one Temescal. Beside him lay his broad, heavy sombrero, his shapely boots and his gloves. A band of scarlet beneath the lizard’s throat recalled poignantly the gown she had worn when he had last seen her gracing the Vallderes Gardens in the City of Mexico. The band of scarlet, the costume, or perhaps the name, “*Mariquita*,” breathed rather than spoken, must have suggested song. In any event, Temescal raised his chin, filled his great chest with a breath which stretched his shirt tight across it. Then effortlessly, and with that splendid control of the diaphragm which is most essential to sustained melody, he poured out upon the listening air the resonant and spirited measures of a fine old drinking song. Viewing him, listening to him, one might say that he did not sing, but, rather, allowed the song to depart of itself, joyously, as a golden bird sweeps from a cañon rim, circles, drops fearlessly, rises with scarce the movement of a pinion, and floats across the morning blue, delicately poised, yet vigorous and elate.

"I am almost in voice again," declared Temescal, wiping his forehead with his silken handkerchief. "And, Juan, I suppose, is gazing at his reflection in the stream. But what of that, when one may borrow from an endless succession of to-morrows?"

Temescal became pensive, noticeable in chest. In fact, Temescal always became that he allowed his chin to rest on his pensive when he thought of Mariquita. He gazed at his hands, curiously, almost as though they were strangers to him. A slight, shuffling sound awakened him to realities. He glanced up.

A girl, leading two horses, was coming toward him among the distant trees. It was evident that she had not seen him, yet she glanced about as though looking for some one. Nearer she came, and Temescal observed that she was barefooted, walking with the upright grace of one to whom the word "corset" was a conundrum, and "shoes" a vague ideal. "Lis-some," he called her, speaking, of course, to himself.

Nearer still, he saw that she was clothed in a single garment of rough blue material, sleeveless, and belted at the waist by a twist of faded scarlet cloth. Perhaps, because the girl was so intent upon looking everywhere, she did not look anywhere in particular, assuredly not in Temescal's direction. She was now within some twenty yards of him, near enough for him to observe that her skin was of a warm, golden-olive hue, and her young face good to look upon.

The led horses suddenly decided they would go no farther. They stopped. The girl coaxed and tugged. As she tugged and swayed, Temescal thought of a blue flower teased by the wind.

The horses, desert bred and alert for the unexpected, had seen Temescal seated beneath the tree. Facing the horses, the girl tugged gently at the lead rope and again talked to them. Walking backward lithely, she coaxed and tugged, laughing when the horses stopped and pricked their ears, each ear like a discovering finger pointing toward that of which she seemed so utterly

unaware. Temescal rose. "A most unexpected——"

The girl turned swiftly, her brown eyes startled, questioning.

"Pleasure," continued Temescal, bowing with ceremony. "Do not fear me, pretty one."

Her eyes, less startled now, still questioning, absorbed each detail of Temescal, leisurely, from his stockinged feet to his uncovered head. Never, in all her sixteen years had she seen such a man, and her gaze told him so. And Temescal—never in his variegated career had he felt so absolutely self-conscious, embarrassed, 'so woefully—as he confessed later—in need of an overcoat. It was as though she saw all that he had been, all that he was, and all that he hoped to be, in that brief few seconds as she stood, loosely holding the lead ropes of the horses, not conscious of herself, where she was, or of the white sunlight touching with an iridescent sheen her glossy black hair. Temescal cleared his throat. The girl's expression changed to one of quiet wonder. "It was you, then, who sang?" she questioned.

"None other."

"Will you sing again? I heard you—and my father heard you. He is Alejandro, the shepherd. We live up there," and the girl gestured the foothills. "Are these your horses?"

"Thank you for finding them—yes. I — You will pardon me while I pull on my boots. Frankly, I was not expecting you. My companion, Juan, it was he for whom I waited." Temescal sat down and drew on his boots, rose and stamped his feet into them, put on his sombrero, threw his serape across his shoulder, and again cleared his throat. "May I ask how far it is to your home, señorita?"

"Yes," said the girl with unsophisticated directness. She seemed puzzled by Temescal's manner of questioning.

Temescal smiled. "How far is it?"

"But a mile, no?"

"And you heard me sing?"

"Yes. Your horses came to our place—Portrero Los Pinos. My father fed them a little corn. When he heard you sing he

said they must be your horses. He is very wise."

Temescal nodded. "I am in voice again! It is a good half mile to your hills. Pardon me, señorita, but I do not know your name."

"I am Alejandro's daughter, La Luz."

"The Light! But I might have known it! The light that drowns upon golden grapes in the sun! At last I behold one unspoiled, utterly primitive, and beautiful! Child, you have——"

The dark eyes of La Luz flashed. "I am not a child. I am a woman!"

"Indeed? That makes a difference."

La Luz smiled—and Temescal's heart skipped a beat. "I am a woman," declared La Luz. "Does not Alejandro call me his Little Woman? Is it not I who cook for him and mend his clothes and help him with the sheep and make him laugh when he would be sad?"

"This Alejandro is your husband, then?"

"But no. He is my father."

"Good! And I—I am," Temescal bowed, "merely Temescal."

"Temescal!" exclaimed La Luz, her eyes growing big. Without another word she turned and ran toward the hills, disappearing among the farther trees like a flash of brown light. Temescal's black eyebrows drew together. "What the devil——" he exclaimed, when Juan, climbing the bank of the arroyo diverted Temescal's attention in another direction.

Sheepishly Juan approached. "I delayed, señor, because I found, when I stooped to drink, the imprint of a bare foot in the sand along the stream. I followed the tracks far up the arroyo. I would have gone farther, were it not that I heard a noise, like the calling of a calf, coming from this direction. Not knowing the cause—and indeed we are in strange country—I came back. I see you have found our horses."

"The calling of a calf, you said? And the tracks of bare feet? If your eyes were not so clear I would suspect a recurrence of your fever. Yes, I have secured our horses, as you see. I have not been lis-

tening to the 'calling of a calf,' as you say, nor have I been following the tracks of bare feet. I have been engaged in far more important pursuits. In fact I have learned much in the past half hour.

"Yes, I have secured our horses—and now you may return with them to our recent camp and saddle them, and fetch them up to the home of Alejandro, the shepherd, who lives in the hills a half mile west of here. He is expecting us.

"You stare as though I were daft. I am not. I am simply definite. Perhaps this Alejandro the shepherd has a daughter. *Quién sabe?* It might be that she has a name. I would be willing to venture that her name is La Luz. Also that she is ravishing, in a wild and untutored sort of way. I would even go so far as to assert that she is a peach. But I forget that you are unfamiliar with the American language. Fetch our saddles. I will proceed toward the shepherd's home, where you will find me."

"But, señor, how——"

"Precisely! Exactly as you have said! No doubt about it whatever! *I* have not been following the tracks of bare feet." And Temescal gestured round about as though calling the earth to witness that he had been engaged in no such vapid endeavor.

The gesturing was unfortunate in that it directed Juan's literal gaze to the earth, whereon, not two paces away he saw the imprint, repeated, of the bare feet of La Luz—although he could not know it had been La Luz. "It is quite plain," declared Juan, "that you have not. It is also quite plain that you had no need to. The barefooted one came to you."

"That is as it may be," and Temescal again gestured airily. "My breakfast has grown cold. How is yours?"

"Of a truth, I am empty, though I drank much."

"Absolutely! Water does not run uphill."

LEAVING Juan to digest this original remark, Temescal swung round, and blandly ignoring the covertly amused gaze

of his companion, followed as best he could across brown earth and pebbles, rock and meadow grass, the tracks of bare feet. For some strange reason he seemed elated. It was as though he trod upon sunbeams in his arcadian pilgrimage. The pinch of hunger was forgotten—for the moment. He admitted as much to himself when the pinch of hunger again recalled the fact that he had but recently forgotten it. He strode as one upon a sprightly mission of discovery. He hummed an aria, and flirted the end of his serape across his shoulder.

Coming upon a beaten path that evidently led from the stream below to the house of Alejandro, the shepherd, he hesitated. The footprints of La Luz, the Golden One—so he named her to himself—were no longer visible. The glamour of the quest faded as he realized that La Luz had not taken kindly to the name "Temescal."

"Had I said 'Mephistopheles' she could not have fled more swiftly," he soliloquized. "Moreover, this Alejandro may be a tough customer, a wary old ram with a hard head. However, I am not exactly veal, myself."

Temescal proceeded with dignity, yet with caution, his eyes active beneath an untroubled brow. The path wound on and up among the trees. Abruptly he came upon a great, circular meadow of close-cropped green—bright sunlight all about, and in the middle of the meadow a solitary piñon tree. Across the meadow, sealed against the brown rock of the hill as though it were a part of the hill itself, was a long, low, flat-roofed adobe, near it a stake corral, and a high pole platform heaped with golden stalks of corn. A milk-white burro nosed about the doorway. Above, a sky of turquoise, edged round about with the sharp spires of dusky pines. "This is good!" murmured Temescal, sighing heartily. "And yet—La Luz is better."

Aware that he who comes singing, be it in broad daylight or in the impenetrable dark, disarms suspicion and allays chance fears, Temescal strode across the

green meadow—following, as it were, the sonorous cadence of his song. And Temescal was almost a chorus in his single person.

Timing both song and his arrival, he paused a few yards from the open doorway of the low, brown house. Drawing a cigarette from his pocket, he lighted it and flicked the match away. He did not need to strike an attitude. In fact the attitude preceded the inspiration. The thing was done before the mind—a comparatively slow agent—had acquiesced. The milk-white burro stared profoundly at Temescal, then delivered himself of a series of chest tones that reëchoed roundly in the caverns of the hills.

"A little off key in the upper register, perhaps," observed Temescal, "yet a worthy effort."

"That is not the man," said some one within the house. And immediately an appalling figure blocked the doorway—the travesty of a man, scarce four feet in height; a twisted dwarf whose arms reached almost to the ground. The thin, bowed legs were clad in buckskin such as the southern vaqueros wear. A faded brown shirt hung loosely over the sunken chest. The man was hatless, his hair snow white and as fine as spun silk, his face—and Temescal stared—was as startling as his figure in that it was like the face of a Spanish nobleman, the features finely wrought, æsthetic, delicate, and the eyes like the eyes of an affectionate dog. "I am Alejandro, the shepherd," he said in a gentle voice.

"I am Temescal—or, if unwelcome in this place, bearing such a name, I have another."

"Not Temescal of Cabazon? No!" The shepherd shook his head. "You are another."

"No, not of Cabazon, although I know the place."

"Not Temescal of Cabazon," reiterated the shepherd positively. "I told my daughter you were not that man."

"Your pardon, Señor Alejandro. I am curious. What if I were the Temescal you mention?"

"Then you would not be welcome to my house. But I keep you in the sun. Enter."

"My gratitude, señor! But no. I have a companion, who is coming with our horses which you so kindly fed. He was once a soldier. He is dear to me because he is young, faithful, and stubborn, not to mention the fact that he saved my life recently. He is a handsome fellow, and withal, modest.

"I lay no claim to the latter distinction, myself." Temescal's eyes twinkled, though his manner was gravely sincere. "In fact, I think well of myself, as you doubtless have observed. In other words, I am not a hypocrite. I lie, when occasion demands, and I flatter myself that I lie convincingly. I have exchanged horses, in extreme necessity, without tarrying to determine the fairness of the exchange. I have also exchanged shots under pressure, with gentlemen who would have confessed that I was a trifle more accurate, had they lived.

"Once I commandeered an automobile with which to cross the border. However, it was a very small car with a short name, and I quickly abandoned it, although I am considered a good rider. I have known many vicissitudes—and few women. I pay as I go. Yet that I may enter your home under no misapprehension—"

Alejandro the shepherd, interrupted with a gesture toward his doorway. "But why speak of all this? My door is open."

"Oh," said Temescal airily, "merely that you may know what sort of man my companion Juan is associated with. If, after what I have said, you will accept him as a guest, I shall be glad to likewise accept your hospitality."

"You must be thirsty," declared Alejandro. "Daughter!"

La Luz came to the doorway, a certain girlish defiance in her face as she saw Temescal, possibly because she was ashamed of having run away from him.

"Some wine for our guest," and Alejandro smiled.

La Luz came, bearing in her brown hands a huge, carved wooden cup, brim-

ming with the purple vintage of the Cordovas. It was a generous cup, an alluring cup, a mammoth cup—a beaker! The cool wine was edged with silvery bubbles that danced in the sun. Temescal took the cup from La Luz and held it aloft.

"From such a flagon old Rabelais himself might have quaffed," he exclaimed dramatically.

"But that is a Spanish cup—not French," declared the shepherd.

"You know Rabelais? And here, in this arcadian hermitage? Glorious! Señor Alejandro, I drink to your"—Temescal was about to say "discernment" when he caught a glance from La Luz—"daughter." Which goes to show—nothing.

Temescal's throat was dry, and the emptiness of hunger nagged him. In one slow, fragrant and soul-satisfying draft he emptied the cup, turned it and watched a few bright, purple drops trickle to the ground. He gave the flagon to La Luz, who gazed upon him wonderingly.

"I am new-fashioned on the spot!" declared Temescal. "Scarce a minute ago I was but a whimpering shadow of a man, a dry pod rattling in the wind, an empty purse, a husk, a brittle gourd; and now I am——" He hesitated for the right word.

"Not Rabelais?" suggested the shepherd.

Temescal coughed. "Well, no! Simply, your guest. That would be my companion Juan, with the horses. No need to wait longer. That sip of wine has made me peculiarly hungry."

Temescal stepped aside, indicating that La Luz should enter. Alejandro, the shepherd, stepped aside—and Temescal entered. Alejandro followed Temescal's broad back through the doorway.

"He drinks as he talks, in a large way," soliloquized the shepherd. "If he eats as he drinks! Still, we have enough—though it is simple food." And the misshapen little shepherd smiled benignly, because he had a guest, and such a guest. Alejandro loved all human beings in the world, save one.

CHAPTER X.

THE FRIENDLY HOUSE OF ALEJANDRO.

WITHIN the long, low-roofed and friendly house, Temescal paused, turned and in a sweeping glance in which was commingled appraisal and admiration satisfied himself that this was no ordinary shepherd's hovel, but the home of a man who though poor, appreciated cleanliness and order.

The earthen floor, hard, smooth and good to feel beneath one's feet, was clean swept, as was the stone hearth of the deep and spacious fireplace. The walls were whitewashed and bare, save for a few essential decorations, such as the old Spanish clock which ticked, one might say, diffidently; a beautifully wrought silver crucifix, a hat and coat upon a peg near the doorway, and a shelf accommodating Alejandro's few choice books. The vegas, or roof beams, were of unhewn native timber of the hills. The deeply recessed windows were high and small, affording sufficient light without glare; enhancing, by restful shadows in the corners of the room, the effect of intimacy and seclusion. The chairs were home fashioned, and substantial, their seats of tanned cowhide, and the backs of hide thongs laced. The table was of hewn timber, the top neatly joined and polished by much cleaning. The doors were of split timber, hinged upon heavy wooden pins. About the fireplace were the cooking pots and pans.

La Luz, behind a huge iron pot that simmered and gurgled alluringly, fetched from its fragrant depths pieces of steaming meat and broth so poignantly appetizing that Temescal, in spite of himself, cleared his throat as one might delicately warn his guests at table that he was about to say grace. And there was bread, coarse, wholesome, and crisp-crustured bread which would offer that resistance essential to a thorough enjoyment of its flavor, and promote sound digestion.

La Luz disappeared, returning swiftly with a bowl of goat's milk. Temescal bowed as he accepted the seat proffered by Alejandro, and dropping his serape

across the chair back, seated himself in a hearty and solid fashion, like one who has never quarreled with his digestion, but attacks that which is placed before him as a good swordsman engages in a friendly bout, lustily, yet never extending himself to his utmost.

Scarce had Temescal seated himself than he rose. "Your most excellent hospitality has put me at fault," he declared, sniffing audibly as the aroma of the steaming stew rose to his nostrils. "I must admit that I had forgotten that I had a companion, other than my hunger."

"But he serves you?" questioned Alejandro.

"Only as I serve him, my friend. You have placed food for him. I shall wait."

"But there is no need. You are a hungry man. Daughter, show the young man where he may put the horses."

Temescal shook his head as La Luz vanished through the sunlit doorway. "Now, indeed I shall wait!" he murmured. He visualized the meeting of Juan Sepulveda and La Luz—the handsome young soldier and the unsophisticated and primitively beautiful daughter of the hunchback shepherd.

"Juan comes, leading the horses," soliloquized Temescal. "His face is touched with a shade of weariness, which always appeals to women—when the weariness is in a young face." Temescal sat down again, but deliberately turned his chair away from the table. "He sees La Luz, and he grins like an idiot. But she does not think so. To her it is the smile of a young conqueror. La Luz offers to take the horses. They converse, chiefly with their eyes, confound it! They understand each other—oh yes! immediately. So do two kittens. Not until they have become cats do they realize that there are other cats in the world. They know nothing whatever of life"—it may be inferred that Temescal had in mind La Luz and Juan—"and yet they have much to tell each other. Meanwhile the sun moves on, nations rise and fall, babes are born and old men die, flowers bloom and fade—and my breakfast grows cold."

With a rather peevish gesture he drew and lighted a cigarette.

"You are distressed about something?" queried Alejandro, his gaze sympathetic. One became oblivious to the shepherd's deformity when looking at his face, or listening to his voice.

"Not at all!" declared Temescal. "In fact I was thinking of nothing more serious than two kittens in a basket."

"Is your young companion a favorite with the ladies?"

Temescal shrugged his shoulders—politely—and spread his hands—to cover the slight start that Alejandro's pertinent question had occasioned. "Oh, he does well enough, I suppose. Hardly through his own initiative, however. He is, as I said, modest. Yet one never can tell. I have known exceedingly modest young women who suddenly—ahem—changed their tactics, as it were. Is it far to the corral where our horses are to be kept?"

"It would not be far for either of us," said Alejandro, smiling quaintly. "But for those children——" And Alejandro gestured toward the meadow. Temescal rose slowly, sauntered to the fireplace and flicked into it the ashes of his cigarette. He strolled to the doorway, leisurely, as one might who is exceedingly curious and wishes to hide the fact. Juan and La Luz, hand in hand, laughing and chattering like linnets in a fig tree, sauntered across the meadow, each with disengaged hand leading one of the horses.

"Quite unnecessary!" observed Temescal.

"Yes," said Alejandro, "the horses would come of their own will, having been fed here."

"One would think that it were night, or that he were blind." Temescal gestured impatiently.

"Then, perhaps, I did well to send La Luz?"

"As for that," said Temescal, shrugging his shoulders, "you are her father."

The little shepherd nodded thoughtfully. He rose, and reaching out his long arm, touched Temescal's chest. "I believe that you and your companion are

honorable men," he said gravely. "My daughter has known but two men in her life—Pepito, who is now with the sheep, and myself. There have been occasional wayfarers like yourself, but none have tarried here. There is no road, nor other reason for their coming.

"Once each year I journey to Cordova. My daughter is a child, yet she is as a woman grown. When last in Cordova I purchased for her a knife, a little knife, yet keen. Sheathed, she carries it in her garter above her knee. I have told her she is to use it for but one purpose. I need not say more—knowing that you are fond of your young companion, who saved your life."

"I understand you quite well, my friend. And that we may not embarrass these two young persons I shall eat my breakfast."

A wan smile touched Alejandro's sensitive mouth. "Do the shadows of ancient poplars disturb the cooing of doves?"

Temescal, enjoying his first mouthful of breakfast, swallowed hastily. "Was that a quotation, or an inference, Señor Alejandro?"

"I have but few books."

"And evidently no almanac among them. However——" La Luz and Juan entered abruptly. Temescal forgot what he had been about to say. The dark eyes of La Luz were sparkling with animation. "See!" she exclaimed, catching hold of Juan's hand. "I have found a brother! This is Juan, who has seen great cities and many wonderful things. He has been a vaquero, a soldado—and he, too, can sing. Also, he has been wounded," and La Luz touched Juan's shoulder caressingly. "He says he will teach me to ride Señor Temescal's big horse. And he has taught me the words of a new song about a lady of Seville and her lover, who was also a soldado. May we not have the guitarra, my father—and you shall hear the new song?"

"As you wish, little one. Yet the young man may be hungry."

Temescal sat with his elbows on the table and the bowl of goat's milk between

his hands, in the act of drinking. He glared at Juan over the edge of the brown bowl. "The guitar, or breakfast?" queried Temescal.

"I think I can sing better after I have eaten a little," replied Juan.

"Possibly," muttered Temescal into the empty bowl.

So Juan drew up to the board, La Luz fetched another bowl of milk, and Temescal, pushing back his chair, stretched his legs out before him and lighted a cigarette. Alejandro, in the doorway, stood looking out upon the green meadow. Temescal seemed absorbed in contemplating the opposite wall.

"Why do you stare at me so strangely?" queried Juan, presently.

"Do I? Pardon me for my seeming abstraction. I was observing the antics of yonder fly on the window ledge. He is spinning about as though demented. Hear him buzz? Perhaps he thinks that he is singing."

"But no—it will rain," explained La Luz. "Each day it rains, a little.

"In the hills,—yes," observed Temescal. "And least, where it is needed most." He gestured in the direction of the desert from whence he had come.

"The desert is a bitter land," declared the shepherd, turning in the doorway.

"As for me—I love it!" Temescal spoke heartily. "The desert sifts the false from the true, the weak from the strong. Out there only he who is of iron may trespass and survive. And he who survives, may never return to the desert, yet he will never forget. Thenceforth he will reverence water, and green grass, and spreading trees, as you have here. Yet I have known such magic in the desert's changing hue, such mystery in its silence, such majesty in its solitude, that I have wished—foolishly perhaps—that I might enjoy the solace of my last sleep there with the ancient and unremembering years, until—well, until something happened. Something always does, doesn't it?" And Temescal shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands, politely.

La Luz, who had been dutifully clean-

ing the pots on the hearth, was gazing at Temescal, her head turned sidewise. She understood but little of his somewhat sentimental dissertation—goat's milk and wine, mixed, have inspired strange utterances—yet intuitively she realized the theme to be big in attempt if not in its actual utterance. Temescal was not unaware that La Luz was gazing at him, nor that Juan, surfeited with food, was dozing in his chair.

IT must be admitted that Temescal's swift descent to the practical was effective. He rose, thanked La Luz and her father for the repast, and taking up his serape and his sombrero, awakened Juan with a word. "If you will excuse us," he said, "we will step outside, where I may wash and bandage my companion's shoulder. I would not offend your eyes with an unhealed wound."

But Alejandro would not hear of their going outside. So La Luz fetched water, the shepherd fetched a piece of coarse, clean cloth from a curiously fashioned rawhide trunk, and La Luz held the basin while Temescal examined and cleansed the wounded shoulder.

"And now you will enjoy the siesta?" suggested Alejandro, the washing and bandaging having been attended to.

"But your eyes, señor! Surely they need attention?" And Juan related, briefly, the mischance which his companion had suffered.

"It is nothing," declared Temescal. "There are different qualities of light"—he allowed himself a glance at La Luz—"and I find the light of your home beneficent, Señor Alejandro."

"But yes, it is something!" declared Alejandro. "Will I get you some tallow to rub on your eyelids? I saw that they were inflamed, as I thought, from a sojourning in the desert sun. Here is my bed—"

"But no," interrupted Temescal. "Allow Juan to sleep here. As for me, I shall spread my serape on yonder sheepskins. I have slept well on a harder bed. However, if strangers should approach, espe-

cially horsemen, I shall consider it a kindness if you awaken me before they reach your portal."

"None shall disturb you," Alejandro assured him. "La Luz will soon be on her way to help Pepito bring in the sheep. But I shall be here in the doorway, with a book. Enjoy your siesta."

Straightway Temescal stretched out on the sheepskins, his head on his arm. Juan had scarce laid down when he was asleep. Temescal, however, did not adjust himself to slumber so readily.

La Luz, taking up a long staff from a corner near the fireplace, passed through the room swiftly, silently, turning her head to glance at the slumbering figure of Juan.

Alejandro, seated in his chair near the doorway, a book on his knee, gazed out across the green meadow. Finally Temescal's train of thought became uncoupled from the engine, as it were. "I will sleep," he said to himself. And Temescal slept.

The faint, silvery tinkling of a bell roused him. Alejandro still sat in the doorway. The bed which Juan had occupied, however, was empty. The angle of light from the western window told him that it was about five o'clock. Temescal enjoyed a yawn, flexed his arms, and shook his head to rid himself of the last, few, lingering shreds of slumber.

"You slept well?" queried Alejandro, turning his head.

"Excellently! I am a new man. Where is that rascal, Juan?"

"But an hour since, he left, saying that he would help Pepito and my daughter bring in the sheep."

"Hum! A most worthy ambition. How many sheep have you, señor?"

"I would have fifty, with the lambs—and perhaps twelve goats."

"Do you lose many—from lynx or cougar?"

"Once in a while a lamb is taken. Three I have lost since spring. And none since Pepito shot the cougar."

"Your Pepito is armed, then?"

"Yes. I purchased a gun for him, in

Cordova. I paid ten pounds of clean-washed wool for it."

TEMESCAL hummed a tune, striding up and down the long room, his head bowed, his hands clasped behind his back. Again he heard the tinkling of a bell. He paused and glanced through the doorway. Across the evening meadow came Juan leading the white burro, and astride the white burro was La Luz, sitting very straight, her shapely little head carried high and her hands out before her as though grasping the reins. Beyond rose the dark bulk of the pines, their tops touched with the golden fire of the descending sun.

"I see no sheep," declared Temescal. Alejandro rose and drew his chair back from the doorway.

"They are in the big corral, beyond the meadow." Kneeling before the fireplace he blew the embers aflame.

Temescal found the picture of Juan and La Luz interesting. He approved of the coloring, the setting, the figures in the middle foreground—a pastoral, "The Shepherdess and the Soldier."

"But may I not even laugh?" The words came clearly across the evening silence.

"Not while I am teaching you horsemanship!" said Juan. "If any one should laugh, it is I. See how you are gripping the beast's belly with your legs. You should carry your knee thus, forward, as I told you, and your heels down. That is better!"

"But not so comfortable," declared La Luz.

"That has nothing whatever to do with it!" Juan's tone was brusque. "You asked me to teach you—"

"But the white one is not a horse, anyway!" cried La Luz, and she leaped from the burro's back and ran toward the house. Her olive cheeks flushed, her eyes glowing, she greeted Temescal diffidently. Then, like a flash, she was at the hearth, helping her father prepare supper.

Juan, ordinarily equal to the occasion, seemed stupefied by the abrupt disappear-

ance of his erstwhile tractable pupil. He gazed about, scratched his head, then shrugging his shoulders, came marching toward the house, the white burro ambling along at his heels.

Temescal saluted his young companion cordially. "You found the sheep enjoying good health? That is well. Yet you seem perturbed. Does your head ache?"

"You wish me to say yes or no, that you may make a joke of it?"

"I can, in either case. Yet"—seriously—"does your shoulder trouble you?"

Juan shook his head.

Then, lightly: "Your heart, perhaps?"

"You are never serious, save to suit your own convenience," declared Juan. "Chance offering, I have something to tell you."

"As for that——" Temescal stepped down from the doorway and drew close to Juan.

"This Pepito—I have seen his face before," whispered Juan.

"Indeed? And naturally you don't like it as well as does La Luz, perhaps?"

"Not that. He is a homely and a sullen fellow. I questioned him, but he would not talk."

"So? About what did you question him?"

"About a dark arroyo, whose northern bank is covered with brush. I am not certain—yet——"

"Nor I," declared Temescal. "Say no more about this. I also have cast a hook into the stream." And straightway Temescal became pensive, or seemed to have become pensive, while Juan, to the contrary, shook off his depression like a dog coming up out of a river. He chatted with La Luz as she darted here and there, fetching bread and cheese, arranging the plates and bowls, patting out tortillas—while Alejandro squatted by the fire, occasionally thrusting a chunk of wood under the iron pot in which simmered goat's meat and vegetables, seasoned with chili and a clove of garlic.

Juan fetched in wood. Juan fetched water from the spring below the hillside. He even volunteered to milk the goat teth-

ered near the house, but La Luz would not let him.

Meanwhile Temescal took his ease in the doorway, smoking and enjoying the cool air, the long sunset shadow of the hill athwart the meadow, the pine tops touched with fading gold that drew slowly down behind the darkening hills. Yet the very inner Temescal, the soul of the man, was busy, as usual, contemplating imaginative sequences to the play. Juan had grown suddenly and suspiciously domestic, he reflected.

"It would seem that he would like to beat his sword into a plowshare—and the not-as-yet visible Pepito into a pulp. Or so I gathered from his expression. How quickly he drew from under his burden of apprehension when he found my shoulder ready to receive it! Yet who am I to sit in judgment on any man—save myself? They made a pleasing picture—she on the milk-white burro and Juan stalking along with military importance, until she hinted by a very nimble process that he was taking himself too seriously. There is something more to that young woman than good looks! How foolish of any one, including myself, to imagine that the untutored necessarily lack intelligence.

"Convention has not cast a film about the mind of La Luz; nor have high heels and stays destroyed the natural poise and balance of her wonderful body. Sophistication has not dulled her interest, even in the smallest task, which she attacks as though it were a novelty, yet with the deftness of habit. Nor is she self-conscious. Truly the sophisticated are the most self-conscious folk in the world, aware of themselves to the extent of adopting artificialities to conceal their thinness of skin. Hence I, Temescal, tough, inured to hazard and the angling thrusts of Chance, adopt a superlative insouciance that I may not weep at my own lack of moral courage. Doubtless, at the moment, I appear indifferent to what is going on about me, yet am I anything but that. Else would I rise and say to Alejandro, 'What manner of man is this Pepito, who tends your sheep? Is he an

honest man?' Truly that were the direct and honorable way.

"Yet I will not say it. Why? Because I fear the question might offend my host? He is too wise to take offense without first ascertaining the reason that inspired the question. Because I fear to disclose the reason? No. Because a healthy reason, unlike its sickly cousin 'excuse,' needs no protection from the sun. Because I fear Pepito the not-as-yet visible? Hardly that! Rather, it is because I dislike to appear rude, and ungrateful for hospitality. A conventional preference throttling a principle! Ridiculous! Surmising what I surmise, would the golden La Luz hesitate to speak? Not she!

"So, convention has made me a coward; sophistication has made me a panderer to convention and both have made me a hypocrite, self-conscious, and afraid to appear that which I am. So I sit here and allow these heavy thoughts to come home to roost, like a flock of importunate and suspicious crows, half afraid to alight in their habitual roosting place, while Juan, sprightly idiot, enjoys himself!"

Temescal rose and betook himself to the washing stone below the spring. Kneeling, he dashed the cold mountain water in his face, scrubbed his head, and rising swung his arms vigorously. He presented himself at the supper table, his face glowing, his eyes bright with good humor.

CHAPTER XI.

PEPITO.

LIEUTENANT JUAN SEPULVEDA assumed command in the matter of discourse, his efforts to entertain being directed chiefly toward La Luz. Yet when Temescal's sonorous "And so it was!" or "You speak the round truth, amigo!" answered Juan's appeal for confirmation of some strange and thrilling incident, the girl's dark eyes flashed from his story to the animated countenance of him who had sung "The Ballad of Marching Men."

Alejandro, who itched to converse with Temescal upon topics of more weight and

substance, ate sparingly and talked not at all. When La Luz had finally cleared away the supper dishes and placed a lighted candle upon the table, Alejandro emerged from his reflections.

"It is long since I enjoyed the companionship of an intelligent mind," he declared, his gaze upon Temescal. Juan fumbled for a fitting acknowledgment of the compliment, but Temescal shot the ball over the net.

"It is long since I have had the felicity of returning such a compliment," said Temescal. "Returned, because I hesitate to keep that which so obviously belongs to you."

"Let us share it, then," said Alejandro, dryly.

"Even so, I should still be in debt to your generosity, Señor Alejandro. Nor do I refer to the excellent supper which has put my hunger to sleep, yet has awakened my curiosity."

"About what, señor?"

"Your boy, Pepito. I hope our presence has not kept him from the table."

La Luz glanced up from her task of scrubbing the pots and dishes. "Pepito would not come in. He said he fell and cut his head on a rock, this morning. He would not let me see the cut. He said he was not hungry."

"I did not know of the accident. Call him in, my daughter."

"He will not come," declared La Luz. "He has gone to bed."

"Pepito is strange and sullen, at times," explained Alejandro. "Yet he is faithful. I have had him with me since he was ten years of age. His father and his mother were killed by bandidos. No doubt you recall the raid on Sandoval, eight years ago, señor. I have good reason to remember it. La Luz also had a mother until that time."

Temescal nodded thoughtfully. La Luz rose from before the hearth and shook back her hair. "Yes. And Pepito said he lost the carbine you bought for him in Sandoval."

"Lost it!" Alejandro frowned and puckered his lips. "Tut! Tut! And I paid

ten pounds of clean-washed wool for the gun."

Temescal shrugged his shoulders. "Do not let that annoy you, my friend. I shall consider it a favor if you will allow me to replace the lost weapon."

"But you must not rob yourself, señor!"

"Nor shall I. I have many guns at my command."

Juan, who had been staring at the candlelight, turned his head swiftly. So Don Ricardo Temescal had many guns at his command! Yet meeting Temescal's impassive gaze, Juan read no deeper than his own quick surmise. Old Alejandro watched them. "Eight years ago," he muttered. "He bears the same name, yet this is not the man. Alike in stature—the other was a beast. This one has a soul."

Temescal lighted a cigarillo and puffed out a great cloud of smoke. He brushed the smoke aside with a leisurely gesture. "Juan dreams at the candle," he remarked, smiling.

Alejandro's lips twitched. His huge hands gripped together. La Luz, standing by his chair, stooped and kissed his sunken cheek. "May we not have the guitarra, father?"

"I had forgotten. Here is the key."

Unlocking the long wooden chest near the fireplace, La Luz fetched the guitar, which she would have offered to Temescal, but he shook his head. "My companion knows a song that will please you. Being a soldier, he sings of love. I, being a lover, perversely sing of war."

La Luz questioned Temescal's seriousness with her fine dark eyes—his own serene, unreadable. She flushed prettily.

"But I will sing for you," volunteered Juan. "If I may have the guitarra——"

Alejandro smiled at Temescal. "You are fond of music, señor?"

"So much so that I fear it. To your song, young soldier!"

Juan twanged the strings, tinkled experimentally, turned the pegs. La Luz fetched a jarro of wine and two cups. Returning to the fireplace she took the huge carved flagon from its shelf and set it before Temescal. Temescal sighed heart-

ily. In spite of his refusal to sing, La Luz filled Temescal's flagon first. "And now," mused Temescal, "I know that she is a woman."

Leaning back in his chair, Juan crossed his legs and tilted his chin. He struck a chord. He sang of "The Lady of Seville," serenaded her, wooed her, and sent her soldado lover to war in six or seven fervidly sentimental stanzas.

Environment lent a peculiar charm to both song and singer. Yet all through the song the bright eyes of La Luz were turned toward Temescal. Unconsciously her face reflected his expression. Unaware that Juan, jealous for her applause, was watching her, La Luz echoed Temescal's "Excellent! Encore!" and asked Juan to sing another song.

"Or perhaps you will play the 'Dance of the Haymakers,'" suggested Alejandro, turning to Temescal. "I knew it well, when I was a boy. Times have changed. Then, young men would work in the fields all day, and in the evening, with naught else but the guitarra and love of music to inspire them, would dance the moon behind the hill."

"If I but knew the tune," said Juan.

"Why, even our Pepito knows it!" cried La Luz. "If I but whistle the tune he will throw his hat on the ground and dance until he is out of breath. Even when he is sullen I can make him laugh and dance like one gone mad."

"Your Pepito is fond of music?" queried Temescal.

"Else I should not have to lock the guitarra in the chest," replied Alejandro. "Once he stole it from the house. I found him in the forest sitting before the guitarra, which he had propped against a tree. Poor brainless one—he was talking to the guitarra, asking it to make music for him. The sheep had strayed. Pepito has strange moods."

"The saints guard him—and ourselves," said Temescal. He drained the flagon, and sat studying the quaint carving on its rim.

Juan, who felt that his song had not been a thorough success, got up and

strolled to the doorway. Alejandro engaged Temescal in a discussion of the times and the manners. Juan, beckoning La Luz to him, informed her that there was a moon in the sky. "There it is!" he said, pointing across the evening meadow. "There, above the trees."

"I cannot see through your head," laughed La Luz. So Juan politely stepped out, and, as it had been ordained from the first, they presently found themselves strolling across the green meadow, entranced by the fragrant stillness, the mystery of the stars, and the illusion that the magic of the night was but for themselves alone. A few slow steps together and Juan told La Luz that she was more beautiful than all the stars.

A few slow steps together and La Luz asked Juan how he could tell that she was beautiful when it was dark.

"But I have seen you in the sunlight, *mi amor!*" murmured Juan, who, being a soldier, and aforesaid flattered by women, felt quite secure in thus addressing this unsophisticated young creature.

A few steps taken even more slowly, then: "But why do you make your voice sound as though you were sad?" asked La Luz. "I am very happy." And La Luz danced away in the dark, laughing as she returned to him.

La Luz touched Juan's sleeve. "Will you tell me something, my brother?"

Juan winced, yet declared grandly that he would tell her anything she wished to know.

"You speak of your friend only as Temescal. Has he no other name?"

"Oh, as for that, perhaps he has."

"What is it?"

"Well, if you must know, it is Don Ricardo Temescal."

"Don Ricardo Temescal!" whispered La Luz. "It is a name that I like."

"It sounds well enough," said Juan.

"Will you do something for me?" queried La Luz.

"Anything in the world, *mi corazon!*"

"Ask Don Ricardo to sing 'The Ballad of Marching Men,' again."

"But no!" said Juan, squaring his

shoulders. "If you want him to sing, ask him yourself."

"Then you have lied to me, Señor Juan."

"Lied to you! But no! You do not understand. If I did not love you, and would protect you, La Luz—"

"What is love, Señor Soldado, Vaquero Sepulveda?"

"If you will act like a child I do not care to talk to you, *señorita.*"

"Then don't. My father says that men say a lot of things to women and do not mean what they say. *You* said you would do anything in the world for me, and the first thing I ask you to do, you refuse."

"But you ask a silly thing. Why do you care to hear him sing again?"

"Because, when *he* sings, my heart goes with his song, up and up, into the sky—I do not know."

"But I know, La Luz. Your heart longs for a lover. Kiss me, La Luz."

Laughing, La Luz thrust her hand against his chest. "If you will ask him to sing, I will kiss you."

YET, as it had been ordained from the first, Juan was to suffer disappointment. Almost he had kissed La Luz when the rich chord of a melody rolled out from the doorway of the shepherd's home. A ripple of silvery notes—and across the starlit meadow floated the sensuous cadence of the "Song of Seville." La Luz fluttered away into the deeper darkness beyond Juan's gaze, like a swift moth winging toward a flame.

While Juan and La Luz were strolling across the meadow, Temescal and Alejandro held animated discourse anent the conditions of the country, a subject with which Temescal seemed exceedingly familiar. The little shepherd was grieved to learn that the land of his youth had changed so much; that the poor were being taught discontent as the first step toward a revolutionary movement which threatened to destroy the power—necessarily stern—which had so long held them together as one people. Temescal spoke of the devastation of the ranchito near

Santuario and the finding of the abandoned infant, Temescalita. "Not war—but savagery!" he declared. "Unscrupulous intelligence has always oppressed the poor of every land. But when peon takes up arms against peon, let every man guard his head!"

"Would that The Great Physician might appear again," said Alejandro, devotedly. "Machine guns and light artillery," murmured Temescal.

"But the church, our president, the rurales!" cried Alejandro.

"Politics, oil wells, anarchy," murmured Temescal.

"But I had not thought it could be so," mourned Alejandro.

Temescal emptied his flagon. "Yet it must be," he declared. "Señor Alejandro, consider your life here in this pleasant isolation as a true picture of the Mexico that is passing. Consider, if you will, my present circumstances, my inflamed eyelids, my natural unrest and dissatisfaction with conditions all about, as illustrating the Mexico that is endeavoring to be. I am outlaw for no reason other than my own sincerity of purpose. One may not stand still and prosper, so I journey—yet I do not know when or where I shall arrive.

"My chance companion is a young soldier who cares not whether he serves song to his Cousin Friend or bullets to his Cousin Enemy, so long as he is occupied. Once a vaquero, and no doubt a good one, he took up the trade of war because war took his trade from him. The treachery of his own commander forced him to desert the army and look out for himself. He is loyal to me, believing me a just man. I can be no less loyal to him, believing him sorely in need of an ideal. Yet I doubt that I can hold him to one purpose long.

"In illustrating conditions you will pardon me if I assume that I represent the brains of Mexico and my companion its rifles. So my companion and I serve one another—not paupers, yet vagabonds of chance, seeking a perfection which may never be realized. Meanwhile we are obliged to forgo such small safety and

content as offers, until the highways are again safe for every man."

"But what can you do to make them safe, señor?"

Temescal waved a gesture. "Individually, nothing." Then with great sincerity, "View our highways with the eyes of strangers and sojourners from other lands. Of a truth, it would seem that I am a stranger in my own adopted country."

"Adopted?"

Temescal nodded. "And by it adopted into a service of which I may not speak, else I would betray a trust. I was chosen for my mission because I am of the land and yet not of it. That which the native-born accepts with a shrug, I accept with the same shrug, but not with the same eyes.

"I was born in the State of Texas, señor. My father was an American, well known in San Antonio. He owned many cattle. It was told among our vaqueros that I had scarce outgrown my cradle when he had me in front of him upon a horse. Of a truth, I cannot remember when I did not ride, nor can I remember when a reata felt strange to my hand.

"My mother was of an old Spanish family, living in Guadalajara. She knew many folk songs of both Spain and Mexico. When I was no taller than this table here, my mother taught me to sing. She would sit in the doorway in the evening, and I would stand upon the step below. When she sang, I watched her lips and kept the tune with her. While it was always a joy to look up into my mother's face, still, I think she employed a deliberately wise method in instructing me. Without realizing it, I held up my head and kept my shoulders back. She taught me to sing with my voice, and to forget that I had a body.

"Also it was my mother who insisted that I should travel, when I became older. My father would have made a cattleman of me. I attended an American college long enough to observe that social democracy is a big billboard for a poor show. In Europe I found the people much more

democratic. Enlisting in the Polish army, when very young——"

"I had it that you were a soldier!" said Alejandro.

"But no. I am a man of peace. *Sacaton!* But the good wine floats a caravel of memories!"

Alejandro, who had not neglected the wine, poured the last of that in the jarro into Temescal's flagon. "Aye!" said the shepherd, "your good mother taught you to keep your shoulders back. Yet not even the Virgin of Guadalupe, at whose feet I was found wrapped in an old manton, could teach me to keep my head up and my shoulders back. I was misshapen from birth, señor; abandoned! Yet I now have a great pity for the woman who bore me."

"We grow old over our wine! And that should not be," cried Temescal heartily. "I drink to the father of La Luz." And Temescal emptied the flagon as though it had been a mere wineglass.

"A thousand thanks, señor. The wine, at least, is impartial."

"As to the instrument it plays upon? Quite so. Wine may lend a peon the dignity of a king, and cause a king to perform like an ape. Yet I admire a man who, when drunk, will confess it. The difficulty is to know when one is drunk."

"Then I will fetch more wine," declared Alejandro. "It is long since I have enjoyed the companionship of an intelligent man."

"Or I, such unearned appreciation. May I carry the candle for you, Señor Alejandro?"

"I do not seek my grave!" Alejandro spoke sharply. "I seek a resurrection."

Temescal nodded to himself as Alejandro tottered out after more wine. The shepherd's shadow, as it moved along the wall, was as that of a deformed giant. Temescal lighted a cigarillo.

"The wine has stretched our shepherd's skin to the thinness of tissue paper," he mused. "Another inch of candle melted and he will be either maudlin or inspired. Softly, Temescal! You have vouched for your young companion with the handsome

face—and the girl has a little knife in a thong above her knee."

Temescal took the guitar from the table, sounding each murmuring string to determine if it were in tune. Frowning, he gazed at the darkness beyond the open doorway, wishing that Juan and La Luz would return.

Alejandro shuffled in, swung the jarro of wine to the table and sat down, breathing heavily. Thrusting his long arm out he touched Temescal's broad chest. "Sing!" he whispered. "I would behold a miracle."

"Then watch the doorway." Temescal smiled. And immediately he struck a chord, a martial, commanding chord which thrilled the shepherd to his very bones. A ripple of silvery notes—and Temescal swung into the light, sensuous melody which Juan had so recently attempted. Yet Temescal's modulations and reserve were so excellent, his tone so rich and colorful, his comprehension of the song's values and limitations so unaffectedly just, that Alejandro could hardly believe it to be the same song.

LA LUZ, who had left Juan staring after her in the darkness, appeared in the doorway, poised like a sail upon a reaching wave. In her hesitant eagerness she seemed the very spirit of the song itself. Yet the light of expectancy died from her eyes as Temescal concluded the song and laid the guitar aside. Pensively she regarded the dim room, the dull embers in the black mouth of the fireplace, the steady candle flame with its aura of faint gold. Her father's gaze was somber—fixed upon the wine in his cup.

"But see what I have found!" cried La Luz, gesturing toward the doorstep. Alejandro started up like one awakened from sleep. "What have you found, my daughter?"

"Pepito!" laughed La Luz. She ran to her father and taking his hand, urged him to the doorway. In the shadows, near the step crouched the lad Pepito, motionless, like a huge toad. He blinked in the soft radiance of the doorway light, his

mouth open, his eyes like beads of polished jet.

"Why did you not come to supper?" asked Alejandro.

"I fell on my head. I was afraid to come."

"The saints lend me patience! Afraid of what?"

"I lost the gun, señor. I was afraid that you would beat me."

"Have I ever lifted my hand to you? Come in where there is light. I would see to your injury."

Cringing in the shadows, the sheep tender put both hands on his head, his attitude as primitive as that of an ape, his eyes, apelike, blinking, restless in avoiding Alejandro's gaze. The old shepherd took hold of his arm, drew him into the room. Pepito stared at Temescal, who nodded in affable indifference and turned to ask La Luz what had become of Juan.

"Oh, I left him talking to the stars," said La Luz.

"They are patient. Your muchacho hit his head on a rock?"

"Si, Don Ricardo."

Temescal, recognizing the youth as the bushwhacker who had tried to kill him that morning, felt inclined to ask a question or two. Yet he hesitated to embarrass his host, satisfied that his Pepito's attempt had been inspired by a desire to protect his patron and the home.

Warmed by much good wine, Temescal forbore to reason in fractions, but rather, summed up the situation in a broad and generous reflection. "We came. We have thus far lived a pastoral. Let us leave behind us as pleasant memories as those we shall bear away with us."

Meanwhile, Alejandro questioned Pepito as to how and where he had suffered the accident. The youth contrived the absurd invention of having been attacked by two mountain lions, and that in the fierce struggle he had fallen and injured his head and had lost his carbine.

Alejandro was not satisfied with this explanation, and continued to question the sheep tender. Realizing that Alejandro was not quite himself, Temescal would

have diverted the old shepherd's attention from the unpleasant theme, had it not been that Juan sauntered in from the meadow, so intent upon appearing casual that for a minute or two he overlooked the presence of Pepito. Temescal caught Juan's attention and with his finger to his lips, signaled silence. But Juan was in no mood to appreciate either the signal or Temescal's attitude.

"I see your eyes still trouble you," said Juan. "Yet mine see clearly enough. This is the ladrone who tried to kill us in the barranca this morning. Now that his hat is off I know him! He fell on the rocks, no? Then ask him how it is that I have his carbine. Ask him!"

"Tried to kill you!" cried Alejandro. "But you did not tell me of this! What have you to say?"

"No! No! Señor! I fell——"

"Pardon!" interrupted Temescal. "But let the lad speak for himself. My companion may have made a mistake."

La Luz turned from watching Pepito and stared at Temescal. Juan pointed at the terrified Pepito. "But no! He shot at us—tried to kill us, Señor Alejandro! My friend returned the shot and nicked him on the cabeza. Look for yourself. Ask him."

"They lie!" cried Pepito. "They are bandidos. They will murder you and steal La Luz."

"You say I lie!" And Juan strode toward the cringing youth.

"Softly, young soldier," said Temescal, raising his hand. "We all lie, at times. Get the carbine."

"But I'll get it!" declared Juan, swinging round and marching from the room.

"And now," continued Temescal, "let us take example from the wine, which you have declared impartial, Señor Alejandro. My companion says your boy shot at us this morning. Your boy says he did not. Perhaps each is mistaken."

La Luz, realizing that her father was in no mood to listen to her, forbore to intercede for Pepito. She could not believe that Pepito had fired at the strangers. They had said nothing about it, and in

fact Don Ricardo Temescal had intimated that the soldado Juan might be mistaken. So, finding an excuse to go to her room, she passed near Temescal. "It is the wine," she whispered.

"Excellent wine," said Temescal, nodding.

Juan came in, glanced haughtily at La Luz as she came from her room with a bright manton about her shoulders. Juan laid the carabine, none too gently, upon the table. "There is the gun which he left on the edge of the barranca," said Juan. "Now what has this assassin got to say?"

"Nothing—while you are talking," declared Temescal. "Sit down and behave reasonably." Temescal turned toward Alejandro. "Señor, as I have consumed more wine than you have, it may be assumed that I contain more impartiality. If you will allow me, I will hear the arguments in this case. My companion, who is also your guest, accuses this Pepito of attempting to murder us. If your mozo will sit down, and hold up his head, we will hear what he has to say."

"But señor——" began Juan.

"An irrelevant observation," said Temescal. "We will proceed."

CHAPTER XII.

THE JUSTICE OF TEMESCAL.

JUAN flung himself into a chair and stared moodily at the candle. "He lectured me for getting drunk in Santuario," reflected Juan, "and now he has taken so much wine that he would defend a murderer. Of a truth, he uses me as if I were his bootjack, to ease his feet, or be thrown at the cat, or be hung on a nail until needed. He will not sing when asked to sing, yet he will bellow loud enough when it suits his purpose. I will lock my teeth and swallow the key; then we shall see how he prospers!"

Alejandro, his chin on his chest, gazed through his eyebrows at Pepito, who, seated upon the bench near the fireplace, glanced from side to side like a trapped animal.

"My friend Juan seems embarrassed," observed Temescal. "Señor Alejandro, may I question your muchacho?"

Alejandro nodded.

"But first, will you not give the boy a glass of wine?"

"Do you jest, señor?"

"Frequently," declared Temescal. "A terrified witness injures his own cause. Give the muchacho a glass of wine."

Grudgingly Alejandro filled a cup. Pepito drank greedily and licked his thick lips.

"Your cups are also empty," said Alejandro, pouring for Juan and Temescal, and not forgetting himself. Juan drank. Temescal left his wine untasted.

"Your name is Pepito?" queried Temescal.

"Si señor."

"Is this your carabine?"

"Si, señor. I lost it——"

"Never mind that. It is found. How did you injure your head?"

"I fell on the rocks, señor."

"Where? There are many rocks."

Pepito hesitated, then gestured toward the west. "In the hills. There was a puma that would have stolen one of the lambs——"

"Quite so. But only one puma?"

"I do not remember. I think there were two."

"And you tried to kill them, fearing that they would steal the sheep?"

"Si! I fired at them a hundred times."

"Splendid! And there being two, they were not afraid, so one of them leaped at you, perhaps, and frightened you so that you slipped and fell?"

Pepito nodded briskly. "Si! Si! I dropped my gun and ran——"

"After you fell?"

"I do not remember," said Pepito, frowning.

"Will you not give him another glass of wine?" asked Temescal, turning toward Alejandro.

Alejandro, muttering, again filled the youth's cup.

"You were afraid to come back and look for your gun?" asked Temescal.

"Si! Also, there was a fire in my head."

"And so you left it, and gathered together the scattered sheep, and counted them, perhaps?"

Pepito nodded.

Temescal addressed Juan. "Can you do better, my friend?"

Juan shrugged his shoulders. "I have no fire in my brain. I am not mad—nor drunk."

Temescal drank a little wine, cleared his throat. "Señor Alejandro, if I had not vouched for the honesty of my companion I should accept the story which your boy has so cleverly told, and say no more. Yet it is unjust that Juan should be suspected of manhandling the truth. It is possible to convince you that both your boy and my companion are truthful, allowing, of course, for the minor variations of mood and temperament.

"In fact, nothing is impossible. Hence"—and Temescal turned suddenly upon Pepito—"why did you try to kill me this morning?" Temescal's movement was sudden, yet his voice was casual, friendly. "Tell me," he continued. "I bear you no malice. None here shall harm you."

Pepito clung to his stubborn silence like a frightened bear cub clinging to a high limb. Temescal drew a coin from his pocket and tossed it to the sheep tender. The youth caught the coin, fingered it, grinned vacuously.

"Why did you try to kill us this morning?"

"I thought you were bandidos. I was afraid you would kill Señor Alejandro and steal La Luz."

Temescal shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands in a gesture which implied that the youth's statement was altogether reasonable. "Truth, without alloy would be a poor coin for general use," he declared—and, it must be admitted, somewhat oratorically. "Contain your annoyance, Señor Alejandro. Rather, censure me for having wounded your muchacho, who, as he says, saw in us wild animals that would kill and destroy. His imagination, naturally runs toward the pastoral,

sheep and rocks and cougars. He did the best he could with the raw material.

"Moreover, it is difficult to think clearly when one's skull has been seared by a bullet, or one's eyes blinded by pepper. Consider, señor: the lad, happening upon the barranca where we were encamped, saw two strangers bearing arms, the one with a bandaged shoulder, the other red-eyed, and doubtless appearing as ferocious as he felt. What were these strangers doing so near your home, and whence had they come?"

"The lad thought of you, señor, and of La Luz: of the sheep—and he took a sincere but inaccurate pot shot at me, as I offered the more ample target. I am chagrined to have to admit that in replying to his salute I missed twice—but you will observe the condition of my eyes, and excuse my clumsiness. My companion Juan can hardly be blamed for resenting the assault. Possibly, now that his dignity is satisfied, he will forget it.

"So we solicit your forbearance, Señor Alejandro, even as we solicit the pardon of your daughter for having caused you this annoyance. It is far to the bottom of my flagon, yet I will risk my head once more. I drink to the loyalty of your faithful but slightly overzealous retainer, Pepito."

"You are a just man!" declared Alejandro. "You are generous! You excuse a deadly assault upon your person, translating it to an act of loyalty. Yet I suspect that you have done this to make me more comfortable in my mind, rather than to exonerate my boy. I cannot believe that you count peons so carefully, Don Ricardo."

"But yes! A peon is like a copper centavo, señor—a small coin in itself, yet a thousand centavos may be reckoned in gold, of whose potency for good and evil you are quite aware. He who gathers the centavos will rule Mexico. Times are changing. He who would hold power must look to the small coins."

Alejandro rose and drank, and if his shadow rose unsteadily, blame the flickering light of the candle, which only dis-

torted that which lay beyond its immediate radiance.

Juan, who had tried to appreciate Temescal's attitude toward the pertinent facts in the case, realized that the case had been settled, as it were, out of court. The high command had ordered a right-about face. He was a soldier. Moreover, there were other smoldering embers of disappointment to quench, so he drank. "To the good cause!" he cried, and, quibbling thus, drank—like a soldier.

Temescal's eyes danced with amusement. He more than enjoyed this game of uncovering masked motives, unadvertised preferences, and the host of human concealments, convictions, evasions and bigotries which, in ourselves, reflect character; in others, perversity of mind.

"That this thing should have happened!" mourned Alejandro, who was what might be termed an ideal pessimist. He would have continued in this lugubrious strain had not Temescal caught up the guitar and struck from it the sprightly tune, "The Dance of the Haymakers."

Pepito's fingers twitched. His head moved in rhythm to the tune. Old Alejandro trembled like a brown leaf shaken by a brisk autumn wind. "So it went!" he cried, snapping his fingers. Temescal's hand flashed back and forth across the strings. Juan beat time with his foot. Suddenly Pepito laughed, flung up his arms, and jumping to the middle of the room began to dance. He leaped and twirled like a young goat capering in a meadow. He stamped his feet and clapped his hands, stung to wild rapture by the rural melody. It was of the soil, as he was.

"But I am not so old!" cried Alejandro, and up went his hands. Opposed to the shepherd boy, he hopped and cavorted as though the tarantella had seized his wits. La Luz laughed, bit her lip, then turned her gaze away.

As abruptly as he had begun the tune, Temescal ceased to play. Alejandro, breathing heavily, tottered to his chair. His face was white, his forehead dappled with silvery beads of sweat. Pepito,

snatching up the carbine from the table, whirled about and vanished through the doorway. Juan shrugged his shoulders, telling himself with righteous self-approval that he was not drunk. Alejandro's eyes grew dull. His eyelids flickered. His chin sank to his chest. La Luz stole softly to her room.

Putting the guitar aside, Temescal sat staring at his empty flagon. Juan smiled covertly. It was plain to Juan that Temescal was not looking at him, yet presently Temescal raised his head. "But no," he said slowly, "you are mistaken."

Juan shuffled his feet uneasily, rose. Temescal stood beside Alejandro, his hand on the shepherd's shoulder. "Come, old comrade! The candle has almost burned out."

Alejandro blinked, roused himself. "I dreamed that I was a young man—the fields of Enramada were green—the girls were——"

"It is midnight, my friend."

"You are a just man!" declared Alejandro, getting to his feet. He leaned heavily on Temescal, who helped him to his bed. Then Temescal gathered an armful of sheepskins from the floor, and followed by Juan, strode out into the still, starlit night.

In the shed near the corral they spread the sheepskins and lay down. Yet Temescal did not say, as was his usual custom, "Now I will sleep." He raised on his elbow. "No," he said slowly. "You are greatly mistaken."

"Mistaken? About what, señor?"

"Several things. Chiefly about me. You think that I am drunk."

"I did not say so."

Temescal ignored Juan's assertion. "Moreover, you censured me for my leniency toward the boy, Pepito."

"I had nothing to say about that. You held the reins."

"Further, you are jealous because La Luz showed a marked preference for my society."

"*Por Dios*, Don Ricardo! But would you quarrel with me?"

"Softly, young soldier, or you will dis-

turb the chickens. It is a poor comrade who will not engage in fair argument. Have you a cigarette?"

Juan sat up and taking his cigarillos from his hat proffered them to Temescal.

"Have you a match?"

Juan produced a match and lighted it.

"A thousand thanks, lieutenant." Temescal exhaled the fragrant smoke. He drew his serape about his shoulders. For a while he sat smoking and gazing out across the dim, starlit meadow. "There is a sign found along American railways which reads: 'Stop! Look! Listen!'" he declared finally. "It would seem that your mind is like a runaway team about to cross the track. Consider me an express train about to cross the road. I have no grudge against the runaway team. I am simply fulfilling a schedule. Of that you may learn more as we progress.

"Meanwhile, I shall offer an unappreciated confession. I am drunk. Purposely I exonerated the stupid shepherd boy. Deliberately I placed myself in the regard of the girl, La Luz. She has beautiful eyes and beautifully modeled ankles. You are not mistaken in realizing that I did these things, but you are mistaken in fumbling about for the reason, which I prefer to keep in my pocket.

"The boy, Pepito, is a half-wit. Alejandro is a gentle pessimist, and of a bilious inclination. The girl is of a simple and trusting disposition. Remember, my good friend and loyal companion, it is a shameful thing to confuse a simple mind. Now I shall sleep."

And Temescal slept.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL.

A KEEN bright morning beamed upon the green meadow. Shreds of mist clung to the farthest mountain peaks. From the low chimney of the shepherd's house a wand of smoke rose and broke into feathery curls and twistings as it met a mild current of the upper air. Beyond the meadow, where the still trees looked down upon the awakening world, the hill-

side was patched with gold and blue—sunlight and shadow of the slumberous forest.

To breathe such cool fragrance was a joy in itself. To realize such pleasant solitude after much strife and hardship was a temptation to remain and grow wisely content with arcadian simplicity and leisurely days. Temescal, slowly awakening, rose on his elbow, breathed deep.

"But who, wise enough to tarry, would be satisfied with tarrying forever," he mused, appreciating the beauty and allurements of the spot, as well as his own hereditary restlessness. "To be satisfied is to die. I prefer the chili to the lotus. *Sacaton!* But I have a head!"

After a brisk wash in the icy overflow of the mountain spring, Temescal presented himself at the breakfast table, where, with a whimsical disregard for Alejandro's morning complexion and mood, for Juan's gravity, and the pensiveness of La Luz, he provoked them all to laughter by describing the march of the old alcalde of Santuario from the posada to his home. A second cup of coffee and Temescal shone like the morning sun. A third and he drove the last vestige of a shadow from the room.

Concluding his breakfast with a cup of white wine—a potent cordial, yet too dignified a liquor to act hastily—Temescal dispatched Juan to saddle the horses. Alejandro protested, begged that the companions stay longer, argued that Juan's shoulder was not wholly healed, that his guests had not enjoyed sufficient sleep before undertaking their journey. Failing to move Temescal from his purpose, Alejandro finally besought him in the name of friendship to tarry at least one more day, wherein they might discuss the dangers threatening their beloved country.

"You tempt me," declared Temescal. "If I stayed another day in this delightful home and this good company, you would have me made into a shepherd. And that would occasion you a hardship most unfair. You would have to grow more grapes. Where you are but a wine cup, I am a flagon. Why, it makes me dizzy, even to think of the purple wine frothing

in the vats. Should La Luz tread grapes eternally? But no! I ride from temptation, Señor Alejandro. Moreover, I am Temescal but for a little while. Revised, expurgated, bound by the stiff conventions of my proper office, you would find me a dry book."

Alejandro nodded musingly. His lips moved, silently shaping the word of his thought. "He is greater than I had imagined. Yet he ignores my poverty and my deformity, placing me at his own height. He sees no hump on my back. He is somewhat like that magnificent Italian, Benvenuto, who converted all things to his own ideals. Until this Temescal came, I was numb with content. I had my few books. Now he has awakened me. Life stings again. Never will such another come this way."

Alejandro rose from his chair. "I detain you. La Luz, find a botella and fill it with the white wine, that our friends may remember us beyond the hills."

"And years beyond the last drop of it." Temescal, rising, addressed Alejandro, yet bowed to La Luz. The shepherd smiled, reflecting that this Temescal was exceedingly human in his significant economy of method.

Juan's arrival with the horses stirred the household to sudden activity. Saddlebags were packed with food. The canteens were refilled at the spring, the morrals laden with dried corn. Temescal superintended these preparations, not oblivious to Juan's occasional glance toward the doorway. La Luz, after presenting the bottle of wine to the companions, had vanished.

Alejandro embraced Temescal, patted him first upon one shoulder and then upon the other, and blessed him for a great soul and a sturdy friend to Mexico. Alejandro's farewell to Juan was equally courteous, though less ardent.

Regretting that he had not seen La Luz to bid her farewell, Temescal mounted and was exchanging a few last words with Alejandro, when La Luz appeared at the edge of the green meadow, tugging at the lead rope of the white burro. The burro

resisted, stubbornly aware that something was expected of him. Juan offered to assist La Luz, but she ignored his offer.

"My daughter is headstrong," declared Alejandro.

"And beautiful," observed Temescal. Alejandro allowed himself to cough politely.

La Luz, laughing, asked Temescal if he would not hold the lead rope while she fetched a saddle. Temescal replied gravely that he was hers to command.

"You are not!" flashed La Luz. "You command everybody."

"But no!" laughed Temescal. "I am not the president." And to himself, "Whew! But the golden one has a temper!"

"You are leaving—my daughter is excited—she is unused to guests," apologized Alejandro as La Luz darted away toward the corral.

"My eyes still trouble me slightly," said Temescal. "But is it not a saddle your daughter is fetching from the sotechado?"

"Yes. The small saddle for the white one."

Temescal gazed toward the high range of El Gata. "The day has not begun," he murmured. He had observed that La Luz wore sandals, evidently anticipating a journey. But not until she had saddled the burro did she tell her father that she intended to direct the companions on their way. Juan felt immensely flattered, and showed it. Temescal, however, allowed himself no such luxury. "The girl cares for him," he reflected. "Else why the public rebuff, the coy avoidance, and the attenuated farewell, which will be protracted to the very top of yonder mountain range? There she will turn back. Soldier and shepherdess. But why not?"

Again Alejandro and Temescal exchanged parting felicitations, each assuring the other that neither time nor circumstance could ever obliterate the pleasant memory of their brief companionship. La Luz whacked the white burro, who, having evidently concluded that further resistance required too much mental effort, set his ears forward, and these he followed at a

pace judiciously extended toward the accomplishment of the journey with as little physical effort as possible.

Next came Juan, a handsome figure on a restless horse, and behind him rode Temescal, solid, and as aloof as a mountain crag. Yet the cavalcade had scarce got under way when Temescal wheeled his horse and rode back to Alejandro. A word or two and he turned to again follow La Luz and Juan.

Alejandro, shading his eyes with his hand, stood gazing after them until the burro was but a moving white dot on the steep mountainside. "A strange man," mused the shepherd. "If ever I am in distress or danger, I am to send word to him and I shall not lack a friend. He named a city and he named a name. Of a truth, he must have many guns at his command."

Taking his staff from beside the doorway, Alejandro set out to find Pepito and the sheep. The youth had not appeared for breakfast. Arriving at the corral, Alejandro found the sheep untended and Pepito absent. Turning the flock out to graze, Alejandro accompanied them, meanwhile anticipating the appearance of Pepito with some childish excuse for his delinquency. Yet noon found the sheep tender still absent and old Alejandro leaning on his staff, watching the scattered band as it grazed slowly along the hillside.

FROM the high trail along which Temescal followed La Luz and Juan, the meadow below soon appeared as but a hand's breadth of green, and the house of Alejandro no bigger than a thimble. Temescal rode leisurely, and made notes in a little book. He finally fell so far behind his companions that La Luz suggested that they wait for him. Yet when they stopped to breathe their horses on some steep, grim slope of the range, Temescal invariably stopped and made notes in a careful hand.

Finally the trail became a mere goat path running to an impassable point of rocks where it switched back and climbed,

in steep windings, to a higher spot, so that Temescal was presently below the travelers, who had stopped, employing the time in sprightly argument. "Then you will not promise?" came Juan's voice as though through a telephone.

"But why should I promise anything? You are going away. You will not come back."

Temescal uttered a loud, sonorous "Hummm!" intended to warn those above that he was at least perpendicularly in their vicinity.

"But I swear——" Juan's voice subsided. A few scattering pebbles fell upon Temescal's sombrero.

Then the voice of La Luz came distinctly. "Take your arm away! I can reach it."

"But you will fall!" cried Juan.

Temescal heard La Luz laugh. He looked up, but could see nothing save the shouldering rock, and the brush above him. Something fluttered out from the cliff, dropping softly. A blue flower, its long stem swinging like a pendulum, fell in front of Temescal's horse. The horse snorted. Temescal put his notebook in his pocket and, dismounting, picked up the blue flower, and thrust its stem through the band of his sombrero.

The crunching of hoofs above, and Temescal again gave his horse the rein. At the next bend he caught sight of Juan and La Luz. She waved to him. "It is a very steep way," she called, laughing. "It is well to take one's time."

"A singularly sweet reminder—for some one," mused Temescal. Again he made notes in the little book. He gazed at the trail ahead, then down at the tiny green meadow. "And Sanchez said there was no trail across these hills. It remained for his chief to find it. Sacaton! But the blue spaces play with one's imagination! My thumb would cover Alejandro's house, and crush it. My hand, held so, erases the green meadow. As for the desert, it has become but the dooryard of this citadel. And yonder, a long day's journey, yet but one vigorous leap from here, is Santuario, and Temescalita. But I hope

the little one is as comfortable as her foster mother's proportions. A magnificent woman, in her proper place."

At the next bend Temescal's stout horse stopped and stood gazing out across the magic distances, yet with ears alert to the sound of plodding hoofs above. Temescal had closed his mind to the morning vistas, the rough trail, the companions so blithely ascending the great mountainside. He concentrated on the vision of Temescalita as he had last seen her, a wisp of humanity in the ample arms of the mother of many.

"Yet I will not give up the niña," he declared. "The adorable Mariquita will not be pleased. She will arch her fine eyebrows and condemn me with her eyes. And she will not believe a word of my story. Yet I shall not give up the waif!" Which might indicate that the foundling Temescalita held a secure place in Temescal's affections, because it was well known in the City of Mexico that the aristocratic Señorita Mariquita Valladares—the bright star of Temescal's not infrequent poetical outbursts—favored Don Ricardo above all men.

Abruptly dismissing the vision and the argument, Temescal rode on up the final, long stretch of trail. A thin, high wind droned across the barren ridge. The air was chill in spite of the bright sun.

La Luz stood beside the burro, her short skirt whipping about her legs. Juan, standing near La Luz, turned and gazed out across the far reaches as Temescal appeared. The eyes of La Luz were exceedingly bright, her face rosy. Temescal surmised that the two had arrived at an understanding, concluding that the girl was in love with the handsome young soldier.

Both La Luz and Juan were startled by Temescal's brusque, "*Que es?*" and for a few seconds were at a loss to understand his question. Then La Luz caught sight of a familiar figure approaching along the ridge of the mountain.

"Pepito!" she cried.

Carbine in hand and a pack slung across his shoulders, Pepito came stumbling along

the ridge, his chest heaving, his thick lips trembling.

"What of the sheep?" queried La Luz.

Pepito flung up his arm in a wild gesture. "But I have no sheep! I go."

"Where?" asked Temescal.

"With you, señor. I make the fire. I cook for you. I fight for you. I guard the horses at night. I am a good boy, señor!"

"You would be my mozo?"

"Si, señor. I ask no pay. I am strong. I can go as fast as a horse."

"Hum! Fast enough to forget what your patron, the good Señor Alejandro, has done for you?"

"He gave me no pay, and I am a man. I am his mozo no longer. You gave me money."

"Hum! And in doing so, did my host an injury. Yet it was heady wine."

Juan smiled. He enjoyed what he imagined was Temescal's discomfiture.

"But he will go back to the sheep when you leave," said La Luz, shrugging indifferently.

"I will not go back!" cried Pepito, brandishing his carbine and dancing up and down in his excitement.

Swift as the beat of a bird's wing La Luz reached down. The thin, bright blade of a knife flashed in her hand. "Insolent!" she cried. Bending forward in the saddle, Temescal caught her wrist, gazed at her flushed face and burning eyes.

"I admire your grace, though not your intent, little wild cat," said Temescal.

The eyes of La Luz became like dark pools mirroring two star points of anger. The knife slipped from her hand. The star points of anger faded, disappeared, were replaced by a look of wonderment.

Temescal let go of her wrist, dismounted leisurely and picking up the little knife held it toward her on his palm. Pepito stared, licked his lips. Juan made a noise in his throat and strode up and down restlessly.

La Luz took the knife from Temescal. A flash of her bare knee and she had sheathed the knife, and was again gazing at Temescal's grave face. "If your Pe-

pito would serve me, he shall," declared Temescal.

"But, señor——" Juan raised his hand, hesitated, glanced sharply from Temescal to La Luz.

Temescal heard only the thin whisper of the wind across the barren ridge. "You would serve me?" he asked Pepito.

"Si, señor!"

"Then you shall. Do you swear to obey me?"

"To the death, señor."

"Not necessarily. Return, then, to your work. The Señor Alejandro is my good friend. Obey him as you would obey me. Guard him from all evil as you would guard me. Give him and his daughter the respect that you would give to me." Temescal glanced at La Luz. Then to the shepherd boy. "Be faithful in this service, for I may return."

Juan's eyebrows arched in amazement. The face of La Luz was suffused with deeper color. Temescal mounted his horse. He touched the blue flower in the band of his sombrero. "Perhaps it fell from heaven," he said. "¿Quién sabe?"

"Like your daughter, Temescalita," volunteered Juan maliciously. Yet Temescal seemed to hear only the thin whisper of the wind across the barren ridge. Bowing to La Luz, he reined his horse to the farther side of the ridge. Juan mounted and followed, bidding La Luz farewell.

La Luz, alone on the ridge, stood watching the two horsemen until they had reached the floor of the desert toward the west. Pepito had gone. The white burro, disliking the unfriendly wind, had also vanished.

Halfway down the mountain La Luz overtook the burro, yet she did not ride, but drove him ahead of her. Before she reached the green meadow she stopped and pressed her mouth against the place where Temescal had grasped her wrist. Entering the house she found Alejandro waiting for her. She ran to him and flung her arms about his neck.

"It is all right, my daughter," said Alejandro patting her shoulder. "That rogue Pepito has come back."

Yet her question startled the old shepherd. "Is Don Ricardo Temescal married?"

"I do not know. Why do you ask?"

"I do not think that he is married," said La Luz. "Yet the other spoke of Don Ricardo's daughter, Temescalita."

"But what of it?" Then shrewdly, "Don Ricardo is a great man among his own people. His ways are not our ways. Accident brought him here. I doubt that he will ever return. As for the abandoned child he rescued, he told me about that, calling the infant Temescalita."

La Luz kissed her father, then, running to the fireplace knelt and laid wood upon the embers. "But he said he might return," declared La Luz over her shoulder.

"The young soldier?"

"No. Don Ricardo Temescal."

"He told you so?"

"No. He told Pepito."

"Ah, that is different!" murmured Alejandro. Then quickly, "Where was Pepito?"

"On the mountain. Don Ricardo made him go back."

"Tell me about it, my daughter. Pepito told me he had been hunting cougars. I knew he was not speaking the truth."

"I will tell you," said La Luz, "if you will tell me about Don Ricardo's daughter Temescalita."

"You are persistent. I shall give you the story as it was given to me. The wind of the mountains has made your eyes very bright, my little one."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLUE FLOWER.

ALTHOUGH Alejandro had assured his guests that there was a trail down the western slope of the range, Temescal was surprised to find a comparatively broad and easy way, in places hewn from the solid rock. The lower reaches of the mountainside were treeless, lacking even the usual vegetation found in the foothills.

Temescal paid close attention to the immediate surroundings, occasionally jotting

down a line or two in his notebook. Since leaving the shepherd's home he seemed to have developed an inexplicable interest in the topography of the country, a circumstance which amused Juan, to whom a tree was a tree, a rock a rock, and an unusually well-made trail merely a matter of immediate convenience.

Juan rode buoyantly, pleased that no difficulties offered. Once in a while he thought of La Luz, soothing his wounded vanity with the promise that some time he would return in solitary splendor, with no towering contrast to diminish his own excellent stature, and woo and win the shepherd's daughter with a mere word and a glance. Hitherto his conquests had been effortless; and now, riding down the easy sweep and return of the wide way, he enjoyed a certain freedom of mind, for the young soldier was unaccustomed to deliberate love-making.

The arid immensity of the desert below did not appall him, nor interest him to any great extent. For Juan, to-morrow's possible exigencies were to-morrow's business. However, he did survey the reaches below from time to time, looking for a chance blot of green that might indicate the presence of water. An ancient and abandoned mine, halfway down the slope of the desert range, explained the laboriously made trail.

At the mouth of the mine Juan waited until Temescal caught up with him. Juan was for exploring the old workings. "There might be gold still there," he suggested.

"And so," said Temescal, who arrived leisurely, twirling a blue flower by its long stem, "let it sleep. We look for water."

"But, señor!" Juan dismounted swiftly and picked a human skull from a litter of loose rock and dust, "men have been here." The fragile brown skull crumbled to powder in his hands.

"Obviously—and they have vanished. We are here. Where shall we be to-morrow?"

"In the tierra caliente, of course," said Juan dusting his hands.

Temescal smiled. "Yes; in the hot country. Last night I dreamed of vultures. Let us find our way down."

Juan gazed round at the mountainside, the masses of broken rock, the afternoon desert below, and finally at the cloudless sky. "Of a truth, it is an empty land. Why do we journey this way, señor?"

"Because of a falling rock in the cañon near Cabazon, perhaps. But a few days ago you served a colonel, who now serves a larger purpose than he could have imagined."

"But when he was alive he served the Republic of Mexico," declared Juan. "He is dead. How can he serve now?"

"By his silence, my friend. He keeps his hands in his own pockets."

"Of a truth we took much loot that he never shared with his men."

"Quite so. This ancient mine gapes like the mouth of a dead man. Let us find our way down."

Again Juan glanced round about, and finally, looking up at the sky, "*Por Dios!*" he cried. "The vultures."

Temescal glanced toward the sky, shook his head. "Not vultures. Eagles."

Even as he spoke a faint, shrill whistle sounded in the far blue, where an eagle, rounding in easy flight, whistled its angry challenge. From some viewless crag in the barren brown hills came an echo of the challenge, and presently another eagle swept out, circled, and darted toward the first. They struck in mid-air. A tiny tuft of feathers, like a puff of smoke, floated beneath them. The great birds swayed and separated. Circling in shorter sweeps, again they drove together, became a blur of flapping wings. And again they dropped away from each other, rose to circle above the tiny, scattering feathers that floated down, twinkling in the keen sunlight. "They fight!" cried Juan.

Temescal shrugged his shoulders. "My dream was of carrion birds, not of royal wings."

Lower the eagles dropped, as they struck and separated in lusty and vicious combat. Maneuvering on tilted wings, they grappled and fell together, tumbling

over and over until within a few feet of the hillside rock, when they fought free in a cloud of dancing plumes.

Swerving sharply upward, one of the eagles sailed out across the desert level close to the ground, its huge shadow a fleeting black blotch on the glimmering sand. The other, unable to rise, spread its wings weakly and rocking from side to side alighted on the trail a few yards from the mouth of the ancient mine.

Temescal dismounted and walked toward the wounded eagle, which raised its wings heavily, sheathed them and sat blinking and turning its head.

"Stand away, señor, and I will kill it!" cried Juan.

"Spoken like a soldier!" said Temescal. "But you will not kill it."

"But, señor, it is wounded. It will die."

"But, señor," mocked Temescal, "you were wounded, and you did not die." And Temescal gravely raised his broad sombrero to the vanquished eagle, which, despite its torn plumage and its many wounds, thrust its head forward threateningly and ruffled its neck plumage in defiance.

A falling plume, darting hither and thither in a queer, jerky motion, dropped on the trail. Temescal picked up the feather, smoothed it between his thumb and finger. Juan holstered his gun, made a cigarette and sat watching his companion. Of a truth, this Temescal was inconsistent; one minute urging haste that they might make camp, and the next, delaying to doff his hat to a bedraggled eagle blinking in the shadows of an old Aztec mine, as though the place were a shrine and the bird a deity.

DID Temescal salute the high courage of wide and dauntless wings, or did he bare his head to a sign and a portent? Was his vision of the old and the young eagles of Mexico, warring until the banner of the republic was but a torn and ragged emblem of anarchy and devastation?

"And next—the vultures," murmured Temescal.

In the evening dusk, specked here and there with the promise of early stars, the companions arrived at the spring at the foot of the mountain trail. A solitary and notably tall palm marked the spring, its mantle of pendent, withered fronds reaching up and up to a canopy of living green spread like a bursting rocket against the sky. Temescal bowed to the solitary and ancient palm.

Juan, struck by that which he considered an especially humorous affectation, laughed. "If there were a thousand palms —" he said, and hesitated because Temescal had turned and faced him so swiftly.

"A nod would then suffice," said Temescal quietly. He smiled, but only with his lips. "Yet isolated and exceptional verdure in a barren land—greenness so unexpected that it suggests daring, almost impudence, is not unworthy of acknowledgment. Pardon me for an oversight." And Temescal bowed formally to Juan.

Juan chewed the end of his short mustache and eyed Temescal a-slant and vindictively. This Temescal was arbitrarily exceeding the most elastic limitations of forbearance. Moreover, he had become secretive, having made notes in a little book, a circumstance which, unexplained, impressed Juan as something unfair to their association, something mysterious and savoring of treachery. And in the band of Temescal's sombrero was the faded blue flower which La Luz had tossed down to him.

Hat in hand, Temescal gazed at Juan. "Let us have the rest of it," he said as he gestured toward the darkening desert. "We are about to endure a bitter hardship together, or separately. In either case it is best to begin our journey with clean faces."

"As for that," declared Juan airily, "I can find my way back to Alejandro's house."

"Even so—let's have the rest of it, Juanito."

Juan, to escape further embarrassment, had begun to unsaddle the horses. He straightened up, the loosened cincha in his

hand. With the other hand he gesticulated. "All day you ride—and say nothing. You frown, and write in a small book. When I spoke of exploring the mine you declared against it. When I would have shot the wounded eagle you forbade me. And now you mock me by bowing to me and comparing me to a palm tree."

"So? And I made a grave mistake. The palm, though green is discreetly silent. It mocks no reverence. Did I laugh when you paid a most proper respect to your chosen saint in the church of Santuario? Have I ever mocked you when you have crossed yourself? If my salutation, to living water and the isolated verdure of the desert strikes you as humorous, and you laugh, do you not mock, first, the tree itself and incidentally my sincerity and reverence? Consider.

"Meanwhile, let us enjoy a touch of the good wine which Alejandro blessed in the name of friendship. Here is the botella. La Luz of the green meadow trod the grapes. Drink, compadre!" And Temescal proffered the bottle.

Temescal, in turn, tasted the wine and replaced the bottle in his saddlebag. "As for the jottings in my little book, Juanito, they are the notes of a song which, some day, you may hear sung by the many. It grows dark. We will feed the horses. Then we shall have a fire, good food, and a better understanding. The afternoon has been so unproductive of excitement and hazard that we have suffered from idleness, which is the superlative test of companionship. Let us become industrious and make camp."

Activity absorbed a measure of Juan's sour humor, and the good wine tuned his pulses to a happier theme. Yet like the proverbial grouse, that having ceased its challenging, still struts and ruffles its neck feathers, Juan set about his task of making camp with a fling at this and a jerk at that, which amused Temescal, who, having spread his saddle blanket, sat smoking a cigarillo and gazing, apparently at the inquisitive stars.

Presently Juan thought of La Luz, picture—POP.

tured her astride the white burro, riding up the rugged mountain trail; and again, standing upon the barren crest, the high wind whipping her skirt about her knees, as she pointed toward the gray desert and the far blue hills beyond. And the young soldier yearned for the companionship of La Luz, for the sound of her voice, her laughter, the quick, questioning glance of her dark eyes. Some day he would return, alone—

Juan knelt and touched a match to the shreds of palm fiber. A thin flame rose in the still air—a slender spear point that wavered and spread among the brittle fronds. In the soft glow of the flame Juan's face, ardently intense with a vision, was like the keen bronze face of that ancient Aztec prince, Quauhtemotzin, the heroic, the splendid, the defiant. Of a truth, Lieutenant Juan Sepulveda dwelt for a minute in a romance more real to him that was the flame before which he knelt.

"La Luz," said Temescal softly.

Startled by Temescal's voice, by the name itself, so significant at the moment—although Temescal had ample excuse to remark upon "the light" which had leaped so suddenly out of the darkness—Juan rose and recalled their present circumstance. "Then you are not a rock?" he observed, gesturing to the shattered hillside boulders about their camp.

"Only upon occasion. The wine and my empty stomach have become reconciled. The wine has won the battle. No, I am not a rock, although I must impress you as stolid, uncompanionable and stubborn. It is my misfortune to sometimes imagine myself as enduring and immovable as a rock. Call me, rather, a feather—the feather of an eagle, if you will, purposeful in its place, detached, a fluttering thing which falls to earth and is picked up, perhaps, by some shepherd and stuck in his hat. Your fire is beneficent, its light doubly illuminating. Watching you at your ministrations, I thought of Cuauhtemoc—of the Plaza de la Reforma, and my beloved city.

"Let us eat. We have meat and bread and water, and the top of the world for

our table. And who," and Temescal gestured toward the sky, "has more candles? Again I mention the light. A coincidence. Speaking of light, did it ever dawn upon you, my friend, that we of Mexico are of two minds about everything? Our blood is of the Aztec defenders and the Spanish conquerors. We leap from barbarism to piety, and back again—hop into the fire and scurry like singed wolves for a water hole—I speak of the soul—and most of us are born too slothful to even wonder why we do it."

"But, señor, you once said you were of American blood."

"I boast a reasonable strain of it. Yet here, in my adopted country, I often forget it. As a son of the United States, I honor and respect my mother. As a husband of Mexico—speaking generously—I adore my wife. Sacaton! But white wine on an empty stomach discovers the shallow spots in one's cosmos. I have said little and talked much. Let us eat."

CHAPTER XV.

FLIGHT.

PEPITO, out early with the sheep, herded them toward the flats east of the Red Barranca and as they found good grazing he amused himself by playing a game which did not interfere with his lazy occupation. He gathered together stones from the dry river bed, and with laborious patience builded a crude statue which ludicrously resembled a man. With two dead branches for the arms, and a round stone for the head, the statue resembled what might be termed a prehistoric scarecrow. Pepito leaned his carbine against one of the rigid arms and stepped back to view his handiwork. Pepito had fashioned the image of his present deity, Temescal.

Taking the coin which Temescal had given him from his knotted handkerchief, Pepito carefully laid it on the statue's unoccupied arm. Not the first in the world to worship a stone image or a golden coin, the shepherd boy paid tribute to his own creation by dancing madly in front of the statue. His face glistened with sweat. He panted like a dog in from a long run.

Finally he ceased his wild dancing and sat down that he might admire his god.

Of a truth, there stood the magnificent Temescal, pardoner, protector of the poor and master of melody. Yet, having regained his breath, Pepito decided that the ceremony was incomplete. Through habit he climbed to the edge of the barranca and surveyed the sheep, grazing slowly toward the edge of the desert. Returning to his stone image, Pepito snatched up the coin and pocketed it. Then he addressed himself, imitating Temescal's sonorous voice. "Return then, to your work. The Señor Alejandro is my good friend. Obey him as you would obey me. Guard him from all evil as you would guard me."

He rushed to the edge of the barranca. The sheep had drifted farther away. Suddenly the band bunched and broke back toward the foothills in a long, surging billow of dusty white. The shepherd boy rubbed his eyes. Out on the desert, bordering the foothills, a band of horsemen drew leisurely toward the barranca. Behind them trailed a lazy cloud of dust.

Screened by the intervening contours of the rocky foothills, Pepito watched the approaching horsemen. Who were these strange invaders of his isolated world? And why did they stop? But they had seen the sheep! Two riders spurred swiftly after the pattering sheep. Pepito heard the thin, reiterated crack of rifle shots.

He slunk up the barranca, climbed its northern wall. Beyond him, toward the east, where the barranca widened toward the desert, the strangers had gathered. The smoke of a fire rose above them as they squatted on the ground. These, then, were bad men, stealers of sheep, bandidos!

Pepito saw a figure move from the group and descend into the barranca, evidently to get water. The man paused and surveyed the stone image, then thrust his foot against it. It toppled to the ground. Pepito could hear the faint thump and rattle of the stones as they tumbled down.

That these men had killed his patron's sheep and were roasting them, was in itself

an outrage. But that one of them should dare to shatter the magnificent image—Temescal! Pepito chewed his lip, shook as though with a fever, whined like a dog that mourns, and with tears of rage blurring his eyes he crept back through the morning shadows and arriving at the trail to the green meadow, pattered up to the casa, breathless.

"The sheep!" he cried, as he beheld Alejandro seated in his chair in the doorway.

"What now, muchacho?"

"The sheep! Ladrones! The Red Barranca! They have broken my stone man! They will murder us and steal the silver crucifix and the beautiful guitarra!"

La Luz, who was scrubbing the table, glanced up. "You have been asleep in the sun, and have dreamed a bad dream. Go back to the sheep."

"But no! I have been awake. I have been much awake. I made a stone picture of the one who sings. Ai! Ai! Ai! The pigs have destroyed it!" And Pepito wept bitterly.

Alejandro glanced over his shoulder toward La Luz. "Perhaps—" he said, and was silent.

La Luz wiped the table hastily, ran to her room and put on her sandals. "I will see," she declared.

"I will go with you," said Alejandro.

Pepito, brandishing his carbine, and unconsciously shedding tears of rage and excitement, followed them to a point of rock on the mountainside, from whence they could look down upon the desert. In the distant barranca were the tiny figures of men and of horses, and the smoke of a fire. Pepito squatted on a rock and blinked up at Alejandro, who, shading his eyes with his hand, contemplated the billowing smoke which rose and vanished in the clear morning air.

Alejandro shook his head. "The other had but departed, and they come," he muttered. La Luz caught his meaning, wondered why these marauders had followed so swiftly in Temescal's footsteps.

"But no!" said Alejandro. "He is an honest man. These may be rurales. Yet

they are many—and they have killed my sheep. Rurales would have first found me and asked for food. Is it that the shadow of The Thief of Cabazon will follow me to my grave?"

"Perhaps, when the thieves are fed, they will go their way," suggested La Luz.

"He said that he had many guns at his command," murmured Alejandro.

"Yet what could they want of us, except food and wine?" asked La Luz. "We have no money, my father."

Alejandro shook his head, muttered, turned toward his daughter. "You were too small to remember." Then to Pepito. "Catch the white burro. If these bad ones come, they will find an empty house. If they should chance to be honest men, they will depart. Would that Temescal and the young soldado were here!"

HOPING against hope, the shepherd made ready to depart, gathering together a few scant necessities, food, water, blankets, which he packed on the white burro. La Luz filled a sack with the choicest of their possessions, the silver crucifix, the carved flagon, the old Spanish clock which she wrapped in the beautiful silk manton which had been her mother's. Observing that La Luz worked swiftly and with enthusiasm, Alejandro asked her if she realized that they might never return to their home.

"Si!" she said, glancing up. "So it is that we leave none of these things for the thieves."

Alejandro sighed and went to fetch a cask of wine from the hillside cellar. He placed the cask on the table, purposely. The sooner the bandidos discovered the wine and became drunk, the better. Then they would become more or less indifferent to the obviously sudden departure of the family.

"We will camp in the hills and watch," declared Alejandro, as they crossed the green meadow, La Luz leading the burro, Pepito groaning beneath a sack, and Alejandro, staff in hand, and serape over his shoulder, following. Occasionally he paused and glanced back. If they could

come within the shelter of the hills before the marauders arrived at the house——

At the end of the first rise in the mountain trail, La Luz stopped to adjust her sandals. Alejandro turned to gaze down at the silent meadow, the abandoned home. Pattering up the trail came the goat, the milch goat, called by Pepito "Evil-face" because of a malignantly human expression in the goat's yellow eyes.

Just before they reached the top of the range, they observed a movement in the meadow far below—a movement suggesting the scurrying of a swarm of black ants. The invaders had discovered the hidden homestead.

Alejandro drew his serape about his shoulders, and breasting the keen wind, searched for a place to camp, finally discovering a shelter among the huge, riven gray rocks which walled three sides of a sort of roofless room. "Here we will wait," he declared. "When those below have departed, we will return to our home."

La Luz, arranging their belongings to the best advantage, made ready for the evening meal. Pepito, who had gone to look for firewood, had not returned. La Luz made her father comfortable, and noticing the dull despair that filmed his eyes, tried to console him.

"See!" she cried, pointing to the milch goat, which lay with its legs folded under, its staring yellow eyes half closed, its lower jaw working as though it were chewing gum, "Evil-face is content. And the white one," La Luz shrugged, "with nothing to do, he is always content."

"And you, my daughter?"

The rich color deepened in the olive cheeks of La Luz. Her dark eyes flashed. "If I were a man, those who kill our sheep should know me!"

"Once I knew such a fire," declared Alejandro, "but the years have taught me to fold my hands."

"You would not kill the bandido who killed my mother?"

"He is beyond my reach. And even his name is not so bitter to me since Don Ricardo was our guest. I will go out and see what has become of Pepito."

Alone on the wind-swept crest the hunchback shepherd stood gazing toward the sunset reaches of the western desert, a wide sea of palpitating amethyst, dotted with the purple-shadowed islands of desert cone and ridge. Bulwarked round the far splendor of the setting sun rose fantastic golden imageries—spires and domes and glowing minarets set upon cloudy terraces amid vales of opal fire. And out there, somewhere upon the vast floor of the evening desert—Alejandro gestured as though to a departing friend—journeyed Don Ricardo Temescal, in whom he had discovered an ideal of his youth, a caballero graced with courtesy, tolerance and true courage.

Turning from the enchantment and the vision, Alejandro crossed the bleak ridge and gazed down upon the darkening valley of his home, where somber shadows lay upon the evening forest and where within the dim boundaries of the meadow, a tiny flame flickered and glowed like the evil eye of some awakening monster of the night.

Alejandro's staff trembled in his clenched hand. Down there ravaged that malignant beast, banditry, which years ago had made La Luz motherless and himself a fugitive, forced to flee into the wilderness to escape the devastating hand of one then known through Mexico as Temescal the Ruthless—Temescal, The Thief of Cabazon.

Leaning against the wind, the shepherd plodded back to his refuge among the rocks, where, in the red glow of the setting sun, knelt La Luz, milking the goat.

"You did not see Pepito?"

Alejandro shook his head.

"The witless one!" cried La Luz. "Where could he have gone?"

"He is scratching some flea of discontent. He listens only to the wind since Don Ricardo Temescal has left us."

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, out February 7th.



So This is Cairo!

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "King Neptune Takes Command," "Whispers from the Sea," Etc.

The American navy effects a thrilling rescue in the land of the sheiks.

THE Scout Cruiser *Toledo* was moored to a buoy in the crowded harbor of Alexandria. Bumboats jostled alongside while swarthy merchants in red fezzes yelled for permission to scramble aboard and peddle Egyptian beads, scarabs, and antique embroideries made in Germany. In scornful accents the bluejackets told them to beat it. Why waste good coin on these bandits when liberty had been granted for the trip by rail to Cairo?

The Yankee gob afloat is no more studious than his own kind of lad at home. Serious reading is seldom one of his hobbies. In foreign ports he rambles ashore with the sketchiest knowledge of the history, the customs, and the people.

In this instance, however, the *Toledo's* crew felt well acquainted with Egypt. It had kindled their imaginations. The Pyramids and the Sphinx had a familiar sound. The Nile and the streets of Cairo had been household words. Moses in the bulrushes! The children of Israel in bondage! Camels and deserts and palm trees! King Tut's tomb!

Two hundred of these seagoing pilgrims went ashore in the ship's boats with steady-gaited chief petty officers to keep the lid on the exuberance. Alexandria was modern, resembling other great ports given over to commerce and shipping. It awakened no keen interest.

The real Egypt began to unroll itself during the three hours in the train which traversed a region unchanged since the stories told in the Old Testament. Tiny irrigated patches of green were tilled by brown toilers in flowing garments of many hues. Naked children played near the mud huts or tended the grazing goats and camels.

On the wide canals floated the clumsy cargo dhows with red lateen sails, the same kind of craft that had been laden with the bricks and granite blocks to build the temples and palaces of the Pharaohs. Another world!

Young William Sprague, seaman, was mightily impressed. Forgotten was the handicap of a leg in a plaster cast and a crutch with which to navigate. The ship's doctor had been persuaded to let him join

the party. The ankle broken during a North Atlantic gale was mending nicely. He had rescued the first lieutenant from being crushed by a steel hatch plate which had gone adrift. It was an act of courage for which the captain had commended him. As a reward of merit, another seaman was requested to look after him on this trip to Cairo in order that he should not miss it.

"Don't you let yourself get pestered with me to-night if you want to give the town the once-over. Go to it," said William to his right bower. "Just plant me in a chair somewhere and I can look on."

"Nothing to it," answered "Chub" Chadwick, who was round and blond and good-natured. "My job is to stand by. You're out of luck, 'Kid.' A bum propeller and obliged to proceed with due caution. To-morrow morning we step on the gas and dart out to the good old Pyramids. That's the big show. Leave it to papa."

"You are a darned good scout, Chub," gratefully smiled William, the cripple. "I'll get back at you somehow."

ANCHORED though they were, they enjoyed the evening in Cairo. The glimpses were like the gorgeous pageantry of the "Arabian Nights." Soon after breakfast they were speeding over the smooth highway that crossed the valley of the Nile and ended where the desolate desert began. A squadron of automobiles was crammed with reckless young bluejackets. It was not a procession, but a race. Apparently the Egyptian drivers had never heard of speed laws. Putting their trust in Allah, they tried to give the other cars the dust and eased her down to forty miles when the traffic compelled.

The luck of the navy carried the liberty party to the Pyramids right side up. These visitors stood and stared at the stupendous monuments of stone that towered from the desert rim. Hilarity was silenced. Kid Sprague felt choked up with the mystery and wonder of these ageless memorials of a vanished race. He was fond of calling himself "temper'mental" because he played the saxophone. It was

true, in a way. He was sensitive to impressions.

"Bigger and grander than I expected, Chub," said he, in tones of profound amazement. "And *old*. Say, boy, don't they look it? For the love of Pete, there is the Sphinx, over beyond 'em! A dead ringer for her pictures, broken nose, cauliflower ear, and all. And nobody has ever guessed the answer to her."

"Don't ask me, Kid. You can't hobble through all that deep sand. And the sun is hot enough to broil a steak. Wait till I break out a perfectly reliable donkey."

They did not have to search far. Already the dirty, ragged Bedouin guides and vagabonds were scampering from all directions. They shrieked as they stormed the *Toledo* sailors who didn't know whether to call it a welcome or a riot. Competent to find their way about, they jeered the clamorous ruffians and stood a few on their heads. This served to clear the course.

Riding upon camels was the popular hit. It had the charm of novelty and the true flavor of the Orient. Twenty blue-jackets careering past the Pyramids on these shambling steeds of the desert presented a picture with a punch. To make it livelier, every camel had a vile temper and found its only pastime in trying to chew the rider's legs.

Astride a sleepy mouse-colored donkey, Kid Sprague moved more sedately. Chub Chadwick trudged astern and whacked the animal with the crutch. They halted in the shadow of the Great Pyramid and watched a group of tourists emerge, very hot and bedraggled, from the shaft driven to the granite-walled chamber in which was the tomb of King Cheops himself.

One of these explorers was a man of middle age, florid and beefy, who wore a cork helmet and a white suit. At this moment his temper was badly frazzled. Perspiration rained from him. Candle grease and soot had besmudged him from head to foot. Loudly he complained of the American sailors who had jostled him in the shaft. It was no fault of theirs, of course, that the long passage was narrow

and low roofed, with hundreds of steps hard to climb and descend.

This spluttering tourist, whose clothes and temper had been ruined, had a little camera with which he wished to make snapshots of the Sphinx. At any rate he trudged in that direction.

With the navy's well-known talent for organization, the camels had been mobilized for a series of races. There were preliminary heats, a starter, a finish judge, and two bookmakers who bawled the odds in stentorian voices. The Arab camel drivers made no objections. They were bound to win.

Kid Sprague had been urging his faithful comrade to go get him a camel and take a whirl. Chub Chadwick's amiable face reflected wistful desire, but duty came first. He said not a word. At length the cripple burst out impatiently:

"I'm all right, stupid! You look like a funeral. Don't make me weep. Leave me with this other donkey, I tell you. I can get a laugh out of it when a knock-kneed camel spills you off on your fat head."

"Well, if you're sore about it, maybe I will," replied the loyal Chadwick. "I never did see so many clumsy, useless gobs in my life. It's a perfect cinch to stick aboard one of those critters and make him steam some knots."

Thereupon the eager youngster legged it to find an unemployed camel. Soon he was clinging to the saddle, perched high upon the hump, while the balky beast groaned and bubbled and swore in its own sinister language. With the noisy assistance of two Bedouins, Chadwick was steered to the starting line where he found himself matched against the coxswain of the captain's gig, who loudly told the world that he was the speed king of the desert. Having discarded his white canvas hat for a red fez with a tassel, he looked the part.

"You're not such a much," scornfully challenged Chadwick as he bounced like a ball while the natives tried to make the camel behave. "If this high-g geared thoroughbred is hittin' on all six, I'll leave you tied to the dock. Gid-dap!"

Amid frantic cheers they were off. The pace was an awkward, swaying trot that somehow covered the ground with surprising speed. Steering was no easy task. Even the coxswain found it too much for him to lay a straight course. He declared that his rudder must have jammed.

Meanwhile the hot, fussy tourist with the little camera was plodding stolidly on his way. The helmet was pulled over his nose as a shield from the glare. He had already expressed his intense dislike of these rackety bluejackets. They were an infernal nuisance. He was in a mood to love nobody at all. Discomfort of any kind annoyed him. This was obvious. And he was accustomed to having his opulent self-importance treated with the greatest respect.

Chub Chadwick gazed ahead in wild alarm. The pompous tourist was blundering right across the path of the camel race. Apparently he expected the fool camels to give him the right of way. He didn't know them. Chadwick jerked the halter rein and implored the idiotic brute to throw its helm hard over. There was due to be a collision unless the fat guy with the camera had sense enough to look up and reverse his engines.

Just an instant too late the helmet was shoved up from the sun-blistered nose. The warning yells had startled the gentleman. He was flustered by what he saw. Two sneering camels whose yellow teeth were bared came charging down upon him with prodigious strides. He hesitated, dodging this way and that like a bewildered jay walker in a city street. His heavy countenance mirrored a panic-smitten agitation.

Chub Chadwick was so excited that he forgot to hold fast to the saddle. His silly camel heard the voice of its Bedouin master who was loping along behind it. Obediently it endeavored to halt and sit down, all at once. Its hairy shoulder brushed the unfortunate tourist and bowled him off his pins. Chadwick lost his balance and slid over the hump. Down he tumbled, landing square in the gentleman's lap. The helmet went spinning and

was salvaged by a grinning urchin who shrilly demanded baksheesh.

Chadwick rolled over, begged the stranger's pardon, and would have helped him to rise. Aid and apologies were wrathfully spurned. The victim lumbered to his feet, brushed the sand from his eyes, clapped the helmet on his head, and erupted in very violent words.

He made a sad exhibition of himself. He was profanely abusive and insulting. A crowd gathered. Some of the Yankee tars laughed at him. They couldn't help it. God had given them a sense of humor. The absurd tourist was undamaged. With the whole desert to ramble in, he had headed straight into trouble. They were sorry he had been spilled and felt anxious to soothe him, but this was impossible.

Smiting his donkey over the rump, Kid Sprague approached the disturbance. His buddy was in difficulties. At a distance the florid man under the helmet had looked vaguely familiar. At closer range the Kid recognized him. This made the situation more absorbing than ever. He could hear the troubled voice of Chub Chadwick raised in protest.

"But I did my best to keep from bumping into you, sir. You simply wouldn't stop, look, and listen. A camel is plain cuckoo, I'll tell the world. I'm off 'em for life."

This failed to pacify the man with the rumpled feelings. His self-control was a total loss. With a truculent gesture he exclaimed:

"Drunk and disgracing your uniform, you damned young rowdy! I intend to report——"

"Pipe down on that stuff," interrupted the boyish sailor. "I never drink a drop. And this whole liberty party is behaving itself *right*. It's for the officers of U. S. S. *Toledo* to check up on our morals and our manners. Get that?"

This added fuel to the other man's exasperation. He expected deference from others. His face was even redder as he blurted:

"I intend to see the captain of your ship at Alexandria to-morrow. And if I

don't get satisfaction, I'll forward a complaint straight to the navy department. They know who I am in Washington. What's your name?"

Before the lad could answer, a chief petty officer shoved through the crowd. It was Martin Donnelly, machinist's mate, with his rough-hewn features and powerful build. In his deep voice he addressed the bullying personage.

"I'll take *your* name, if you please. If you mean to go through with this thing, I propose to turn in my own report."

"Huh. I take no insolence from you either, understand? My name? Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton."

"Never heard of you or it," rumbled Donnelly with the black scowl that betokened rough weather. "Well, you can take it from me, Mr. Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton, that your eloquence has spouted about long enough. Suppose you turn off the tap. The accident didn't amount to shucks and the kid has done all he could to square it."

"Coming off to the ship are you, to raise a rumpus? Think it over. The boy is on his first cruise and his record is good. You may get him in all wrong."

"It's none of your business, you big roughneck," began Mr. Morris L. Gowdy, but he went no farther. Martin Donnelly raised a large hand. It commanded silence. Something told Mr. Gowdy that if this hand should fall upon him he would be permanently flattened out.

"Easy, sir," spoke the machinist's mate. "Better go somewhere and cool off. This hot sun and gettin' all stewed up is bad for a man that eats and drinks too much. What you need is a slap on the jaw, but I might have to send for the Cairo coroner."

Mr. Gowdy mopped his face and was at a loss for a retort. He was the center of attraction for at least a hundred of the liberty party. Their comments were most uncomplimentary. As though afraid they might decide to mob him, he broke through the cordon and toiled across the sand in the direction of the highway.

"A prize snappin' turtle," said the sympathetic Kid Sprague as Chadwick trudged

over to him. "Don't let it crab the party. You have plenty of lads to back up your alibi."

The buddy nodded his thanks, but his cheerful spirits had ebbed to low tide. A camel had blighted his young life.

"I wish I knew something about this Gowdy sundowner, Kid. How does he get that way?"

"He always was like that. He comes from my State—I heard him make a speech when he was running for United States senator two years ago. He spent too much money in the campaign and it licked him. His work was coarse. He is the big noise in Templeton. Three thousand hands in his mills when business is good. Nobody likes him."

"Rich and all swelled up. That's why he rode me so hard," sighed Chadwick. "Heaven help a poor young gob."

"You said it, Chub. He makes his own laws and regulations, but he can't run the navy."

"I'll bet he's got influence, Kid. And he is all set to peel the hide off me. I could see it in his eye. He is one bad actor. And the gang laughed when the camel dumped him. That made him rave."

"Golly, but I wish I could help you," exclaimed William Sprague. "You certainly do deserve a good turn for conveyin' me to Cairo."

Seaman Chadwick was exploring the pocket of his white blouse. Life was one thing after another.

"Lost my new fountain pen that I bought from the canteen last pay day. Could you beat it? Bounced out when I fell off that blamed old camel."

"Let's go look for it, Chub. Might as well try."

The donkey was persuaded to move to the spot where Mr. Morris L. Gowdy had been so suddenly upset. In the deep sand, trampled by many feet, the search seemed hopeless. However, it diverted Chub Chadwick from his dark forebodings while he diligently pawed and sifted. It was Kid Sprague who yelled and pointed at something black. It was almost buried.

Chadwick uncovered not a fountain pen but a flat leather pocketbook. Hastily they examined the contents. Cards and memoranda informed that the pocketbook was the property of the great Morris L. Gowdy. Not much money in it. Two Egyptian bank notes. Disgustedly Kid Sprague exclaimed:

"Only ten dollars! These rich guys park it at a hotel or a bank. It's only poor goofs like us that love to feel a bundle of kale in their clothes."

"Hard luck," said Chadwick. "I sort of hoped it might make him ease up on me if I could give him back his lost fortune."

Mr. Gowdy had passed beyond their vision. They hastened to overtake him, but the donkey refused to shift from low gear. A guide told them that a man of Mr. Gowdy's description had gone back to Cairo alone in an automobile.

"And that's that," said William Sprague. "I don't feel like breaking my neck to chase him. I suppose he stays at the most expensive hotel. What's your idea, Chub?"

"I can't waste the afternoon on him, Kid. Honest, we must make every minute of this liberty count. I may get restricted to the ship for the rest of the cruise on account of this hard-boiled plutocrat. Didn't he say he was coming aboard to-morrow? Hold his pocketbook and give it to him then."

WILLIAM agreed to this. They tarried to rest in the palm garden of the Hotel Mena, overlooking the Pyramids. Sandwiches and cold drinks offered a certain consolation. It was a clouded holiday. They felt rather adrift and forlorn. For this reason they welcomed the sight of Martin Donnelly when he loomed in the offing.

Detaching himself from a party of his own companions, he sat down at the table with the pair of disconsolate lads who were much younger than himself. There was a sense of comfort in his strength and mellowed experience. With a twinkle in his somber eyes, he remarked:

"You can't blame it on my jinx, boys.

Not guilty this time. I never went near those condemned camels. Whew, how dry I am! Beer for mine. What's yours? Here, put your pocketbook away, Kid. I'll buy."

"It's not mine, Martin. We found it in the sand. It belongs to Morris L. Gowdy."

"The big tramp! My mild disposition was all that kept me from punchin' him for a row of scarabs. What did you find in the wallet?"

"Nothing much—cards and stuff like that."

"Um-m, let me have a look, Kid. I can't expect you infants to be wise to this wicked world."

"Perhaps we can hang something on this bird? Is that what you mean?" asked the ingenuous Chadwick. "I never thought of that."

"Fight the devil with fire, son," said Donnelly.

"I was telling Chub about this Gowdy," the Kid remarked. "I had seen him at home. It's a coincidence."

"A coincidence? What we need is a depth bomb," growled the machinist's mate, as he fingered the pocketbook. "Is he married, Kid?"

"Yes—one of those faded, skinny blonds that has to shove off to a rest cure or a sanitarium every so often. She wasn't with him to-day."

"Left her at home, probably. He needs the rest cure. How do you know he isn't runnin' wild?"

"Find the other woman, Martin? Gee, it sounds as if you meant to blackmail him."

"Blackmail or blackjack him, Kid," Donnelly announced without shame. "All I bar is murder. It worries me to see you boys all gloomed up this way." Slipping the pocketbook inside his coat he added, "I'll give this back to you later. I'm engaged with one of them heavy-duty intellects that turns over slow but steady. I need to study the documents in the case. What's your schedule, Kid?"

"Hire a cab and cruise in the bazaars this afternoon. Chub can hop out and buy souvenirs for the both of us."

"Perhaps I'll sight your smoke. I may crash into the curio stores before night. Anyhow, I'll make your signal at the Hotel Bristol before taps. Enjoy yourself, Chadwick, and forget this millionaire bum of a Morris L. Gowdy. There's more'n one way to skin a skunk. And I may be took with one of my brilliant ideas."

That the brawny machinist's mate should have concerned himself so seriously with the affairs of these unhappy youngsters may seem odd. There was a quixotic streak in him—a shipmate's loyalty blended with a kindness singularly responsive. A hard man, yet soft at heart, who, once he had taken hold, did not know how to let go.

Here was a situation that appealed to his code of rough-and-ready chivalry—a liberty party spoiled for jolly Chub Chadwick whom every one liked, and luckless Kid Sprague making the best of it with his leg in a plaster cast. As the final factor of the equation, Martin Donnelly had taken a violent dislike to Mr. Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton, and felt compelled, by fair means or foul, to put a crimp in that gentleman's methods.

TURNING these things over in his mind, Donnelly made choice of a competent partner in whom he might confide. This was Jerry Overholt, chief quartermaster, a quick-witted, active little man with a dancing eye who could be daunted by no rash enterprise. His service record, with its medals and commendations, was proof of this. Sight-seeing bored him. Donnelly assumed that he would welcome any diversion with a kick in it. They broke away from the crowd and drove in to Cairo together. Seclusion was found in a small hotel undiscovered by the liberty party where Donnelly explained things over a bountiful luncheon.

"You see how it is Jerry. This Gowdy person mustn't be allowed to get aboard the ship and put up his holler to the executive or the old man. He didn't get Chadwick's name, but he could pick out the lad if the crew was lined up at quarters. We sail for Port Said to-morrow night. After

that we'll be hell-and-gone for the Indian Ocean, the Cape, and the South Atlantic. This Gowdy bimbo will never catch up with us again."

"He pulled a raw one. I was in the audience," said the chief quartermaster. "Well, what's your comeback?"

"I guess we'll have to kidnap him," soberly answered Donnelly. "You know what I mean—tuck him away somewheres till after the ship goes to sea. That sounds sort of violent, but it's the one best bet. I can't find any compromisin' documents in his pocketbook. If he chases the skirts, he plays 'em safe."

Jerry Overholt appeared a little startled but was ready to be shown. He was usually willing to try anything once. And Martin Donnelly had a knack of making an adventure seem entirely justified and feasible.

"Shoot," said Jerry, his head cocked alertly like a terrier in consultation with a mastiff. "Kidnap is a word I don't like. This hefty guy is to be unavoidably detained."

"Correct, old-timer," agreed Donnelly, whose brow was furrowed with concentrated thought. "In his pocketbook I found this piece of paper with his dates all written down. He is as systematic as a pay clerk. To-night he goes out to the Hotel Mena for dinner—eight o'clock."

"Will he be alone, Martin?"

"He don't say, but he was by himself this morning. Anyhow, it looks like our only chance to commit abduction and so on."

"I can step around and find out where he stays," Jerry suggested. "Probably at Shephard's or the Ritz. We couldn't pull anything unless we were all set to check up on him."

"But suppose we did pry him out of a taxi in the dark, where the road to the Pyramids runs off into the desert, what then? Where can we stow him? And it couldn't be done in uniform, Jerry."

"Not on your life. Leave me to work out the details, will you, you old blunderbuss? Well, for one thing, we'll have to

be faked as Bedouin robbers grabbing this American millionaire for ransom. It's a difficult stunt, Martin. We can't stay and stand guard over him, for the ship would sail without us."

"We need another pardner—somebody wise to the native stuff," came from the perplexed machinist's mate.

"It can't be done without him," Jerry replied. "Hot dog! It's Jimmy Hassin. Let's go get him. He will be with the gang at the Hotel Bristol for chow."

"Jimmy Hassin is right," beamed Donnelly like a man who saw a great light. "It won't take a whole lot of piasters to corrupt him, body, soul, and breeches. And he is a red-hot sport besides."

Jimmy Hassin was the Egyptian dragoon who had obtained the contract to take the liberty party to Cairo at so much per man, payable in advance, this to include railway fares, hotel hills, and automobiles. It was an excellent arrangement, protecting the men against extortion and insuring their return to the ship if they went broke. Shrewd and merry was Jimmy Hassin, with an English vocabulary compounded of lessons at a missionary college and tourist slang. He wore the red fez, but his clothes were of the snappy pattern affected by the American youth.

It remained for the conspirators to persuade him that the reward was worth the risk. They found him picking his teeth in the hotel lounge and swapping yarns with a group of bluejackets. Calling him aside, Donnelly inquired:

"Can you shake the bunch for a half hour or so, Jimmy? Something important. Coin in it for you."

"Money talks," said Jimmy Hassin. "I have to live. The tourist season is on the blink. Too early yet."

They unfolded the reason why Mr. Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton had to be left somewhere for safe-keeping during the next twenty-four hours. Jimmy's brown face crinkled with amusement. There was malice in his voice, however, as he exclaimed:

"I like to get that Gowdy's number myself—throw a scare into him, what?

Three days ago I was his guide in the bazaars. He try to do me out of my commissions—the rake-off on the things he bought. That man is a dirty tightwad, believe me. How much you give if I put him away all safe?"

"Twenty-five bucks," replied Jerry Overholt. "If you flub the deal, you get nothing."

"Fifty dollars, and cheap for the price," protested Jimmy Hassin.

"Get out, you burglar," grumbled Donnelly. "This is easy money. We stand all expenses."

"Forty iron men," passionately implored the Egyptian. "If this job skids on me, I go to jail for seven years—remember that!"

"You deserve it. All right, you win, Jimmy. Forty berries when Gowdy is clamped down good and tight. What's under your fez? It's your move."

Jimmy pondered with a grave, abstracted mien. It was a ticklish, complicated business that appealed to his native love of finesse and intrigue. It seemed worthy of his best efforts. Not a crime, he argued with himself, for no ransom would be demanded. To arrange it so that Mr. Gowdy might make his escape at the proper time—this would be the trick. His inflated self-importance would make the most of the adventure. It was a noble tale for him to tell—how he had been carried off by Bedouin bandits and had extricated himself by his own wit and courage. A fine grand-stand play for the fat pig of an American! He ought to pay Jimmy Hassin five hundred dollars for the stunt, but collecting it would be an awkward matter. At length, the wily dragoman looked up to say:

"Listen, you gobs. In the desert—four miles from the Pyramids or something like that—is a little village of mud houses where there is plenty of old tombs and truck. In that village is a cousin of mine. He is a crook. Sometimes I go to see him because there is a very nice girl in that village. She is stuck on me. You pay him baksheesh, he will put old Gowdy in a room and lock him up. When Gowdy

gets out, he can walk himself back to Cairo or hire a donkey."

"But that gets your cousin in trouble with the police," Donnelly objected. "Gowdy will raise all kinds of trouble."

"Never mind about my cousin. He will do what I say," replied Jimmy Hassin in a hard voice. "He has money enough to fix the cops. One time he tried to kill my brother—poison in his coffee—and I get wise. I don't squeal on him, understand. Some day I may want to use my cousin. Now is the time."

"Gosh, I hope he don't slip a pill into old Gowdy's coffeepot," murmured Jerry Overholt. "We don't want to overplay our hand."

Jimmy guaranteed the personal safety of the prisoner and swore it by the beard of the Prophet. Thereupon they put their heads together to plan how Mr. Morris L. Gowdy, on his way to dine at the Hotel Mena near the Pyramids, could be quietly and expeditiously extracted from his hired motor car. These were three seasoned men of the world, accustomed to stratagems and alarms, with a talent for organization. One by one the obstacles were solved, as well as could be done in advance, and the kinks ironed out. Having set his hand to the task, Martin Donnelly could not be dismayed. He was a stubborn man when cleared for action.

ALL oblivious that Fate was about to hurl a monkey wrench into his orderly luxurious scheme of existence, Mr. Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton, strolled across the terrace of Shepherd's Hotel at seven thirty in the evening. He was ready for his dinner engagement. Two cocktails had fortified him for the ride. Florid, well groomed, domineering, he was the picture of the masterful success that is stamped with the Yankee dollar mark.

Presently he stepped into a shiny limousine with a native chauffeur in livery. It was a car reserved for those who could afford to pay for it. As it moved through the crowded streets Mr. Gowdy scowled at recollection of the camel and the rowdy young bluejacket. He was not one to for-

get such an episode. He had previously planned to spend to-morrow at Alexandria. It would cause him no inconvenience to take a shore boat out to U. S. S. *Toledo* and, as the duty of an American citizen, tell the captain how his sailors disgraced the uniform when on leave.

Mr. Gowdy rolled across the Nile bridge and over the smooth boulevard between the irrigated fields. Shade trees made the soft darkness more obscure. The headlights threw their white shafts against this dusky curtain. Not far from the end of the journey a string of camels with bulky packs on their backs blundered across the road. Belated, they were plodding along to make camp in the market place, or so it was inferred.

Taking fright, they huddled together, the long necks bobbing to and fro. The chauffeur jammed on the brakes to avoid collision. Mr. Gowdy bounced on the cushion and swore petulantly. He couldn't seem to get away from camels. The chauffeur was compelled to halt the car for a moment. In this moment things occurred with a precision swift and incredible.

A door of the limousine was wrenched open. The dome light revealed a tall, ruffianly Bedouin of powerful physique in a soiled white robe with a crimson girdle. His head was swathed in folds of white cloth which also covered the lower part of his face. Mr. Gowdy had a glimpse of black brows, eyes somber and ferocious, high cheek bones, a skin burned dark by desert sun. Behind this formidable apparition stood two smaller men similarly clad whose movements were agile.

As though in a most dreadful nightmare, Mr. Gowdy was yanked headlong from the limousine. Dexterously a woolen scarf was passed over his mouth and knotted behind his head. His shouts were no more than wheezing murmurs. At the same instant his hands were gripped and bound together. A hard, cold object was pressed firmly against his stomach. He correctly conjectured this to be a pistol, but he did not know it was empty.

With their artfully blundering camel train, the Bedouin outlaws had stopped four other cars and peered into them before they bagged their quarry. However, the trap had been successfully sprung and it was time for them to move rapidly in the direction of the shrouded desert so near at hand.

Scrambling down the embankment of the highway, Mr. Gowdy between the two smaller captors, they halted at a fragment of mud wall to a timber of which a donkey had been tied. It was a sturdy donkey selected to bear the burden of two hundred pounds of American plutocracy.

The empty pistol prodded Mr. Gowdy's stomach. It was a gesture that made him wince and gasp. The tall sheik who looked like sudden death stalked in front, leading the donkey by a short towrope. To right and left shuffled the other bandits. One of them spoke in Arabic but the others remained grimly silent.

For a little distance they went carefully to avoid tumbling into irrigation ditches. Soon this cultivated ground was left behind. They passed the rim of the Nile valley and came abruptly to the desert sand in which nothing grew.

The night wind brought to their ears the distant music of an orchestra playing for dinner at the Hotel Mena, yet they were already in the Egypt of desolate spaces and primitive people. They passed beyond the familiar area of the Pyramids and the Sphinx and there were no more landmarks to guide them, but Jimmy Has-sin knew his bearings and held an unswerving course for the village where dwelt his rascally cousin.

Martin Donnelly still strode grandly in the van. It occurred to him that the long walk back would be no easy promenade. The escapade was worth it, but the organization had functioned with so much efficiency that the results seemed rather tame and uneventful. Here was Mr. Morris L. Gowdy riding as quiet as a mouse, without even a squeak out of him. For all the trouble he made he might have been a bale of hay. An occasional poke with the pistol kept him in terrified sub-

mission. His proud spirit was broken. It was unkindly concluded that he was a man with a yellow streak.

They had traversed a mile or so when Jimmy Hassin ran forward to pull Donnelly's flowing sleeve and whisper a subdued word. The tall sheik dropped back, leaving Jerry Overholt to lead the donkey by the halter and flourish the pistol. A few paces in the rear Jimmy Hassin imparted in a voice carefully hushed:

"Some bad men are following us, Mr. Donnelly. You can't fool me on this desert stuff, not much. I hear 'em one, two times. And just now I think I see 'em."

"What for? I'll say you're a false alarm," hoarsely whispered the tall sheik.

"Loafers from the Pyramids tribe—you know 'em—some guides, all robbers. They see us go by. Tourist on a donkey—he wants to see ruins in the starlight. What you say? Romantic! All foreigners are crazy, so these Bedouins dope it."

"A holdup?" replied Donnelly, glowering fiercely. "You son of perdition, how do I know you didn't tip 'em off? If you double cross us I'll break your neck."

"For God's sake, don't you go blow up like that," Jimmy Hassin implored. His fears seemed genuine. "These are very dangerous robbers, believe me. If we fight 'em, they kill us plenty dead."

"Huh, this Gowdy belongs to us, and I reckon we'll keep him," grunted the obstinate Donnelly. "Here, you Jimmy, sidle up and relieve the chief quartermaster at the donkey. Pass him the signal to fall back and report to me. Then stop the outfit and let's listen."

The two navy men held a brief, furtive council of war. The only weapons were a useless pistol and a thick stick with which Jimmy had basted the donkey. Yes, they were being followed. It was no fantasy. Several stealthy pursuers were coming nearer and nearer. In the sand their feet made no sound, but their shadowy figures were discernible as shimmering, ghostly blobs of white.

The situation had taken an incongruous turn. Martin Donnelly was resolved to

defend the detestable Morris L. Gowdy against attack and spoliation instead of running away and leaving him to his fate. Jerry Overholt, chief quartermaster, agreed that it had to be done. It was a ridiculous mess, said he, but he guessed they would have to stand by. They were in duty bound to give the Gowdy bird safe conduct after snatching him into the desert.

Perceiving that the donkey and its escort had halted as if to reconnoiter, the prowling vagabonds from the Pyramids ran forward to finish the business of plundering the tempting tourist. They expected no more than a show of resistance.

Never were five predatory children of the desert more amazed and discomfited! Instead of scampering away, the Bedouins escorting the fat tourist seemed to welcome a scrimmage. Two of them were wholly undismayed by a chorus of blood-thirsty yells, by the flicker of a knife, by the glint of a whizzing spear. They surged into those five marauders and treated them with great cruelty. The mêlée eddied around the phlegmatic donkey while Mr. Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton looked on and gave himself up for lost.

Unable to offer the slightest defense, a random blow from a robber's club banged him over the head. Knocked unconscious, he slid off the donkey and lay stretched in the sand while the fight trampled over him.

The pistol made a handy bludgeon for Jerry Overholt. The thick stick was terrible in the hands of Martin Donnelly. He was a tall sheik run amuck, rampageous, worse than a desert storm. Lo and behold, of those five rascallions who had hoped to empty a tourist's pockets, one sat bedazed with a broken pate, another held both hands to his nose and cried loudly to Allah, a third limped slowly away, while two were in flight as fast as they could put one sandal in front of another.

Breathing hard, Martin Donnelly knelt to examine the inanimate body of Mr. Morris L. Gowdy. A welt on his brow indicated what had happened to him.

"Here is a jam, Jerry," sadly observed the machinist's mate. "This here unfortu-

nate millionaire of ours has been knocked as dead as a mackerel. What do you think of that?"

"Get out, you big doony," scoffed the chief quartermaster. "He took the count, but you can't tell me he is dead enough to bury. Sure, his heart is beating. He will come to presently."

"What if he don't, Jerry?"

"Oh, shut up. Don't interrupt me," cried the quick-witted quartermaster as he jumped to his feet and did a jig step. "Gorgeous! Am I bright? Kick yourself out of the white nightie, Martin, and rip off the burnoose. Shake a leg. Lively, now!"

"What's the big idea?" asked Donnelly, astonished.

"Dumb-bell! We are in uniform, aren't we? We were strollin' out to see the Pyramids by night, understand! We saw Mr. Gowdy pass close—we didn't know who he was—but pretty soon we spotted the bunch of cutthroats when they got under way and followed his trail. So we steamed along after 'em."

"I get you," chuckled Donnelly who could see through a hole in a millstone. "We felt mighty suspicious and rushed up in the nick of time to rescue the gent."

"Smooth work," declared the admiring Jimmy Hassin. "I am your guide, showing you the Pyramids at night, eh? Don't forget to throw some bouquets at me, please."

The scene was quickly rehearsed under the chief quartermaster's direction. The Bedouin garments were tossed to one side. There stood two gallant, self-reliant chief petty officers of Uncle Sam's navy, with their highly respectable guide Jimmy Hassin, well known to the hotels and bazaars of Cairo. They waited impatiently and with increasing trepidation.

The performance would have to be postponed indefinitely if Mr. Gowdy should fail to wake up. Donnelly rubbed the victim's brow and massaged his wrists. Carefully he inspected him by the light of a pocket flash lamp. He no longer disliked Mr. Gowdy. He appeared to feel a pathetic fondness for him.

AFTER what seemed an eternity the gentleman sighed, opened his eyes, and muttered broken words. Tenderly Martin Donnelly raised him to a sitting posture and supported him. Mr. Gowdy blinked in a bewildered manner. Memory was fitfully returning. He shuddered. The frenzied climax had been too much for his nerves.

These were not the Bedouins who had kidnaped him. They were men of his own race. They talked his own tongue. They wore white uniforms with bright buttons. The flash light disclosed their identity. They belonged to the American navy! Mr. Gowdy almost wept. Fingering the lump on his forehead, he said in husky accents:

"How—however did you happen to find me?"

They explained. It had been a stroke of luck. Modestly they refused to see any particular merit in it. They had been on the job. That was all.

Jerry Overholt tied the woolen scarf around Mr. Gowdy's head as a makeshift bandage. They put him on the donkey and held him there. Slowly the party returned to the Pyramids and thence to the Hotel Mena at the end of the highway. Mr. Gowdy felt considerably shaken. He had friends at this hotel. He would spend the night here instead of motoring into Cairo.

The pair of naval heroes nudged each other. Speech was superfluous. Jerry Overholt had summed it up in one word. Gorgeous! They had Mr. Gowdy precisely where they wanted him. It was for them to let matters take their appointed course and refrain from meddling with destiny. And so they arrived at the fashionable Hotel Mena, gay with winter pleasure seekers from England and America.

The parlors, the café, the palm garden buzzed with excitement. The sensational tidings of the abduction of Morris L. Gowdy had been announced by the frightened chauffeur of the shiny limousine. Police and a detail of cavalry had been summoned from Cairo. They had gone

scouting into the desert, but had failed to encounter Mr. Gowdy and his captors.

Now the missing millionaire made an entrance as thrilling as a motion-picture melodrama. With him were the valiant rescuers, two fearless, resourceful chief petty officers from the United States Scout Cruiser *Toldeo*. They were mobbed by cheering men and fair women. The orchestra played "The Star-spangled Banner." Martin Donnelly blushed to the ears. Jerry Overholt neatly side-stepped an elderly lady who tried to kiss him.

Mr. Gowdy's friends extricated him from the ovation which had restored his dignity and self-importance. He was himself again.

He requested the splendid sailors to go to his room with him. He had something to say to them. Jimmy Hassin remained in the hall, with his ear at the keyhole.

"I shall be unable to make the trip to Alexandria to-morrow," began Mr. Gowdy, reclining in a large, cushioned chair. "I—er—it was my intention to report one of your men for misconduct."

"Yes, sir, so I understand," exclaimed Donnelly, "but if you could forget that it would be a favor to us."

"Forget it? Of course," was the emphatic response. "I have to. You have put me tremendously in debt to you and your ship. I am proud of our navy and its personnel. If you will give me your Cairo address, I will arrange to have a messenger call before you take your train to-morrow. Not payment—but a token of my esteem. Call it that."

"Shucks! Jerry and I couldn't take

money for this stunt, Mr. Gowdy," protested Donnelly. "It was fun for us. But there is a couple of lads who had their liberty party plumb ruined by your bad temper. Chadwick was the young gob on the camel. Sprague was his buddy with the leg in a plaster cast. Anything you care to slip us could be split up betwixt the two lads as a sort of balm to their feelings. How about that, Jerry?"

"It goes double, Martin."

"Very handsome of you," warmly returned Mr. Gowdy. "That guide of yours—what's his name—Jimmy Hassin? I'll take care of him."

They shook hands with Mr. Morris L. Gowdy of Templeton, and passed into the hall. Jimmy Hassin reproached them bitterly.

"You didn't take all the money he will cough up, eh? Boobs!"

"Subside, Jimmy. Pipe down," said Martin Donnelly. "You get your forty bucks, same as we promised, though I have an unholy suspicion that you double crossed us, at that. And Mr. Gowdy says he will plaster you with piasters. You did mighty well."

They hired a car and returned to Cairo, two virtuous mariners with a well-earned liberty. After a contemplative, contented silence, the chief quartermaster observed:

"Anything on your conscience, Martin?"

"Nary a speck, Jerry. We saw our duty and we went to it. How about you?"

"I can sleep like a child."

"Not yet. We must go break out Chub Chadwick and Kid Sprague and give them a real, sure-enough party."

Another story by Ralph D. Paine in the February 7th issue.

THE ATHLETIC DIPLOMAT

FRANK B. KELLOGG, American ambassador to England, is an athlete. He is an expert horseman. When Roosevelt left the White House and sold the saddle horses he had in Washington, Kellogg bought one of them. The ambassador, when in the Senate, used to play golf with the then Senator Warren G. Harding. During Taft's first campaign for the presidency, Mr. Kellogg pitched five innings of a baseball game for a team of statesmen opposed to one of newspaper correspondents at Hot Springs, Virginia. To keep himself fit, he uses a skipping rope and goes through other "setting-up" exercises every morning.



The Dummy Speaks

By Bert Mohrman

A Philistine of the prize ring is smitten hip and thigh.

THE DUMMY" is not a fiction hero. The characters and situations in this chronicle are not the vivid imaginings of an author's brain, but rather the actors and experiences in a little drama staged by Fate, the book written by Fact and no music arranged.

"Pop" Gracey, the costar in this playlet of life, just a few months ago passed to his reward. He was a unique figure in Western sporting circles. Always handling a stable of fistic artists with titular aspirations, he never held a fighter any length of time after that fighter arrived in the "near-great" class.

Those on the inside knew the reason. Gracey believed in clean living. If a battler who had attained a position of some note in the ring believed he could look upon the wine when it was carmine and the horses when they were slow—Gracey was through. The fighter could seek some other trainer. He generally did.

Success is a top-heavy crown and these boys were far from adept jugglers. Therefore, after years of hard work, Pop had but little on the right side of the ledger.

A rather weather-beaten health ranch at
11B—POP.

Aurora, twelve miles from Denver, a few fighters who ate heavily and fought lightly and a system and method that was successful but still a failure. It is hard to make youth understand that in order to retain physical condition one must continue indefinitely the method that brought about that physical supremacy. This was Pop's creed and he lived it. To break the creed laid down by Pop was to spell banishment for the youngster who caused the fracture.

Joe Regon, the other principal in the drama, if justice has run its true course, is in all probability engaged in the reduction of large stones to smaller ones, in some State penitentiary quarry. He was of that school of pugilism that succeeds on brute strength and crooked strategy. To him the cost or manner of gain was incidental as long as the goal was reached. And now for the yarn.

POP discovered the Dummy in a third-rate fight club. It was before the Dummy appellation had been applied. Then he was Tommy Thomas, just a pre-lim kid, fighting for the fun of it as well as the three or four-dollar prize that would

pay for a few alleged meals and a dingy place to sleep.

He knew nothing of training. Sometimes he would box a little before a fight to limber up his tough muscles. To box in actual combat was an unknown quantity to him. He fought. And smiled while fighting. Sometimes he would take a terrific jolt in order to crash in two blows of his own manufacture.

He was successful in a measure. The night Pop discovered him, he was engaged in the act of sending a neighbor-in-argument on a long inspection tour of the constellations with the aid of a right swing that originated somewhere in the region of the heel.

After the fight Pop sought the youngster in the dressing room. Tommy at first thought Pop was engaged in the gentle art of "kidding the troops." A product of Denver's "dirty district," which is a maze of railroad tracks and poverty, homeless and parentless at ten, the boy was bewildered at the interest and kindness of the old trainer. To be handled by the great Pop Gracey was an honor. Would he come with him? Would a starving man accept food? He certainly would.

He joined the Gracey stable that night and became a firm adherent of the Gracey method of living—plenty of sleep, good food, and plenty of exercise. He progressed rapidly. The green "ham and egg" became a fine functioning physical machine. His quick mind, sharpened by the hardships encountered during his previous precarious existence, made him an apt student.

In six months sporting writers could hear his name mentioned in connection with things fistic without going into gales of hysterical guffaws. They could consider an assignment to cover a fight in which Tommy appeared without condemning the sporting editor to the smoldering regions. It was a compliment to their ability to be so ordered, for the boy fought with a rapid scientific finesse and one must know the game if a proper report was to be rendered.

In a few more months Tommy's name

was good for at least a column of press copy a day. He was coming along at a great clip. Friends, recruited from the sporting fraternity, worshiped at the feet of a new idol. Dinners, parties and occasions in his honor were staged. But Tommy seldom attended. When he did it was to make a parting speech around ten p. m. that contained something about "must get to bed early, and soon."

It seemed that old Pop Gracey had at last picked a winner. From a tough egg possessed of hard muscles and ability to take it, Tommy had advanced under Pop's tutelage until he had become one of the brainiest, speediest fighting machines in the game. Muscles trained by scientific application and clean living—he had arrived. And Pop Gracey received his just share of credit.

The time arrived when only set-ups could be secured to box Tommy. In fact most of the local pugilistic timber was just a bunch of push-overs for the lad. Pop was considering the possibility of bringing him to the East for a shot at the "big uns" and real money.

But there still was the question: Could Tommy take a severe drubbing and still come through a winner? Some of the critics claimed he was hardly seasoned to the glare of the big lights in the larger clubs, much less sufficiently groomed for an entrance into metropolitan lightweight fistiana.

Tommy Thomas was the living example of old Pop Gracey's system. In the boy's body and mind the soul of Gracey functioned. If there was a fallacy it should be detected and remedied before the journey East.

A fighter sufficiently tough to make a real fight of it, and possessed of more experience than Tommy, must be found to act as the trial horse.

Joe Regon was at that time the proverbial stumblingblock to topnotch honor seekers. Half Mexican, the other half Indian, Regon was primitive in more than the literal sense of the word. Although not considered king-pin material, he had nevertheless demonstrated a marked fac-

ulty for absorbing punishment and he was a ring general of years' standing. Many a high-priced performer had fallen victim before the half-breed. He was just a tough egg—and crooked.

The old Acme A. A. in the stockyards district of Denver was the scene of the conflict. It was the supreme test for Thomas. If the youngster could manage to win a verdict over the Mex he would prove to the satisfaction of all, that he was a coming champion. A knock-out would have been glorious plumage in Tommy's cap.

Regon, sneering at his opponent's chances, trained in a rocking-chair. His road work was done in an automobile. He had strengthened his stomach muscles by long bouts with "white mule" and homebrew. To him Tommy was a push-over. Only fighting a couple of years and believing he could dump the Regon apple cart! Ridiculous. It was ridiculous for Joe to reason that way.

The day of the battle was a gala one in the Mile High City. The outlying districts had sent hordes of fight fans with plenty money to wager on Tommy. The Regon lucre was not short by any means. Many were of the opinion that the Mexican would administer the quietus in a few rounds.

AND now the fight. The gong brought Tommy out with a rush. Pink and glowing, he jabbed and countered with a confidence wrought by condition.

The Mexican was bewildered. This wasn't according to his reckoning. His muscle-bound right shot out and found only ozone. A stinging jab and his head rocked on his shoulders. Tommy was mauling him to bits. The gong—and the round ended.

The Mexican was a sadly mussed bit of humanity, but through the blood coursing from his split lips a leer of hatred and mockery was easily discernible.

"Watch for a trick, boy," cautioned old Gracey, recognizing the signs. "He'll try to fox you if he can. Watch him, lad, and just keep jabbing."

The second was a repetition of the first. Tommy was pecking the breed to death. A one-two punch dropped the Mex to the mat for a nine count. He got up and staggered into a clinch. They broke and clinched and clinched and broke until the bell. Regon's strength was fast waning.

In just forty-five seconds of the third round the Mexican pulled the trick that brought to Tommy the cognomen of Dummy. Realizing he was beaten, the primitive streak coming to the surface, Regon rushed into a clinch from the bell, backing Tommy into a neutral corner.

With the Mexican's arms entwined around his chest, Tommy was shooting devastating blows to his opponent's stomach. Suddenly Regon tightened his grip. His head came close to Tommy's shoulder, face distorted in apparent agony as he shrieked, "Foul! Foul!"

Tommy, always a clean fighter and bewildered at the fact that he had fouled, dropped his hands momentarily. Here his inexperience told. It was the opening that Regon wanted.

Like a streak Regon's right whipped over to the point of Tommy's jaw. All the Mexican's fast-slipping strength was behind the blow, and the lad toppled like a poled ox. As he fell, body stiffened, his head struck an uncovered turnbuckle on the ring rope where it was attached to the post. The blood poured from a gash three inches long, inflicted by the steel buckle.

In the tumult, that was composed of cries for Tommy to finish his man, few had heard the Mexican's cry of foul. The referee started to count. Tommy was out—cold.

Pop Gracey, alternating between tears at Tommy's defeat and wildly railing at the half-breed, for he had detected the trick, tossed in the towel. A fickle fight public, turning from Tommy to Regon, started for the ring. Cursing and yelling, "He quit, he quit," they charged the circle to get at Tommy. A near riot followed.

The limp form of the lad was carried through the crush to the dressing room. Cursory examination by the club physi-

cians revealed no serious injury, aside from the gash at the base of the skull. Still he remained unconscious.

Every known means of resuscitation was employed, but Tommy could not be revived. Doc Shippey advised that he be rushed to Memorial Hospital for a more thorough examination.

The house surgeons diagnosed the case as one of concussion of the brain. It was inoperative. The organic injury was slight and an operation would in all probability increase the danger instead of dissipating it.

"Wait until he comes to," was the verdict.

Pop Gracey, tearfully denouncing the wily Mexican and mumbling prayers to the Almighty that Tommy would be all right, asked a few of us to wait with him in an anteroom.

Toward the cold gray dawn of a Colorado morning a nurse appeared at the threshold and beckoned to Pop. He smiled a little wanly, straightened his old shoulders and followed her. Tommy was just emerging from his coma, we guessed.

Doc Shippey, who had been in consultation with the staff, came into the anteroom just as Pop's footsteps died away.

"He's coming out of it, boys, and believe me only a miracle will ever bring back to us the real Tommy Thomas. He's suffering from a bad concussion. Were we to operate the injury would be increased—probably cause death. I'm afraid he'll never speak, or remember anything. He's through as a fighter, that's certain."

We were astonished at Doc's words. None of us had realized the severity of the case. True, we had thought it might mean a fractured skull, but never lost memory and speech.

"It's a form of hysterical aphasia," Doc continued, "in which the victim may receive slight organic injury, but the jolting and jarring of the brain was of such force in this case as to cause great functional disturbance. Only a shock even greater than this one will restore him to normalcy. Only a miracle will bring Tommy's old self back."

As though to substantiate Doc's words, the quiet of that grim building was broken by a cry of anguish from Pop Gracey at the bedside. He had been told the truth of the situation, but it was hard for him to comprehend.

"Speak to me, lad, just once! Say you recognize old Pop. Everything's all right. For God's sake speak!" he sobbed.

"Just a word, Tommy lad, just a word!"—the last a cry that tore at one's heart and brought a lump into the throat.

The old man, loving the boy as a son, was heartbroken. Gently they led him back to us, still sobbing brokenly.

"He can't talk, fellows, he just looks and stares. My God, it's awful! Those big eyes, so trusting, just look and look. He don't know me, he don't know me!" Pop sobbed.

We tried to comfort the old fellow as best we could, but it was a hopeless task.

WHEN the medicos deemed it wise, Pop called for Tommy and took him to the old Aurora camp. Leaving the white walls behind, the lad seemed to have left the real Tommy in the little cot. He seemed comfortable in the country but he was contented to just sit and stare. Week after week he did nothing but gaze into jumbled space, with poor old Pop wracking his brain for some way to comfort him.

But old man Gracey still clung to the hope that the miracle might happen.

"Just wait," he would say. "Tommy'll be all right. I've great faith in the Almighty, and when he does talk and hear again, you can bet he'll be ready and waiting for that skunk Joe Regon."

The sporting fraternity rechristened Tommy and Pop. Tommy became "Dummy" and Pop was known as "Just Wait" Gracey. But the wiseacres didn't know everything. Part of Pop's care embodied a certain amount of instruction that kept Tommy in the same condition as he had been in during the hectic fighting days. Road work just the same. Weights and pulleys, rope skipping, and what not. I firmly believe that Pop would have advo-

cated a course in setting-up exercises for a man about to cross the Styx.

Pop tried to jog Tommy's memory by having him put on the gloves once, but the poor lad looked so scared and bewildered that Pop decided that the wisest course was to eliminate the boxing.

As the lad got back into condition he managed to go around a bit. Somehow his old haunts held a magnetic attraction for him.

Wherever a fighter was in the course of his training, there you could find Tommy. He frequented the gymnasiums, his little white pad and pencil in hand, writing questions, and if the one questioned was amiable enough to converse, he would have to write his part on the pad.

These written conversations were few and far between because the majority of sports disliked Tommy as a quitter. The story of the Mexican's treachery circulated by Pop had been jeered at.

One could in no way connect the flashing figure of a few months before with the blank-visaged Dummy. He was the butt of coarse jeers and jibes. His eyes, always searching, seemed to be hunting something that would break down that veil over the forgotten past.

A light would burn for a moment, and then his hand would brush across his forehead as though attempting to thrust aside the haze. Unsuccessful, the hand would drop and the light would disappear.

At these times Tommy would scribble just two words on his pad, 'the pain.' We understood. The attempted thought was too much. It was best not to try and jog the Dummy's memory.

Meanwhile, Regon was pursuing his crooked way uninterrupted. Still the trial horse of wide experience, he flourished on his ability to absorb beatings for which he was paid handsomely. But he never again neglected to train for a fight.

NOW the mills of the gods grind slowly, as some one once remarked, but they grind exceedingly fine. After a year of almost darkness for Tommy the gods started their grinding. As the lad rounded

into shape the old Tommy seemed to be with us again, in body if not in spirit.

Pop Gracey could smile once in a while now. Tommy was hard as a railroad spike. He skipped and jumped around with newly made friends and seemed to relish the skipping.

And one day the grinding mills ground out a fine spray that enveloped Joe Regon and brought about the retribution. It all happened in Scully's gym. Tommy had wandered in to watch the training of Phil Ross, who was preparing for a bout with "Young" Shirley, a Wyoming heavy.

My boss had informed me that my classic figure wasn't exactly decorative to the office and also that half a column of copy could be used on Ross and his chances to win, so I scuttled up to Scully's.

Bill Scully had a beautifully equipped gym for that part of the country, with a regulation-sized ring in the far corner. In this squared circle Phil Ross and sparring partners were working out. As usual, Tommy was draped over a ring post, rapturously witnessing the set-tos. As I approached he smiled and lifted a hand in greeting. We stood together for a few moments and then Tommy, apparently becoming restless, started for the door. The mills had started grinding.

It happened that Regon, having taken the honors in a local battle the night previous, had drifted into Scully's to hear the compliments of his fawning associates. Sitting in a chair tipped against the wall à la barroom fashion, feet swinging, he was drinking in the plaudits and occasionally throwing in a remark of his own.

Spying Tommy, he called jeeringly: "How's it goin', Dummy? You found your pipes yet?"

Of course the Dummy couldn't hear, but he noticed all eyes directed toward him and hesitated a moment. He swept the assemblage with his searching gaze and seemed to stop for a second when he encountered the mocking sneer of Regon. Then his eyes dropped and he went on toward the door.

A group standing knotted a little in front of Regon's chair blocked the way,

so that Tommy had to pass between the group and Regon. As he started to do so the Mexican maliciously thrust out a foot, intending to trip Tommy.

Instead of the expected result, the sturdy leg of the Dummy acted as a strong wedge, and Regon fell to the floor, the lightly balanced chair having skidded from under him.

The gales of laughter which would have been delivered at the Dummy had Regon's trick been successful were turned on Regon as he crashed to the floor. Incensed by the laughter, and doubly fired by the fact that one of his own tricks had backfired, he scrambled to his feet, eyes blazing, and rushed toward Tommy, who had stopped when he realized what he had done.

Before any one could interfere, Regon, mouthing a volley of curses, hit Tommy a smashing blow on the temple. Down he went and in that fleeting moment I could see the ring over a year ago, the crowds, the lights and the yells, as poor Tom went down from that crooked punch. He lay there a moment quivering in every muscle, blood trickling from the old skull wound that had reopened when his head hit the concrete.

"G'wan, talk, say somethin'," snarled Regon as he stood over the prostrate lad.

The frequenters of Scully's stood gaping like wooden men. No one, not even his lowliest satellites, had thought Regon so rotten as to strike the Dummy.

Again I could see that referee counting in that fateful battle. For the time we stood there staring a count would have just about reached nine. Tommy staggered to his feet.

And then the miracle. The Dummy spoke.

"You rat! I never fouled you!"

He squared off. He was carrying on the fight of a year ago.

"Come on and take it!" he cried, punctuating the remark with a wonderfully timed swing to the nose that flattened Regon's flat proboscis still flatter.

The Mexican paled, not so much from the force of the blow as from hearing the

Dummy speak. Imagine the chagrin of every man in that room.

Then took place a fight that I would not have missed for five extra years of life.

The Mexican was fighting a ghost. He turned from sane brute to fear-crazed demon.

The crowd formed a ring. Around and around they milled. Between jabs Regon tore off his coat. Tommy was in his shirt sleeves at the start of the fracas.

With every jab and counter the Dummy spoke. It seemed like the pent-up forthpouring of a heart stifled by oppression for years.

To hear him speak was to me greater than the most glorious symphony.

"Fouled you, did I?" *Bang!*

"You haven't the heart of a rabbit." And his iron fist would plunk into the half-breed's face.

"Fouled you, hey! Fouled you!" And another left and right tore past the Mexican's guard as they crashed over, shaking him to the very toes.

There were no rounds in that fight. Just a mad milling battle. Tommy seemed to be in better form than ever in his fighting life. Regon had thrown science to the winds. It was as though he was fighting against a jinni who would consume his worthless carcass in a cloud of acid smoke should he acknowledge defeat.

Jab and swing, and down the Regon would go.

It wasn't fighting heart that brought him back on his feet, but he was afraid—driven wild by the ghost who persisted in sticking those red-hot needles into his body and face.

The fight was nearly over when Pop walked in. What act of Providence had sent him to Scully's no one will ever know. Maybe it was that divine something that guides us to our reward and sorrow alike, but as Pop had suffered, so did he rejoice—to the fullest.

Tommy had just sent Regon to the floor with another scorching left. I pulled Pop aside as he came up to find out the why of the excitement, and hurriedly explained

to him. I expected some sort of wild demonstration when he heard that Tommy had spoken, but that old-timer, versed in the ways of the world, just took it all calmly and said: "I told you once, 'Just wait!' The time's here. Our wait is over."

THE group made way as Pop edged toward the inner line of the circle. He settled on his haunches, watched the *mêlée* intently for a moment, and then, hands cupped to his mouth, he went to work.

"Lead with 'at left, Tom. Jab, boy!" he bellowed, just as though he was directing an ordinary fight. "A little higher. The button, boy, the button! Now."

It came like the bark of a gun, and Tommy executed the order in like manner. A feint with a left and then the sleep inducer. A right with all the fury of outraged manhood, plus physical perfection, propelling it landed flush against the wagging jaw of Regon. Down he went, and stayed down.

As the Mexican hit the floor, Tommy, weak-kneed with the unaccustomed excitement, started to sway. Willing hands caught him and bore him to a cot at the side of the room. Regon's cronies deserted their fallen leader.

Billy Scully, much the master, ordered the assemblage out. Some one had the good

sense to phone for Doc Shippey. Doc hurriedly examined Tommy, sewed up the wound, and then looked at me for the explanation.

I explained as best I could.

"Well, it's happened," he said, smiling in that matter-of-fact way that medical men have. "The shock of the blow was even greater than the one that rendered him dumb. The miracle has happened. He'll be his old self again."

And human old Pop Gracey, tears streaming down his weather-tanned cheeks as he looked into the flushed face of Tommy, just murmured, "Thank God!"

AND so this yarn ends, as far as I am privileged to write. It might be mentioned that Regon never fought in the ring again. If my way of reckoning is not warped, the gods that grind the mills, ground properly. Maybe I'm wrong, but I'm satisfied at the result.

After a few weeks Tommy took up the thread where it had broken. Using another name he is at present one of the leading lightweights in the country. You may have seen him fight many times—maybe you are going to watch him perform to-night. But the Dummy episode is closed forever. The Dummy has spoken.



AFFECTED HIS MEMORY

A PERSON'S memory can be destroyed with astonishing swiftness and ease. This is particularly true of a snob. A snob can be introduced to you at noon and forget who you are by twelve twenty. When reminded that your identity was thrust upon his consciousness less than half an hour ago, he stares coldly and mutters a bromide, such as: "Yes, yes. Didn't know you with your hat brim turned down."

William W. Corcoran, one of the high lights in the United States consular service, was introduced to a member of this tribe in Washington not long ago, one of the spindle-legged, thin-necked, mustached kind. Corcoran met him in the morning and got an icy stare from him on F Street in the early afternoon of the same day. As they came abreast of each other, Corcoran, noting that the fellow had had his mustache shaved off since the morning introduction, grasped him by the hand and said effusively:

"Corcoran's my name. I'm afraid you don't know me without your mustache."



The Thing that Will Not Die

By T. von Ziekursch

Author of "Heritage," "On the Snow Trail," Etc.

There is something about the Canadian Northwest Mounted that cannot be defined with a word. This story was written to show what that something is.

CAMPBELL was a tall sort of man and you didn't have to see his fore-arms to know that they were wiry in their slenderness. His hair was parted in the middle and invariably had the appearance of being well brushed. Usually—that is, whenever possible—he was shaved fairly clean, and even his parka seemed to have been custom tailored.

His eyes were a strong blue. You have seen men of that type. They look to be cold. Perhaps it is the combination of blue eyes and weathered face. Campbell's age was indefinite. Men of medium years would have said he was young and those on familiar terms with romantic youth would have looked upon him as one—well, just beyond.

Where he came from, and why, no one knew. He was silent mostly and when he did speak it was in a terse fashion, the words rather abrupt but always correct. He asked no advice nor favors; the few who kidded him saw him smile as though he appreciated it—and then they stopped such light badinage, for there was some-

thing about that smile which brought cold chills.

Some few thought he was a tenderfoot, a chechahco, but that illusion was soon dispelled. He was as hard boiled as any man along the Findlay and they had to be hard to live there on the very edge of the real North.

When he departed from the little cluster of cabins that formed the settlement known as Nobut it was toward that vast wilderness which reaches out its rarely traveled wastes right over to the Alaskan border, and though he gave no indication of his purpose all Nobut understood. There were others, too, over there, and in those dense forests and amid the wild passes strange things happened.

In plain words Campbell had become one of those who are known as outlaws. It may be that he had been one before. There were none who knew. And it could not have been proved against him now, for the forest trails and the streams that go on their meandering ways through the hills when the grip of the ice is loosened do

not carry tales of the smuggling that they see nor of the gold that is stolen at the point of a gun nor the cabin or cache broken into and robbed of the furs that have been taken by months of labor on the trap lines.

A miner came into Nobut and told of being held up. The leaves were curling in the forest and he was just preparing to go out for the winter with a good-sized pouch of dust and nuggets to show for his summer's toil with pick and pan. Then one afternoon late a man stepped out of the bush above where he was washing sand and gravel in the creek bed. The newcomer's face was masked by a dark-blue bandanna handkerchief and when he faded back into the bush still holding the rifle menacingly he carried the pouch containing the entire proceeds of the miner's summer of work.

In Nobut there were those who listened to the description given and thought of Campbell: But they said little.

THEN came the first snow, and a trapper who had been in from his lines two hundred miles away for supplies and had departed with sled loaded to the capacity of the team, came back to seek further credit, sullen and resentful at the masked man who had stepped out from among the trees with gun leveled and who had departed into the forest a few moments later heavily laden with supplies and the ammunition from the trapper's load.

In the eyes of the North these were the greatest of all crimes, but there were others that were greater in the eyes of the law. Of them the North knew little and cared less.

What though officialdom squirmed and ranted over smuggling, and other crimes against the dignity of the Dominion? What were they when compared to those of a vastly more personal nature?

But when Constable Hadley of the Mounted arrived at Nobut he found talk that was vague of a man named Clinton and his gang, also of the one called Campbell, and of others who traversed the trails of that vast wilderness toward the north

and west, stretching unbroken beyond that mystic region of the Nahanni and over the border into Alaska.

Men did not talk definitely nor make direct charges where others could hear, but there were those who came to the Mounted man alone and spoke in low tones in which the note of warning was uppermost.

It was on the third day after his arrival at Nobut that he met Clinton, a squat, heavy man, who came in out of the wilderness for ammunition.

Without mincing words Constable Hadley spoke to him.

"Clinton, I hear you are smuggling up along the border."

There was something sullen on the other's face.

"Maybe you also heard that I'm the Queen of Spain," he said, "but after you're up in this country a while you'll learn not to hear so damn much. You're new up this way, ain't you?"

Constable Hadley ignored both attitude and words.

"I'm here to find out whether what I hear about you and some others is true, and if it is I'm here to send you to jail."

"It'll take some provin', I guess," Clinton said, and went on his way back into the wilderness with his heavy pack of ammunition and supplies.

Then Constable Hadley left Nobut and turned toward the north and west, carrying his own pack. The leaves of the aspen poplars had turned and fallen and the forest was a somber place. The moose and caribou calves were growing big and the wild fowl were turning toward the south, in short flights with the new broods that were not yet overly strong of wing.

A hundred miles beyond the Nahanni he found the cabin of a miner who told him that of the border runners which urged him on, plunging deeper still into the wilderness, right up to the region where the dominion's authority ends.

There the first snow found him, and in it he saw the tracks of a man, and they came from across the border. Three days Constable Hadley followed them and then became aware that they led him back to-

ward the cabin of that same miner who had been robbed earlier in the fall. It was late when he arrived there and the miner had just returned from his digging to find that the cabin had been entered and the fruits of his toil taken.

The tracks of the spoiler turned back toward the border and Constable Hadley was well aware that the gold would go over the border just as so many furs and other things had gone, without observance of the laws that demand such formalities as duties. It was theft and border running combined.

The short day of winter was ebbing, but Constable Hadley stopped at the cabin only long enough to replenish the pack that he carried. Then he followed those tracks where they led back into the forest. Pale light came down from the brilliant heavens, illumining the forest where the tree growths were less dense and in the open glades. The tracking was comparatively easy but the fugitive held on, evidently expecting that pursuit of some sort would not be long coming.

The trail through the snow led over a crest and down a steep hillside where the forest was thicker, turning at last into a long valley between the low hills. Here the Mounted man was forced to travel more slowly, for the mercuric glow from the cold heaven did not penetrate so readily, and at times the night was stygian in its blackness amid the coverts.

Now and then greenish glowing orbs appeared and Constable Hadley knew that the denizens of the wild were abroad and watched the pursuit. And then the trail turned up along the side of a ridge where the snow had been swept clear and there was no longer any trail to follow. At last the Mounted man became aware that this was not sheer accident, and started a careful back track, two hours of which brought the expected. The fugitive had turned where some rocks offered the opportunity to hide his trail.

One less experienced than this man of the Mounted must surely have missed it even on the back tracking. From the heights of another ridge that he climbed

especially for that purpose Constable Hadley surveyed the forest depths below and saw a flickering glow that might have passed for some celestial reflection where the spindling top of a pine reared above its fellows.

Carefully he marked the direction, knowing well that the man who had built the fire did not intend it should be seen. Once down off that ridge in the flat that fire would not be evident a hundred feet away, but Constable Hadley held toward it and advanced slowly, cautiously as some night prowler of the forest. At last he saw it ahead, its light shielded as he had expected by a curtain of pine boughs so that only the faintest of gleams could escape. Carefully he closed and was within fifteen feet of it before he realized that no one was there.

A laugh in back startled him and he wheeled, rifle ready.

"Go ahead and shoot," said a voice in the darkness. "There are a lot of trees you can hit. But I'll hand it to you; you almost got me."

There was something deliberately confident about that voice.

The Mounted man stared into the darkness, well aware that he could not hope to see the other and that the faint glow from the fire cast him into silhouette. Any hostile move now on his part, even an attempt to attain the safety of the forest's blackness, would be futile.

Again that voice came from the forest. "Who are you and why have you been following me so long?"

"How do you know I've been following you?" the Mounted man countered.

That laugh sounded once more and there was a note of real enjoyment in it.

"Perhaps I expected that some one would, and kept a watch on the open ridges on my back trail to see."

"Well, I followed you from that cabin where you robbed the miner," the Mounted man said.

"Who are you?" the man in the forest asked.

"My name is Hadley," the Mounted man parried.

There was a moment of silence, then a short "Oh," in the blackness, followed by, "Constable Hadley of the Mounted?"

"Yes, Constable Hadley of the Mounted, and you are under arrest."

Now the voice of the man who was hidden in the forest came in a deliberate drawl.

"I don't think so. At least, not until you catch me, and I'm probably a better man in the woods than you are."

"You are Campbell, aren't you?" Constable Hadley asked.

"That's as good as any other name," the other answered. "But how did you know?"

There was a moment of hesitation, then the Mounted man said, "Well, you have some little peculiarities of speech that some men who told me about you had noticed."

"You look for things like that in the Mounted, don't you?" the other asked, and went on when Constable Hadley did not answer. "Well, look for me now, and if you find me look out. I'm making a straight line for the border, which is about fifteen miles away."

Not a sound came to the Mounted man's ears but something—perhaps it was instinct—told him the other had gone off through the forest, and he followed, away from the dying embers which lay safe in the little cleared space.

Carefully he circled about, head down, and at last dropped suddenly to his knees and bent close. Then he went on at right angles to the circle he had been making. Occasionally he lost the trail where the forest was dense and the blackness mephitic, but always those circling tactics found it again. Of necessity the other must be gaining, and Constable Hadley's thoughts went over the situation as he followed.

Would Campbell double and twist on the way? Was it foolish to waste so much time making sure of his trail? By now he must have a lead of a mile because of the time the Mounted man had lost keeping to the trail, and it was only fifteen miles to the border, where his authority ended. By seeking to make sure of the trail he

would be merely giving the other more of a lead and certainly with the advantage Campbell had by now he would not waste time trying to make the trailing more difficult.

Constable Hadley turned toward the west, up the rising levels of hills toward that unmarked line which was the goal of this race between hunted and hunter. On an open hillside where the glow from the heavens illumined the snow with a weird sheen there were tracks and Constable Hadley went to them and examined them closely.

EVEN now in the night their story was plain. They were new, made but a few minutes before, the slight ridges fresh about them. Constable Hadley breasted the hill and went down into the valley beyond. This was a race between two men who knew the ways of the woods, a race that was to be a test of sheer speed and endurance over the shortest route between two points, with no strategy included.

It was a challenge the other had thrown and the Mounted man took it up. His stride lengthened to the utmost where the snow was not so deep and among the drifts he plunged on, bent forward like a man pulling some heavy load. The way led directly through the forest and here the brush was thin. Despite the cold he perspired and the moisture froze where his hand clasped the rifle. His mustache, too, was brittle with the crystals that formed from his breathing.

A creek, its surface covered with snow and protected from the wind in the depths of a valley, revealed the passing of the hunted man, and again there was that direct challenge in that no subterfuge had been used to hide that trail. The pursued had deliberately come into the open where the trail must be followed most easily.

Something of admiration for this other came to Constable Hadley. This was not mere bravado. It was the confidence of a man well aware of all the cards in the game and sure of his own powers.

In its way it was a sporting thing. The other had not sought the added factor of

hiding his trail to assure safety. Here Constable Hadley was the law. The other must submit or try to kill. He chose flight rather than attempted murder, but in that flight he revealed a certain contempt, a certain willingness to match himself with the one who represented the law, a lack of fear that acknowledged respect only for the thing the law represents.

The hill slopes that made the valley were steep, and the creek bed fairly straight as a result. Constable Hadley, hardened to the rigors of the trail, felt a growing tiredness. The hours passed but he held on and once, far ahead, through an opening in the trees, saw something darker that moved. But before he could lift the rifle it was gone.

There was a graying in the heavens now and the cold points of light that were the stars were disappearing. That indefinite period of greatest darkness came and then the graying was more perceptible and the slow dawning of the winter day followed. The creek was widening, too, and in the new light the Mounted man saw that the tracks of the other were fresher, but the border must be close.

Just ahead the open space that was the creek broadened and joined that of a larger stream, a small river. Constable Hadley heard voices there and broke into a trot with the rifle held forward and ready. Then he stopped abruptly at the sight on the open ice of the river.

The one he had pursued was not there but the tracks that must have been his led up through the snow on the opposite bank. On the open space of the river were two dog teams and the sleds they dragged were piled with the bundles that told of furs. To the Mounted man came realization that there, stumbled across by sheerest accident was that which he had been sent to prevent. Driving the dogs were two men and the whole of their purpose was plain. To them the duties that governments establish were merely things to be avoided. Back and forth across this border in a region impossible of patrol they plied their illegal trade. It must be so.

Constable Hadley went forward and

recognized that one who had been called Clinton among the cabins of Nobut. He had brought the dogs to a halt and they settled on their haunches on the open ice willingly enough. Now he took a step forward, peering at the advancing Mounted man.

There was recognition and then a swift motion as he dove behind the bale on the forward sled, hidden as effectively as though behind an earthwork. Before Constable Hadley could close there came a shot behind that bale and he dropped the rifle and swung around unsteadily as though under the shock of some heavy impact. His right arm fell limp and his left reached for the rifle, grasped it and he leaped for the protection of the trees while the second man tugged at a case over his rifle.

Again the one Constable Hadley had recognized as Clinton fired, but the bullet clipped a branch and brought down a fluttering of snow. Within the protecting cordon of the forest the Mounted man sought vainly to steady the rifle with his one good arm. He was weak from the bullet's shock and the blood dropped from his right hand into the snow. He could feel its moist warmth as it ran down over his hand and then the whole arm went suddenly numb.

He was bleeding faster than was good and even in those few passing minutes found it hard to stand erect. Then he saw that the others had separated and were coming toward him. They knew where he was among the trees and they came slowly with rifles held ready, waiting for him to move out from the protection of the trunks.

There was something intensely grim about it all. Could they know how badly he was hurt? Were they sure and merely closing to kill? Perhaps he might steady that rifle for one shot but then how would he reload the chamber with only one hand?

A lone hope opened. Could he force them to surrender, drop their rifles? There was a momentary gathering of his powers. Then he called, "Drop your guns and surrender—in the name of the king."

"To hell with the king, and the Mounted, too!"

It was Clinton who answered and a shot from his rifle glanced off the trunk of the pine behind which the Mounted man wavered slightly. Then, even before the echo had died away, another shot sounded in the forest on the opposite side of the river and Clinton's knees doubled. He took a step forward and another, ludicrous, hurried steps, and fell on his face in the snow at the very edge of the river.

EVEN as he fell that rifleman fired again and the other man who had been with the dog sleds stumbled and went down to lie quietly. Then from the forest on the opposite side of the river, fifty yards away, came the man Constable Hadley had pursued throughout the long night.

Slowly, deliberately he advanced, down onto the ice and across. Straight toward the Mounted man he came and there was no attitude of threat in the way he carried the rifle.

"How bad are you hurt?" he asked, and rested his rifle against the bole of a pine as he reached for Constable Hadley's wounded arm. Neither saw that Clinton moved slightly where he had fallen, then crept a little to one side and clutched slowly and with what was plainly a last, desperate effort for the rifle where he had dropped it.

Constable Hadley did not answer this man who held his broken arm. Instead he studied Campbell's face, and then spoke.

"I owe you something for this—Campbell. Might I ask why you did it after I'd been trying to run you down?"

Campbell's cold blue eyes smiled though his mouth did not.

"I heard you call on them to surrender in the name of the king;" he hesitated, looking at the arm, then went on, "and I heard their answer."

"I understand," the Mounted man said. "What was your name before——"

The expression on his face changed suddenly and he sought to push Campbell aside but the roar of Clinton's rifle came too soon. Campbell seemed to bend forward at the waist as though he had been kicked in the back. Then he took a step that brought him leaning heavily against the Mounted man, sagged and fell slowly and there was a smile in those cold blue eyes still though the face was drawn as with sudden, sharp pain.

Constable Hadley saw the rifle fall from Clinton's hands again as he rolled over onto his back and lay still on the ice in a grotesque attitude. Then he looked down at the man he had known as Campbell and knelt beside him.

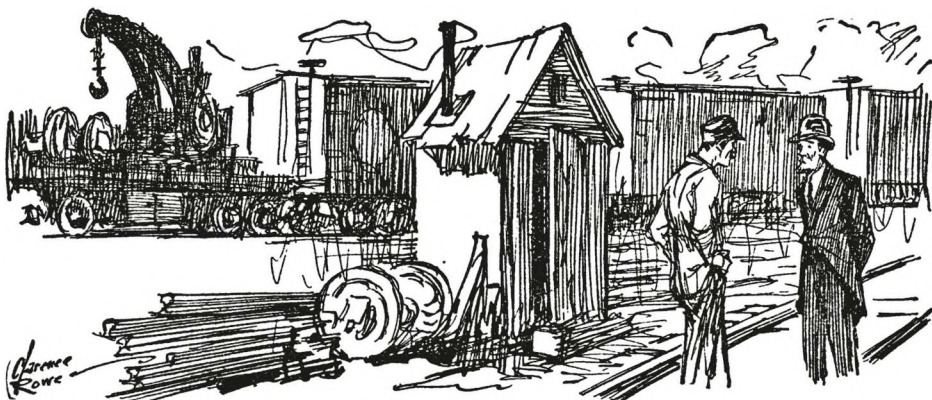
With his good hand he opened the parka and pulled aside the heavy shirt, touching the other man's breast to see if the heart showed signs of life. There was no faintest throbbing. His hand came in contact with something metallic hung on a bit of string.

Even before he drew it out to look the feel of it sufficed to explain. But he looked at it—the insignia of the Mounted—then pushed it back inside the shirt, over the heart, and was closing the heavy parka when he noticed the corner of a paper in an inner pocket.

He started to draw it out but halted. It was an official thing and on it would be a name—but Campbell was as good as any name, better perhaps. Deliberately he took from the belt the small bag of gold dust that belonged to the miner and that had caused this quest originally, then closed the heavy parka. At last he arose and slowly went about the task of binding the wound in his own arm to stop the flow of blood.

Out of the North came a cold wind, audible a long distance off as it moaned through the branches. In swirling curtains it blew the loose drifts of snow that settled like shrouds over the three dead men.





The Pay-day Game

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "The Stocking of Snow," "The Agent at Showdown," Etc.

Superintendent Rivets of the old P. D. rolls the dice for supremacy of the division.

PAY day, with thirty dollars in his pocket, and the boomer brakeman peering around a corner of the depot, his fears enhanced by the vocal din falling from the window of the trainmaster's office just above. It was a day to stop, look, listen; one unguarded move and he would be espied by the call boy, hated minion of the trainmaster, and made to sign up for a run before the thirty dollars was spent.

Between himself and the blockade of freight cars—cause of the embittered tirade of the trainmaster—lay a space where he could be hunted in the open, and this the boomer viewed, his huge shoulders hunched and moon face drawn with melancholy. Beyond the blockaded train tracks was the caboose track, where, at the moment, behind locked doors, several silent drinking games of cards and dice offered a joyous run for his thirty dollars.

In sudden desperation he scuttled across, made the cover of the first line of cars—only to be held up by one of those untimely meetings that make friendship a curse. Face to face he stood with his crony of many bleak poverty-stricken days

—the days before pay day. The old crossing flagman, benefactor of the hot shanty stove and two-bit loan; of euchre games when he was hated and despised as a pauper among the cabooses.

A certain boomer hardihood might have enabled him to pass the crossing flagman, who had a four-bit stake in the thirty dollars, with only a greeting, but for the latter's greatly altered appearance. And curiosity being the ruling passion of the boomer, as it has been of all the rover crowd since the world began, he stopped dead in his tracks at the challenge of a cutaway coat, scarlet tie, shined shoes. The chin whisker of his old friend had been trimmed; instead of a battered forage cap he wore a derby—dented, it is true, but still a derby.

"'Tis the great-grandfather's estate—the one with the castle, y'have inherited," suggested the boomer with interest, "and have set up as a person of fashion."

But the other's chin whisker bristled with scorn. "It is a notion of boomers that a man should wait for chance or inheritance to overtake him along the road and endow him," he retorted. "In my case, the gentleman's clothing and my

snug little property stocked with a red cow and her young son, are evidence of thrift in a single job."

This retort on the boomer's improvident habits might have been heeded but for the additional food for reflection which it contained. Though this was pay day and therefore the date of maturity for the fifty-cent loan, why should not the flagman, confessed owner of an estate, extend the time? The boomer, who had in fact been reluctantly withdrawing a half dollar from his pocket, released it again without a jingle. Let the flagman approach the subject.

Strangely enough, the latter did not do so, but carefully taking out two black, shiny cigars, measured them with an instinct of thrift and offered the smaller. "This is my one holiday a month off the crossing and I am going to spend the day about town," he explained. "But I had to hurry in to meet the pay car without pasturing the stock and must go home to look after them." He had the habit of riding a freight down to the railroad crossing near his estate, and now he looked at the frozen traffic of the yard with a sour comment on the trainmen.

"He has forgotten the loan," reflected the boomer, and was prompt with a wily excuse to make himself scarce.

"I better tell the switch engineer you ain't at the crossing to-day," said the boomer, "so he won't be as reckless as usual."

Here he would undoubtedly have lost the ancient but for a call boy who had just been hissed off a caboose platform with threats against his life.

"Sign here," said the desperate boy, and the boomer, with one glare at the greasy book, raised threatening foot and hand simultaneously.

"Bang loose," said the urchin resignedly, "but there's the trainmaster watching you from the window."

Boomer felt it was true. Having neglected to seek deep cover, the cold eye of the boss was boring into him through a break in the string of boxes.

"Anyhow, 'tis promotion for the likes

of you," resumed the boy. "Y'are to take out No. 37 as conductor."

The man heard not. With thirty in his pockets, the gurgle of flasks and whisper of grimy cards in the cabooses, he was dying in sight of the boomers' promised land.

"Conductor!" The note of respect in the flagman's voice, aroused him as nothing else would. He nodded, repeating the word, and listening intensely.

"Conductor!" The rather frosty eye of the ancient thawed to a beaming blue. "So y'are promoted, and the last man I expected to be proud of——" A roar from the trainmaster's window interrupted; and Boomer found himself on the platform below it accepting the tissue orders of the operator.

"Get her out of this yard and get her through, you bum!" the official was saying. "Never mind a brakeman—you won't need any brakes. Who was that man you were talking to?"

"Flagman of G crossing, sir. Day off for——"

"Oh—is he taking a day off!" snarled the official, for though he might not smash into locked cabooses or barrooms on pay day these men caught in the open were fair prey. "Fetch him out."

THE old flagman, remote from headquarters and unacquainted with officials except as superior identities who swept through his crossing in glittering specials, nevertheless stood his ground alongside the brakeman.

Somehow the straight glance and bravely bristling whisker subdued the tone of the trainmaster, who guiltily was waiting for his own drink time. Such were the old years when a yard, and maybe half a division, would be blockaded for a while on pay day.

"You're not too old, grandad, to set the brake in the cupola," said the official, and closed his window.

"Old grandad I fling back in the teeth of you," hissed the flagman, and was muttering in his beard to the call boy when the boomer stepped out of the telegraph office with the waybills of his train.

He nodded gloomily to the other's tirade against drinking, gambling roadmen, and an official who would deprive him of his holiday. The train was a through one, the run forty miles to the next freight-division point, where they would certainly be doubled back at once. "All day we will be together," reflected the boomer, "and him sure to remember and call the loan in that time."

Passing the three silent and locked cabooses wherein, as the call boy had confided, a dozen brakemen and conductors were shooting dice, the flagman shook his fist. "A curse also," he added as an afterthought, "on the new division superintendent, who has not nerve to break it up."

"An official break up the pay-day game!" said the boomer in surprise. "I would take a bigger man than Superintendent Rivets, and a tougher. Anyway, he is down the line somewhere."

"Big and tough," repeated the flagman meditatively; and then: "Our run is to Climax. In the days of ten years dead and gone——"

"What about it?"

"'Twas the home of the big tough men," replied the other dryly. His habitual caution of speech had returned to him, after the fierce outburst which had astonished the boomer.

"Like as not he'd be a bad old boy for a man owing him to have on his trail," he reflected uneasily. The engine crew, ready and waiting, was signaled, and presently the freight was rattling over the switches. At the first cattle guard it struck a red cow and her young son who had apparently escaped through the yard fence of a little isolated house near by. The flagman tore his best suit getting down into the ditch to examine them, but they were beyond assistance.

"'Twas the stock of the estate," he told the boomer as they climbed back into the caboose. "If the dice shooters had run out the local I would have had my cattle safe in pasture two hours ago."

At these additional grievances there was no outburst of wrath, but instead a dour silence, during which he pinned up the tear

in his trousers and straightened a broken hat brim. Once he paused for a long stare at the boomer, who suddenly seemed to see the lean, hard jaw shaven of the whisker. With that a mask was swept from the flagman's visage; gaunt and weather-beaten, it was unwrinkled except at the corners of the eyes which had the blink of blue ice.

"Pay day it is," he said softly, with so cruel a grin that his companion reached instinctively into his pocket. But the flagman, with an agility unexpected in sixty years, swung himself into the cupola, where he sat with the brakehead between his knees and looking out over the train for the remainder of the run.

At Climax he said: "I have an old friend here that I will look in on for a minute. Then I will be with you for first out——"

"Whist," interrupted the other, seizing his arm. "There is Superintendent Rivets—the thin man sitting on the truck."

Rivets, seeing them drop off the caboose, beckoned. "I did not believe they were operating the P. D. to-day," he said. "Or perhaps you do not know what day it is."

"Sure, pay day does not make any difference to the likes of us," replied the boomer proudly.

"Glory be," said Rivets, taking another look at the flagman. "Have the trainmen turned out their grandparents to hold their jobs while they go on a spree?"

"I am the youngster of my family," replied the flagman, the soft voice and clipped words instantly fixing Rivets' attention.

The brakeman, afraid of the high official and equally afraid to offend his friend of hard times, blurted out that the trainmen's spree had cost the latter his holiday, a new suit, and the cattle of his estate. "And an illigant cow and young son they were," he concluded, "worth every bit of——" But when it came to fixing the amount of a claim between the two he paused aghast at the trouble he was letting himself in for.

"Do you go on about your business,"

commanded his friend, "and I will call on my friend after a word to the superintendent."

"Rivets—superintendent," he resumed as the boomer made his escape, "don't you think, as between man and man, that your own grandfather would have made a better job of the division than you are doing this day? Have you no pride of ancestry to deny him that much grit? I do not know who or what he was, but I would say——"

"You will say nothing further," replied Rivets, but he was astonished to look into eyes even colder and fiercer and younger than his own.

The flagman considered him a moment. "I have heard of you—as dispatcher and trainmaster on the west end," he said; "and never that you lacked courage. And here you are, as superintendent, sitting on a truck, a broken man after three days on the job."

RIVETS, who was truly a hard man, doubled his fists, but could not strike out because of the gray whisker. And as his eyes blazed away into the face of the other, they widened and he muttered a memory, though not as one friend recalling another. "Casey—old Casey of the Sorley gang."

"I have heard the name," said the other.

"And you a flagman on this division, y'old wrecker!"

"A wrecker I never was," replied Casey, "except of express safes and of my own career—I mean by that the prosperous career of outlaw, which I wrecked to become an honest man. Not only in deed but in speech, and I have given you the best cud to chew on this day that was ever served up to you."

Rivets gripped his hair, not knowing an answer to the situation, and Casey was passing on when he called and caught his arm. The two had met once a dozen years before without particular good will, but Rivets was impressed by the old outlaw's boldness in facing probably the only man who could recognize him outside of his old gang.

12B—POP.

"I will say this for myself, Casey," he said, "that I can handle a hard job with most men, but after only three days on this division troubles have come down in an avalanche. The trainmen, always wild enough over here, have made it up to gang me this pay day. Where can I get more if I fire them all? There's no answer; I'm snowed for the present; maybe I'm through here already. But first, I'll hand you and your partner a bouquet for being two on the job; and I'll see you paid for that stock to-morrow if I have to rob the safe at Barlow. What's the damage? Make it steep!"

"The damage for pants, cattle and a fractured hat is one hundred dollars; they are cheap at the price," said the flagman, "the hat in particular. And 'tis not the railroad company will pay for them."

"You mean somebody else?" asked Rivets, bewildered.

"I mean the pay-day sports on the ca-boose track. I quit dishonesty as a profession and became a crossing flagman who have never been notorious in crime. Prosperity followed the flag, y'understand, because I waved it with industry—and if a dozen shiftless trainmen think they can wreck my estate, they are wrong."

With that he started off to visit his friend, leaving Rivets rooted to the spot.

The friend Casey found in the office of his large, handsome shebeen. A bald, bulky man, he stared at Casey a moment with a queer dilation of eye. Then shook his hand with enthusiasm and closed the door, and locked it.

"Casey, my old running mate," he said. "And are they close after you—though the chin whisker is the best disguise for a robber ever I saw——"

"It is no disguise, but the regalia of a man who for a dozen years has been honest as yourself," informed Casey, and added a few words of his career in Barlow.

"And now," he finished, "will you lend me a .44 to recover the fruits of honesty from omadhauns who have spoiled my estate of a cow and her young son?"

He found the weapon in his hand, as

his friend exclaimed in righteous indignation. It would not have quieted the boomer's nerves to see Casey test the mechanism, and twirl the wicked thing, but he wasted no time in the shebeen and after a handshake hurried out and back to the station. There Rivets sat on his truck watching a freight pulling down the yard.

"I sent your pardner out," he said, "it being ridiculous to put two brakemen on a train, as scarce as they are. But there are always plenty of enginemen on the job, and in thirty minutes I will have out an engine for my car."

"'Tis all the same to me whether I go as brakeman on your special or on the freight," replied Casey, "if I am sure of reaching the caboose track at Barlow this evening."

"We will walk in on them after dark," said Rivets, and Casey cocked his eye inquiringly.

In body the superintendent, though twenty-five years younger, was not very different from the old flagman; moving along together both frames looked lean and sinewy as a mountain goat's. But as their eyes met, Rivets felt his own countenance must be only a cast of plaster or flour into which he was trying to force the hardness of resolution. The face of Casey, which in spite of his rattling speech and whisker, shot a gleam of granite, was entirely different.

Rivets gritted his teeth as he continued: "The fact is, mad as it may seem, I am throwing in with you on this."

"Y'have some interest of your own, and devil a bit do I care whether you come along or not, superintendent," said the flagman, "if 'twill serve you. But this I know—I am going to collect the damage from the men who were the cause of it."

"What would the world be coming to if a reformed outlaw could be spoiled by honest men? But remember that some of the trainmen are sure to be armed, and though only with bulldogs to kill bums, one of them might easily reach yourself on the principle that if a cat can look at a king, a bulldog can kill a superintendent."

Rivets, who had been tense and pale, laughed suddenly, holding up his palm to life as a man will who has discovered it imposing on him. "I have been a serious man, Casey—taking myself seriously—and all at once understand that life is not in taking yourself seriously, but in making the other fellow do it."

"A great outlaw you would make," said Casey. His scheme was, he explained, to hold up the trainmen, and putting a hundred of the loot in his pocket, drop the rest as by accident on the floor during his get-away.

"Which does not let me in at all," said Rivets. "I must seize this opportunity to introduce myself to these men in a way they'll be guessing about for years. For never is a superintendent a subject for guesswork among you employees, that he don't have you going."

"Then you are really coming in on the holdup," said Casey.

"In this way," answered the superintendent, and outlined his own scheme, which at the end involved a throw of dice between Casey and himself.

AT eight o'clock in the dark Barlow yard, a dozen survivors of the pay-day game, most of them conductors, were still rolling them with enthusiasm under the dingy lamp. When a key turned in the locked door they did not look up for a moment—and then there was a general gasp. A black mask had his back against the door, covering the game with a heavy revolver; and the revolver was pointed over the shoulder of Superintendent Rivets.

There had always been in Casey's voice a timbre that never failed to enforce obedience to his command of hands up. It was there to-night, and the gamblers lined up promptly.

"Speak to your men, Superintendent Rivets," commanded that rasping voice; "advise them to play safe for the good of the railroad, for good employees are scarce."

"Good employees!" repeated Rivets, raking them with a glance which came to

be dreaded in later times. "And them leaving the division to blockade, while they gamble and spree! You can drop the last one of them, as far as the company is concerned, Mr. Robber."

"Ha!" laughed Casey. "And I'll be doing that same unless they drop themselves on the floor face down with hands outstretched." Which the dozen proceeded to do, covering all the floor of the caboose. Casey locked the door, and having the unarmed Rivets at his mercy went through all the victims thoroughly. The superintendent, standing aside in dignity, watched the humiliation of his delinquent employees maliciously.

Only when all pockets had been turned wrongside out and table stakes appropriated, did he speak.

"Mr. Robber——"

"Face down, hands out," snarled Casey to one who had turned his head at the calm voice of Rivets; "or by the soul of Mike Sorley—my old chief, saints rest him——"

A shiver passed among the prostrate men at mention of this grisly name, still dreaded.

"Mr. Robber," resumed Rivets with some impatience, "you boarded my car and robbed me, and that is all right. But I feel that your bringing me here into the pay-day game as a hostage has made my employees submit to the degradation"—and he rolled it under his tongue—"of lying on the floor while you went through them. 'Tis the safety of their superintendent they considered. And I am not one to overlook it. How much did you collect?"

"Stand in the corner there, superintendent," said Casey. "while I count. For I take it you do not ask without reason. Seven hundred and forty-one dollars," he answered presently. "Faith, I must have raided a bunch of winners," and at a twitch and curse from the floor he sent a heavy bullet close enough to drive a splinter into the man's face. "You were saying, superintendent?"

"This—if you will stop shooting long enough to listen. Don't send a shot into

his back—'tis not necessary." And again a shiver passed over the floor.

"These men, my employees, who have submitted to the degradation rather than have me shot, have worked hard for most of that money, though some of it is winnings. A while ago I spoke hardly of them for tying up the division on pay day, but that is because other superintendents have brought them up badly, and they did not know a boss had come here who is not afraid to fire or blacklist any man, or to defend himself.

"You spoke of Sorley, the old express-safe blower. He was not a bad sport. I knew him of old on the west end. D'you remember the gambling game he had for loot with President Regan?"

"And skinned him," said Casey. "'Twas in Regan's car. That was a fat season for the gang."

"You have taken all my money; is my I O U for seven hundred and forty good with you? One throw of the dice, and if you win, the money to be delivered anywhere, any time?"

"Roll 'em, superintendent," said Casey. The prostrate men heard a clatter on the bench where they had been playing; a resounding curse; a shot. The lamp was broken. They scrambled to their feet, as Rivets struck a match to light his cigar, and saw a stack of coin and bills on the bench.

"Those outlaws on the west end were never bad sports," said Rivets. He pocketed the money. "Every man here gets the amount of his pay check," he announced, "less ten per cent which you must have spent for drinks. The rest will be pro-rated among those who lost. Report at my office to-morrow at ten."

He saw them all out, closed the door; locked it. So ended the great pay-day game on the P. D. with the superintendent himself towering as the most tremendous sportsman of caboose legend.

But the boomer brakeman did not know that, and on the arrival of his freight, which Rivets' special had of course passed, he posted down along the caboose track, only to find it dark and deserted.

For a while he remained lost in thought. Though he could get action for his thirty in the town gambling house, experience had taught him that a man got no more run for his money there than the dealer permitted.

"Some lucky guy must 'a' cleaned 'em all," he reflected, gazing at the dark, silent cabooses.

THE thirty in his pocket, burning all day, grew red-hot. "Sure, the flagman still has his estate," he reflected, "though the P. D. unstocked it at the cattle guard."

The distance to Casey's cottage was nothing to a man who would have walked twenty miles to get rid of his pay check, and presently his red moon face was at the latter's lighted window.

Casey was disclosed licking his fingers—and counting bills which amounted to a hundred dollars—under the lamp.

It was characteristic of the boomer, who never entered by a door until he had been invited from a window, that he tapped on the pane.

Casey brought him in, and learning that a poker game was sought for, accommodated him till twelve o'clock. Then the boomer rose, stretched himself and announced he was going home. There was a peculiar satisfaction in the way he stretched himself, and grinned on his

crony for a moment; then came a dreadful reaction.

"Y'don't happen to be able to spare fifty cents?" he asked weakly.

"That makes a dollar," said Casey, handing it over reluctantly. "You should pay your debts before you begin gambling."

"I'll see you next week, old-timer."

"Well, you boomers have got to be kept warm somewhere," said the flagman, his chin whisker bristling.

So the boomer departed and a man who had been waiting for the game to end came around the corner of the cottage.

He entered into the little living room, a different man from the one who had been sitting hunched over on the truck at Climax.

"When you rolled those dice to-night you hadn't taken out the hundred that was due you," said Rivets.

"I had taken it out—naming a wrong amount to those poltroons."

"You won," said Rivets; and laid down a hundred. "Casey, is there anything better than crossing flagman—say conductor, now——"

"Whist, superintendent; would ye tempt me with a position which handles money?"

"No—Honest Man," said Rivets.

Which arrangement has been the making of many an honest man.

Mr. Johnston will have another railroad story in the next issue.

MISLEADING SIGNS

AN old man from far back in the western North Carolina mountains boarded a northbound train in Asheville, North Carolina, and established himself comfortably in a seat in a Pullman. He was over six feet tall, thin, without a cravat, and wore a walruslike mustache. With his pipe in his mouth and his feet propped up on the opposite seat, he leaned back, closed his eyes and reveled in the motion of the train.

"Hey, there!" shouted the conductor as soon as he caught sight of the old man's pipe. "You can't smoke in here!"

"I ain't smokin'," retorted the mountaineer dreamily without opening his eyes.

"You are!" objected the conductor. "You've got your pipe in your mouth this minute!"

Still the old man made no move and lifted neither eyelid.

"Yes," he agreed in the same somnolent tone; "an' I got my foot in my shoe, but I ain't walkin'."

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**Contest Editor, POPULAR MAGAZINE,
79 Seventh Ave., New York**

The names of the winners will be announced six weeks after the close of the contest.



The Eyes of Sebastien

By Alan Sullivan

Author of "The Debt," "Work for a Real Man," Etc.

Many old-timers maintain that no wolf will attack a man. But what of that fabulous beast with a human soul who prowls the deep woods of French Canada—the dreaded *loup-garou*? Who dares predict what a werewolf will, or will not, do?

THIS is a tale of the big timber that grows in league-long patches where the headwaters of the Saguenay find their birth among tumbled foothills of the Laurentian range. Thence flows the Saguenay, a chill and formidable stream, gathering volume as it moves southward with countless tributaries from unknown lakes and moose-trampled marshes, loitering on its way through stretches of cedar-bordered solitude, flinging itself headlong over cataracts where the tawny water rages thunderously day and night, ever more deep, forbidding and austere, till at last it merges majestically with the great St. Lawrence, the mother of many rivers, and spends itself mysteriously between the thousand-foot crags of Capes Trinity and Eternity.

All along the Saguenay it is a French country, as French as when two hundred years ago the peasants of Brittany and Normandy first fared northward into the unexplored wilderness.

Amid the big timber and beside unnamed waters they raised their log-hewn walls, with the mud-chinked joints, the tiny deep-set windows and the massive roofs that must bear the weight of winter snows. Out of the forest they carved their farms, planting grain between the unconquerable roots, drawing sustenance from wood and stream, beating off marauding Indians, gathering in the long winter evenings round pine-heaped hearths, utterly alone save when in summer the yellow bows of a canoe glided round a point and a missionary Jesuit Father landed from Quebec; or when in winter the man of God tramped, solitary, through endless miles of big timber on his errand of mercy and peace.

But always there was talk of France, with lingering, poignant pictures of the land they had left, of the red roofs of Quiberon that look across the bay at Croisé, and the cobbled streets of Rennes that lead to the swift-running waters of the Vilaine.

In one of the patches of timber on Lac St. Luc there is a lumber camp, a nest of long buildings, ten feet high, that occupy a roughly cleared space close to the water's edge. From the camp there radiates a maze of winter roads traversed by a hundred lumberjacks in gaudy woolen capotes with axes and saws over their shoulders, and down these roads, which all slope gently to the lake, great logs are drawn, to be dumped, rumbling, on the ice.

All through the day one can hear, near and far, the crash of big timber toppling earthward, the creak of straining harness, the crack of whips, the stroke of axes and the whine of distant saws. At night there is talk beside great cast-iron stoves stuffed with fuel, much smoke, the drone of winter winds and the plaintive hoot of the great white owl.

IT fell on a day when the sun shone bright and the snow was like a sparkling blanket that a man emerged from the Saguenay trail and struck across Lac St. Luc. He walked with a long, easy swing, bending a little forward beneath the weight of his pack. Threading his way between the piles of logs, he halted at the door of the main building, twisted his feet free of snowshoes and entered.

"Holla," he said with a smile. "I have again arrived."

The cook looked round, and straightway forgot his cooking, for the newcomer was none other than Antoine Carnot, the peddler—the bringer of news—the teller of tales—the confidential go-between in the wilderness—the human link with the outside world. Antoine was all of these, and more. A bit of a doctor, a bit more of a lawyer, a shrewd trader, and, withal possessed of unfailing humor and a heart of gold. No wonder that Pierre Colange forgot his cooking, and hurried forward, hands outstretched.

"Ten thousand welcomes, *mon vieux*. No, you shall not talk till you have eaten. Behold, a partridge which was for the boss—but eat and say nothing. The wind makes a chill in the stomach, but you

have an hour before the men come in. Fill thyself, and say nothing till afterward."

Antoine nodded, and obeyed, while Pierre watched him admiringly. Then there was news, much news from a dozen villages, while the pack was unrolled, and its contents spread on a table in the corner. Knives and neckties, shirts and razors and mouth organs, jimcracks and cheap jewelry, studs and celluloid collars—the result of Antoine's annual trip to Quebec.

A great man was Antoine; had he not once sent a telegram to Montreal and got an answer the very next day?—and he right there in Quebec all the time? Presently his wares were displayed to his satisfaction, and he sent Pierre a swift glance.

"Jean Deslormes, he is still here?"

Pierre nodded. "He makes good money—forty dollars a month—and spends nothing save for tobacco."

"I was at Villeneuve this day two weeks ago," said Antoine thoughtfully, "and saw the girl Marie Fisette. They are betrothed."

Pierre laughed at this. "Does not the whole camp know it? And how many times has Jean not told us? Every morning he goes along the road making verses to that girl with his mouth. It is well that he cannot write—but perhaps I do not understand such things. I made no verses to my Henriette."

Antoine looked a little grave. "Sebastien was also at Villeneuve, and full of anger when he heard of the betrothal. Marie told me that he said strange and threatening things, that she should never marry Jean. Then he barked something like a wolf, and she did not see him again."

"*Loup-garou!*" whispered Pierre under his breath.

It was a word of awe through the outlying French country. The story of the *loup-garou*, that strange and malign combination of man and wolf, had come with them across from the hills of Brittany. The belief still held north of the Laurentians.

It was always an old dog wolf, tenanted

by some evil and human spirit, endowed with wild powers of murder and revenge, a lean gray beast that patrolled the winter hills and sent his savage note drifting down into solitary villages where simple folk gathered closer round the fire and glanced apprehensively at the window fastenings. Sometimes it was a man who took the form of a wolf to serve his dread purpose, and became again human when his deadly part was played.

This had been whispered of Sebastien behind his back. Where the man came from none knew, only that calamity came with him. He was small, dark and very active, with hollow cheeks and burning eyes, and moved about through the French country, seldom doing any work, but living apparently without effort. He was disliked and feared, but the folk made no protest—at least to Sebastien. There was the case of George Famieux who threw Sebastien out of his barn one evening, and next morning found his prize cow with her throat torn. One remembered that sort of thing in a district where cows were scarce. So now the good Antoine pushed out his lips and nodded gravely.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "it can be nothing else."

A little silence fell in the cook's camp, and both men had a vision of Marie Fissette of the parish of Villeneuve; Marie, the prettiest girl north of Cape Trinity, with her flaxen hair and white skin like milk and a smile that was remembered and treasured enviously in every lumber camp on the Saguenay. They said that she chose Jean Deslormes when she saw him driving logs through the chute at Les Arables. And what Jean did then ought to be enough for any girl.

"They will be married this summer—yes?" asked Pierre.

And just at this moment the door opened without sound, and Sebastien himself strolled in. He rubbed his long hands to set the blood going, glanced shrewdly at the two men and stared meaningly toward the heaped platters on the stove. Pierre gave him food, this being the law of the wilderness, while Antoine began

to arrange his stock. Both were a little breathless. Presently Sebastien pushed away his plate.

"Without doubt, Pierre, you are the best cook in the Saguenay camps. I will tell them so in Villeneuve." He lit his pipe and began to smoke contentedly.

"You go then to Villeneuve?" hazarded Antoine.

"Yes, I start at once, this very day."

"By the Saguenay trail?"

Sebastien sent him an inscrutable smile. "My trail is my own, Antoine." Then, meaningly, "Let him follow who can."

"It is ninety miles to Villeneuve as the goose flies. What takes you there in mid-winter?"

"The thing that takes all men to all places no matter what the season. The face of a woman."

Pierre lifted a kettle from the stove, and the lid rattled. "Is it, then, that Sebastien marries at his age?"

"What is age to the man who loves? In five days I shall possess what will make me envied by many."

He announced this in a voice that lifted as he spoke, and surveyed the others with burning, insolent eyes as though daring them to protest. There was in his manner something suggesting that he had at his disposal powers of which they knew nothing.

He leaned a little forward, every line of his sinewy body resembling an animal couched to spring, and there was but one animal in the minds of the others. He was known to travel swiftly, and always alone, but no man had ever found his tracks. And though he could not marry till after he had been in Villeneuve for at least three days, he now stated he would marry in five. That left two days to cover ninety miles, measured as the goose flies.

There was but one beast in the big timber that could travel like this. Antoine glanced furtively at Pierre, and the latter gave the faintest nod. "*Loup-garou*," their lips signaled.

Sebastien got up, stretched himself, gave a short laugh and strode to the door. "For a good dinner, *bien merci, mon*

vieux. It is I who shall feed you when the logs come down past Villeneuve in the spring. Every woman of the family of Fisette is an incomparable cook. We shall be ready, Marie and I."

For a moment after he disappeared there was silence in the camp, then both men stepped quickly to the window. Sebastien had reached the ice and, having put on his snowshoes, already had struck southward across Lac St. Luc. He walked swiftly, dwindling as they watched to a dark speck that vanished round a near-by point. Antoine looked at his friend, and swore a great oath.

"Jean—where is Jean?"

"He comes with the sawyers in ten minutes. But wait—I will go and call them now."

Pierre went out and smote with a poker on a large steel triangle that hung close to the door. Straightway the woods throbbed with a clear singing note that lifted through the green tops and caused a dropping of axes and cessation of droning saws, till down the winter roads trooped the lumberjacks, hungry as bears and chanting musically of Alluette and La Claire Fontaine.

At their head came Jean Deslormes, a young, tawny-haired giant, straight as a hemlock and shouldered like a bull moose. He caught sight of Antoine outside the camp, and, running forward, flung round him a pair of gigantic arms.

"Ah, Papa Carnot. When didst thou arrive, and hast thou perchance been at a place called Villeneuve?"

Antoine struggled for breath. "I would first that some young fools learn their strength—and use it less," he gasped. Then, in a whisper: "No, I have not visited Villeneuve since a fortnight past, but there——"

"A fortnight! That is but a moment, while I have not been there for two months. Is there nothing then to tell me, no message?"

"Shout not thy love to the whole camp, my son. There was one here a moment ago who even now is on his way to Villeneuve."

"Have you then sold all your stock to the good Pierre, and sent out for more?"

Antoine shook his head. "The name of the traveler is Sebastien, and he goes fast."

"*Le loup-garou*," said Jean grimly. "But why to Villeneuve?"

"In search of one Marie Fisette, who he swears will be his in the space of five days. My son will need all his strength, and must act very quickly. Let go, Jean; you break my arm."

"He took what trail—quick?" Jean swayed a little, with such a tremor as runs through the brown column of a pine when the saw eats at its heart.

"He said that his trail was his own, and that any might follow who could—then struck south around the point. Shut up thy Marie in thy breast, my son—and hasten. But," and here Antoine sent him an eloquent glance, "search not always for the form of a man as you travel."

Jean hurled himself into the sleeping camp.

IN ten minutes he was out on the ice, and, clearing the strewn logs, swung forward toward the first southerly point of Lac St. Luc. Thus led Sebastien's trail—long, narrow tracks with the points of the shoes turned up a little more than was usual in a bush country and the tail of one with an outward twist. He would remember that.

They took him round that point, straight as an arrow flight past the next one and on to a glassy patch where the water had come up and turned a mile of Lac St. Luc into a looking-glass. Here he slipped off his shoes, trotted across and cast about close to a shore line. There was no more trail.

He stood for a moment, shaking his head like a great, puzzled dog. This was the trail that any might follow who could! His lips became dry as he doubled back, and, picking up his own tracks, traversed the edge of the patch till he came to them again. "By Gar!" he whispered. "By Gar!"

Eighty miles due south was Villeneuve,

with Marie and tinkling sleigh bells and pearl-gray smoke climbing from heaped roofs. Somewhere to the south was something nosing swiftly through the big timber. "Search not always for the form of a man," Antoine had said. Jean jerked out a tense petition to Saint Joseph, patron and guardian of the family Fisette, then put on his shoes.

There was moonlight by seven. It turned the snow to a pale purple, on which blue-black shadows of big timber lay like wide and parallel bars. He tramped across these, bar to bar, leaning forward with massive arms swinging, his legs working like pistons; a vast engine of a man moving in a white flurry and spouting deep-drawn jets of vapor.

There was no sound save the creak of shoes, and a muffled thud as some overburdened cedar doffed its load of snow and straightened its tender branches in the stinging air. Presently he came to a frozen swamp. On the other side of this, where the shadows began again, stood a lone wolf.

It vanished as he stared, merging like one shadow into another. Jean paused for a moment while a new thought dawned, and struck off sharp to the right. Two hundred yards away he found it—a wolf track, the triangular pad with the long, sharp projecting toe and narrow, trailing heel. He followed this back a quarter mile, noting that it paralleled his own trail, curving where his curved and holding south for Villeneuve.

Then Jean knew.

At four in the morning the moon went down in a bank of cloud. Came a whine of wind and a few drifting flakes. The woods grew dark. By this time Jean was very hungry, and therefore felt cold, for in these latitudes the body, like a boiler, demands fuel.

He shoveled aside the snow, made fire and tea, searching the gloom with quick and furtive glances, crossing himself between gulps. In ten minutes he heard a rabbit squeal. That meant death in the ground hemlock near by. Something else was feeding there, and resting—resting.

As the goose flies it is ninety miles from the camp on St. Luc to Villeneuve, but as man travels not less than a hundred. As a wolf might go it is perhaps ninety-five.

At sunrise Jean knew it was the same this time for man and wolf. There was not so much concealment now. He saw the gaunt, gray form flitting, wraithlike, between brown trunks, a malign beast with deep, lean shoulders and bony, arrow-shaped head. It rested when he rested, ate when he ate—and kept always a little in advance.

By midafternoon it became difficult to think of anything else and he grew very sleepy. It was only the vision of Marie, with her flaxen hair, her smiling mouth and white arms, that held him awake. At sundown he knew that he must sleep if only for half an hour, or he would lose his way. There were no stars this time, and no moon. He made two fires of green birch logs, laid spruce boughs between them, pulled the hood of his capote over his nose and stretched out.

Instantly, it seemed, he began to dream. There was no *loup-garou* now, but only love and the whiteness of his girl's cheek. At this unction his body yielded, his great muscles relaxed; till, smiling, he plunged into an abyss of slumber, lulled by tiny crepitant voices from the surrounding forest.

Then, horribly, the dream became distorted. Marie's face, so close to his own, changed to a grinning mask with black lifted lips, flat sleek skull and malevolent yellow eyes.

The yellow gave place to black. They were the eyes of Sebastien. Simultaneously came a strange warmth on his cheeks. He blinked. Something was staring at him, something so near that it shut out the rest of the world.

He gave a cry, and sprang to his feet. There was a scramble in the snow by the spruce boughs. Jean Deslormes was alone again.

"*Que le bon Dieu nous sauve!*" he whispered, trembling.

From a southward ridge came answer, not by the voice of God, but the wild and

haunting voice of the gray wolf. Through the big timber it drifted, savage, remote but inescapable, the note of terror that in this season of the year carries its own message to fur and hide on the foothills of the Laurentians.

To Jean it also carried a message, and he flung himself forward. It could not now be more than thirty miles to Villeneuve. He swung on, summoning his vast reserve of strength, plunging through underbrush where once he would have gone round, himself now a thing of the woods in the manner of his going—this giant with the mind of a child. He stayed not to rest or eat; he looked not again for the gray shape.

THEN a remembered hilltop—a winter road for drawing wood—an outlying pasture—the bark of a distant dog—and below, in the valley, revealed in the half light of dawn, the spire of a church and the forty farms they called Villeneuve. Into the crisping air climbed forty pencils of pearl-gray smoke, like the exhalations of those who slumbered yet a while ere facing the rigor of the day.

Jean tore downhill to the house of Marthe Fisette, the mother of Marie. It seemed that all was safe here. He paused at the door, heard inside the crackling of a fire, and knocked. At sight of him the old woman dropped an armful of wood.

"Jean," she stammered, "how came you here?"

"As flies the goose from Lac St. Luc," he said, breathing hard. "And Marie?"

Marthe did not answer that, but stared at him wonderingly, and with a touch of awe. "It is undoubtedly the good God who has sent you, but how did you know?"

"Antoine Carnot told me; and, hearing it, I waited for nothing." He broke off, staring back. "Then it is true!"

"Sebastien!" Her lips framed the name.

He nodded. "*Le loup-garou!* Together we have come from the camp on Lac St. Luc, and this morning he also is in Villeneuve, but in what form I know not. Last night when for a moment I closed my eyes he came and crouched beside me,

breathing in my face, and would have torn my throat had I not suddenly awakened. I brought no gun, for one cannot kill a *loup-garou* except with a bullet that has been blessed, and there was no priest on Lac St. Luc."

Marthe crossed herself fervently. "That is true—always it has been so."

"And the friends here. What do they say?"

"They shrug their shoulders—and say nothing. It is not well to quarrel with Sebastien. There is that affair of the good Famicux—a thing all remember."

"And Marie?" he demanded.

Marthe sent him a wintry smile. "Look over your shoulder, my son."

She was halfway down the ladder stair from the room above; Marie with thick, yellow, knitted strands along her back, great slumbrous roses in her smooth cheeks and drowsy love in her blue eyes. Jean gave a huge, gusty sigh of delight, put out his mighty arms and lifted her as one picks up an acorn. She hid her face in his capote.

"My little one," he said softly. "My little partridge! Thou art safe here, very safe."

Presently they put food before him, and he ate, ravenously, telling in snatches of the trip from Lac St. Luc, "Ninety-five miles in forty-two hours, by Gar!" while Marie clucked over him as though she were indeed a hen partridge, and Marthe busied herself without words between stove and table. Then Jean got up.

"I go now to Père Leduc, for we shall be married in three days. Also, there is the matter of blessing some bullets." He paused, and waved a hand at the encircling bush. "It is there I shall use them."

"I also shall go," said Marie, divided between love and fear.

He shook his great head. "Such talk is not for my little bird, but thou shalt go so far as the store, and wait there. In three days my soul shall go everywhere with me. Be content, my swallow."

They went off down the packed road, where the snowplow had left four-foot ridges on either side; down to the store

which was diagonally opposite the church and the house of the good father. Here Jean left her clasped to the expansive bosom of Madame Famieux, crossed the road, kicked his shoepacks clean and found Père Leduc in his book-lined study. He spoke first of his heart's desire.

The father nodded, smiling. He loved this young Anak, this son of the wilderness, with his great thews and childlike heart. Wise and tender was Père Leduc, a pure flame that glowed constantly, healing both minds and souls with a wide spiritual paternity.

"It is well for you both—and the good Marthe agrees?"

Jean nodded.

"Then I will call your names at vespers this very night, so that it may take place in three days. A good girl, your Marie. You go yourself back to Lac St. Luc?"

No, Jean would not do that. He had saved eight hundred dollars for a farm—and the farm of Georges Laurier, was it not in the market? He paused a moment.

"There is another matter, mon père—that of these bullets." He held out a dozen, cupped in a gigantic palm. "May it please you to bless them?"

Père Leduc shook his head gently. Were he not very wise he would have laughed. He knew—knew all about it. Individually he knew more than the entire village put together. Part of his strength was that he only revealed a fraction of his knowledge. And now he wanted to hear what this enormous child had to say—all of it.

"Tell me, my son."

Jean told him, from the very start, touching not on the physical marvel of the trip—for to Jean it was no marvel—but on its terror. How did Sebastien leave the flooded patch on Lac St. Luc? What became of his shoes when he turned into a wolf? What did he mean by breathing in Jean's face? Why did he lead the way to Villeneuve, and most of all what was the import of this boast about Marie? There must be an end to this—the end brought by a bullet that had been blessed. All Villeneuve was waiting for that.

Père Leduc put his hand on the young giant's shoulder, and spoke of tradition and legends and the powers of evil. "No, my son, you yourself are about to give answer to Sebastien—a final answer. You and this dear daughter of the parish will have my blessing, and not these bullets.

"When in three days you leave the church with Marie on your arm and joy in your heart you will have replied to Sebastien. He will have written himself down as a loud-speaking fool at whom not only the village of Villeneuve will laugh. That laugh will run up and down the Saguenay, till he will wish to walk into the stream itself to escape it.

"As for what you saw and searched for, but did not find on your way here, when the mind of a man be distraught with weariness and perhaps fear there is not much of which he can be very sure. You have had an evil dream, but it is past. Go now, my son, and take peace and happiness with you. Le bon Dieu is not forgetful of His children on the Saguenay!"

Jean went out, cheered but not convinced. It was all very well to talk like that. But he *knew*, while the good father had not been on the trail from St. Luc. He rubbed the bullets together in his pocket, stalked across to the store and gathered in Marie.

"Behold my wife in three days—this little spruce partridge," he said to the fat Madame Famieux. "There is much to talk of."

Up the shining road, arms linked, they walked, while Jean told her the words of Père Leduc. Nor was Marie convinced. The good father had never felt Sebastien's burning eyes, nor could he understand what it meant to a girl to shrink and quiver beneath that insolent stare till she became weak and helpless like a bird in a net.

"It is but one thing we shall do, Jean."

"What is that, my dove?"

"You shall meet Sebastien and take his promise, or make it, that there is an end to all this."

"Of what value then is the word of a

wolf, could he speak it?" grunted Jean. Then, looking up, his heart leaped. Sebastien had rounded a bend in the road, and came straight toward them. Marie saw him, shivered and clung the closer.

"Jean," she whispered, "not now!"

Drawing nearer Sebastien walked more slowly, staring first at the giant with strange inscrutable gaze, then at Marie with a wild inhuman hunger. His cheeks were hollow and he moved lightly on his feet. They were not the feet of a man who has traveled ninety miles in forty-two hours—or less.

He came level with them. Marie found herself gently pushed forward and past him. Jean stood motionless, every sinew in him turned to fire.

"*Loup-garou*," he said thickly. "*Loup-garou*, what seek you now?"

Sebastien did not speak, but lowered his lids, and from hot half-veiled eyes sent the big man a look of contemptuous pity. So keen was it, so utterly penetrating, that Jean felt as though a hand were fumbling in his breast and groping for secrets.

THEN, as Sebastien was about to pass on, a mighty arm shot out and took him by the throat. He was shaken as a wolverene shakes a rabbit, shaken till his teeth chattered, and then flung headlong into the crusted snow. Jean turned on his heel, and followed Marie.

"It is done, my turtle—and the wolf did not speak."

Late that night, after Jean had gone to sleep at the farm of Christophe Famieux, Marie talked long with her mother, and told her the words of Père Leduc. Marthe could make no answer to these words, but found them nevertheless devoid of comfort. Presently she climbed the stair ladder, returning with a small image of Saint Joseph, patron saint to every good Fisette.

"It is lead," she murmured, "and from Ste. Anne de Beaupré it came, where it was blessed by his eminence from Quebec. Is it not that the head of the holy man is of the size of a bullet?"

Marie nodded, her eyes brightening.

"Then the rest of it I leave to thee, my pigeon. When thy mountain of a husband shall take thee from me in a sleigh to Beaulieu on the third day from this, see that the short gun of Christophe be thus loaded, and near at hand under the robes. It is in my mind that there will be need of that gun."

So on the third day, Gaston Roubidoux, sacristan, sent a rocking peal from the wooden church, and those of Villeneuve came in boxlike sleighs stuffed with straw, and drawn by short-legged, round-bodied Percheron horses, to see the union of Jean and Marie—doubly intriguing because it spelled the humiliation of Sebastien. Marie was all in white, with everlastings in her hair; Jean in a new, tight and very bright blue suit into which he just wedged his great body, celluloid collar anchored by a large rolled-gold stud, yellow tie and patent-leather shoes that hurt abominably.

Père Leduc spoke words of peace and love, after which they all went to the house of Christophe, the largest in the village, where was given the marriage feast, with riotous quadrilles and great good feeling. And Sebastien had not been seen by any one since three days—which added not a little to the general hilarity.

Beaulieu lay thirty miles away—or was it only three? Jean, being dizzy with happiness and pride, was not quite sure when at sunset he tucked his girl into the sleigh, wrapping the robes closely round her feet. There was plenty of straw underneath. Marthe had seen to that.

The horses, pet team of Christophe, arching their glossy necks, dashed off with a jangle of bells and laughter and cheers. The good father nodded contentedly and turned homeward. These children of his—how gay and handsome they were!

Halfway to Beaulieu—the horses going like playful kittens—Marie pressing to his side—frosty roses in her cheeks—the blue eyes like stars—with all this Jean could hardly believe his own good fortune. What a noble day it had been, and how many others, even more wonderful, lay ahead. His feet were now very sore—that being from the dancing—and his collar

stud was boring a hole in his gullet, but he was bursting with joy.

"My love!" he breathed. "My soul—my little ptarmigan!"

Just at this moment there came from a belt of cedar hard by the pulsing howl of a timber wolf. Marie heard and shivered. Jean heard, and his heart stopped, then began to race. The Percherons heard, whinnied their alarm and plunged forward.

Something shot across just ahead, turned, doubled back and made a ripping, darting stroke at the throat of the nearest horse.

"Quick, Jean, under the straw at my feet—the gun of Christophe, with the head of Saint Joseph!" panted Marie.

He wondered what Saint Joseph had to do with it, but a gun was a gun, and, burrowing swiftly, he recognized the short, single-barreled, muzzle-loader with half-inch bore. Pushing the reins into the girl's hands, he cuddled his cheek against the brown stock—and waited. The near Percheron was bleeding at the throat. Again that lean, darting form, ears flattened back on the sleek skull; again the curving attack rapid as light.

The wolf was in mid-air when the foresight covered a gray shoulder for a fraction of time. Jean crooked his finger.

He snatched back the reins, forced on the Percherons and fetched them up, quivering, on top of the thing on the road. Here for a deadly second the steel-shod, dancing feet hammered down—down, till what lay beneath was a shapeless lump of hide. Marie covered her eyes, but Jean, soothing his team, stared at it hard before he went over and kissed the roses back to her cheeks.

It was in his mind that the eyes of this wolf instead of being long and yellow, had been large and dark and burning. But he said nothing of this.

"My little weasel spoke of the gun of Christophe with the head of the good Saint Joseph," he smiled. "And what did she mean by that?"

Marie told him, and for months after that there was little talk of Sebastien.

THEN summer arrived. The logs from

St. Luc began to come down the Saguenay, and Jean was persuaded to help the drive through the chute of Les Arables. Marie went with him, and so it happened that Pierre Colange on a certain day did indeed sit at the table of an incomparable cook. The shanty that Jean knocked together stood close to the river, and the table was outside. They were talking of Sebastien when Pierre got up, shaded his eyes and stared hard at the tawny water.

"It has been in my mind, *mon vieux*, that we should meet him yet once again. What is that between the two hemlocks?"

He had come down with the logs—come from the unknown—and circled slowly in a great eddy. The smooth face was still unscarred. One sodden arm rested slack on the ribbed bark. The eddy brought him toward shore, bobbing as though something were twitching at his heels. The three gazed at one another, till Jean, remembering the prophecy of Père Leduc, lifted his brows and signaled.

"Go inside a moment, my little beaver. It is not for thee to see."

There is a cross underneath a jackpine just below that eddy. Jean hewed it. On a flat stone at the foot is a small leaden image without a head. That was the thought of Marie. On the cross, Pierre Colange, with some misgivings, put the name—one word. He could not decide what else, under the circumstances, one might safely say.

The cross stood there after the drive went on, and the following sweep had cleared every stranded log. Squirrels perched on it, rabbits hopped about it, red-headed woodpeckers sometimes tried their strength on its tough fiber. But nothing happened till Antoine Carnot passed in the autumn.

He saw it, read the one word, and exactly appreciated the difficulty. So, smiling, he lit his pipe, squatted close, and began to carve with firm, deep strokes.

"*Sebastien. Le Loup-Garou*," read the next lumberjack who came that way.

A Chat With You

IF you have had a radio for any length of time you have had the thrill of tuning in to strange and unexpected places, hundreds, perhaps even thousands of miles away. The broadcasting station cannot be seen but it seems just at your ear. WEAf and WHAAM and all the rest of them have clear individual voices of their own. Were you ever inside a broadcasting station? We are in one now. It has great range, high power, and the charm about it is that it is so easy to tune in on. You don't have to know the wave length, or twist the knobs, or put the phones over your ears. The station is POPULAR. To tune in you don't even need a machine or a single dry battery. A visit to the nearest news dealer is sufficient. It is better to time your visit to the seventh and twentieth of the month. Still better to order in advance.

* * * *

AN additional charm about it is that the artists who perform for us here have no need to be present in person. In fact they are scattered over the four ends of the earth and each operates a sending station of his own. It is much more wonderful when you can hear the message from one man in Arizona, another in France, still another in the misty Northwest, all on the one evening. Consider now that broadcasting station POPULAR is on the air. We have a highly paid announcer here. So we will step aside and let him talk to you.

* * * *

MY unseen audience," he says in a voice that commands respectful attention. "This is station POPULAR sending. In concluding our program for January 20th,

may I say that this station sends its messages more widely and clearly than any other. People in Hongkong, China, are listening to me. Men in London and Winnipeg, Mexico and South Africa get the message with equal ease. We have the further advantage of being able to relay the messages of the famous artists who will provide entertainment for you during the coming programs, although they themselves are scattered in all the most interesting places in the world. Mr. Henry Knibbs, author of 'Temescal,' 'The Ridin' Kid from Powder River,' and 'The Amazing Tenderfoot,' will speak first. Mr. Knibbs lives anywhere in the North Woods, in New Mexico, Arizona. At present the sound waves come from the far Southwest. Mr. Knibbs speaking."

* * * *

AND now you hear, without any interference from static, the voice of Harry Knibbs.

"I am glad that 'Temescal,' of which you have just had the second part, appears to be well received. I myself believe it as good as anything I have done, perhaps better. It will run for five issues and I think I can promise that it gets better as it goes on. I have already written about thirty thousand words of a new novel 'The Sun-gazers.' I am having a good time writing it. Part of the story is in Mexico and I think the glamour and romance you like are in the yarn.

"I have a fine new saddle horse from Kentucky, with a pedigree beyond reproach and manners equal to his pedigree. His name is Don Ricardo Temescal, possibly because he is a gentleman. I have been on earth fifty years. I am just be-

ginning to know how to live. I think tolerance is the thing. One must even be tolerant with oneself to get along. Best wishes! Good night!"

* * * *

ANNOUNCER: "William Morton Ferguson is next on the program. He is broadcasting from the north coast of Ireland. You can almost hear the waves crash against the rocks of the Giants' Causeway."

Mr. Ferguson: "It is good news that you like 'The Panister Mystery,' which opened this evening's entertainment. I think it one of the best I have written and I am at work on another to follow soon. I am in good shape for work, being in better training than when I came over here. I can ride two or three miles on a wheel and then play eighteen or thirty-six holes carrying a fourteen-pound bag without thinking very much about it. Here the climate is such that it is the survival of the fittest. That's the reason I don't get a car. I can do better work now than if I were fat and broken winded."

* * * *

ANNOUNCER: "Next on the program is A. M. Chisholm, relaid to you from his ranch on the Columbia River."

Mr. Chisholm: "You have a Skookum Bill story of mine in type. It is coming out April 20th. I think you will like it. I have done my best. Got smashed in a motor car lately but am recovering and at work again. I generally ride a horse and one good feature is when a horse piles you, you don't hit anything till you hit the earth. I never realized what a snappy rebound a fellow can get from a car."

* * * *

ANNOUNCER: "And now Bertrand Sinclair, talking from the west coast of Canada."

Mr. Sinclair: "I wish you would state a preference as between a yarn to follow this laid on the coast, and a tale of the old range. 'Head Winds' in the February 7th issue is a favorite of mine. I hope you like it. You'll get it complete two weeks from to-night. And in the meantime I am at work again."

* * * *

THERE are also messages on the air from B. M. Bower in Nevada, from Francis Lynde in Tennessee, from Roy Norton in France, from Rohde on Long Island and Percival Wilde in Connecticut and from a dozen others. Dickson speaks from Mississippi, Holman Day from California, Paine from New Hampshire. Sinclair, Paine, Dickson, Montanye, Knibbs and Calvin Johnston will all be with us at the entertainment two weeks from to-night."

* * * *

TO get away from radio as we close, you will find below the solution to the cross-word puzzle we published two weeks ago.

1	H	D	2	S	T	A	C	P	O	3	O	L	E	4
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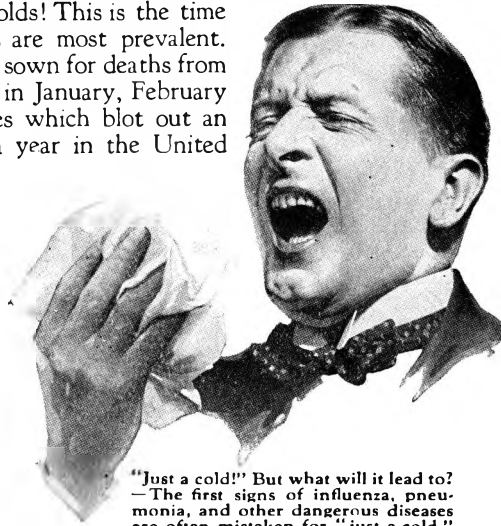


Fair Warning!

LOOK out for January colds! This is the time of year when colds are most prevalent. Seeds are now being sown for deaths from pneumonia that will occur in January, February and March. These diseases which blot out an average of 150,000 lives a year in the United States and Canada frequently develop from neglected colds. Out of every seven who get pneumonia one person dies. As many people die each year from pneumonia as from tuberculosis. Year after year the same thing happens.

Do not neglect a cold. A cold in the head is not a simple, trifling annoyance but a real disease with a medical name—coryza. In addition to the danger that pneumonia may develop, a cold often leads to chronic catarrh of the nasal passages, to ear trouble ending in deafness, to chronic bronchitis and inflammation of the bony cavities of the face. A neglected cold may even prepare the way for serious heart trouble.

The first noticeable symptoms of diphtheria, typhoid fever, measles, scarlatina, whooping cough or smallpox may appear as a cold. A person suffering from what seems to be an innocent cold may pass on to someone else a fatal attack of one of these diseases. If you or your children are suffering from colds stay away from other people until you are certain that the "cold" is not an



"Just a cold!" But what will it lead to? —The first signs of influenza, pneumonia, and other dangerous diseases are often mistaken for "just a cold."

infectious disease. This decent precaution will prevent many serious epidemics and save many lives.

A cold is an inflammation of the mucous membrane which settles upon the point of least resistance—the nose, throat, chest, or gastrointestinal tract. Sudden changes in temperature, drafts and exposure to damp and cold, breathing stale air and street dust—these are direct causes of colds.

Lack of fresh air and sufficient exercise to keep the skin and body healthy, lack of sleep and rest, over-indulgence in rich indigestible food—these are indirect causes of colds.

To take cold easily is to advertise that your living habits are wrong. By following simple health rules you are likely to keep well. But if in spite of all your care, you do take a cold—do not treat it lightly. See your doctor. Remember, it is not a sign of weakness but a mark of wisdom never to neglect a cold.



The amount of absenteeism in large business establishments is seldom realized until the facts are thoroughly reviewed. Common colds are among the chief sources of loss of time.

In a group of about 8,000 clerical employees of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company at the Home Office, records show that colds which involve disability for work affect 2 out of every 5 employees during the course of a year.

Among school children, colds are probably the cause of more absenteeism than any other illness—with consequent falling back in grades and extra expense to the tax payer.

Medical supervision of schools is becoming more thorough from year to year and is doing much to

prevent serious epidemics and thus save lives. Parents should cooperate with school authorities in working to stamp out these minor illnesses which frequently have fatal consequences.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has prepared a pamphlet, "Prevention of Pneumonia" which will be mailed free to everyone interested in guarding against this dangerous disease which ranks second only to heart disease in the death rate. Send for it.

Permission is gladly given to any individual, organization or periodical to reprint this page wherever it may serve the interests of community welfare.

HALEY FISKE, President.

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