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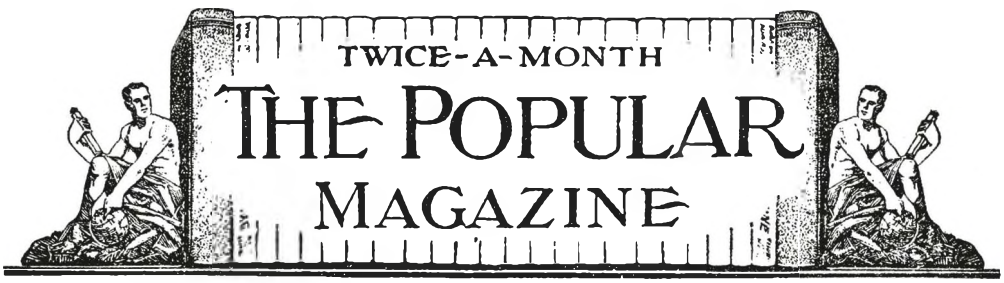

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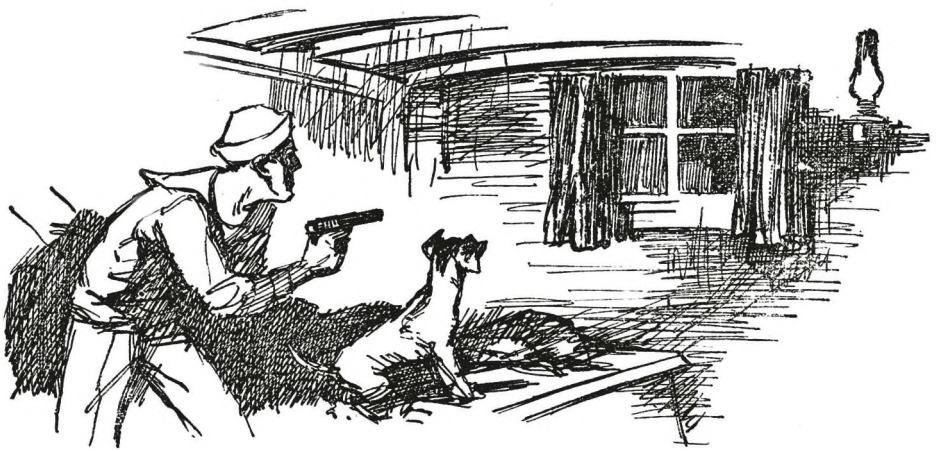


One Night in Zanzibar

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "Four Bells," "Bright Roads of Adventure," Etc.

Three assorted and highly engaging specimens of Uncle Sam's naval product undertake a few hours of innocent diversion amid the exotic delights of Zanzibar. That night the heavyweight champion of Britain's Grand Fleet is carried back to his ship on a stretcher, the native police force is stampeded, the Bu-bu-bu Express runs amuck, and various less notorious incidents disturb the peace of the Sultan Seyyid Khalifa's decorous realm. How these reprehensible disturbances were generated, how the American scout cruiser *Toledo* fell two days behind her cruising schedule, and how two bedraggled gobs, a bruised and dented warrant officer, the dauntless Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison, the beautiful Zuleida, and Moses Mahomet Ali—that flea-ridden pup—were salvaged from a derelict dhow in the weltering waste of the Indian Ocean, this story of rollicking youth explains in swift and masterly style.—THE EDITOR.

(A *Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

TEN O'CLOCK LIBERTY.

THE cable thundered through the hawse pipe as the ponderous anchor splashed into the blue harbor of Zanzibar, most romantic of the sun-bathed islands of the Indian Ocean. Roving very far from home, the scout cruiser *Toledo* had displayed her flag in ports almost never visited by an American man-of-war. It was a sight to thrill the heart of a Yankee exile, if there had been such a one on the beach, this long, gray ship of surpassing speed with a certain grace and beauty denied the massive fighting machines of the battle fleet.

Her "shakedown cruise," they called it, the purpose of which was to tune up a new ship and to school a crew of four hundred and eighty officers and men in the intricate, exacting team play of the modern naval

service. Even in this age of turbine engines and all manner of amazing electrical devices, you can't make sailors without sending them to sea.

The steel decks of the *Toledo* swarmed with active youngsters in white clothes while the quick notes of a bugle or the bird-like trill of a boatswain's pipe called them from one routine task to another. The sun was only two hours high, but the languid breeze, drawing from the land and heavy with the scent of cloves, foretold a day of blister heat. Week after week of tropic seas and sweltering ports had seasoned these Yankee lads, so brown and hard, and they shoved the work along nor grumbled more than is the bluejacket's habit.

Scrub and paint and polish, with battle stations and gunnery drills for good measure! To be slack in little things is to invite slackness in the chief essential, which is fighting efficiency. Such is the eternal gospel of the navy. In time of peace the competent commander thinks of little else than to be as ready as possible for the emergencies of war. Remote and detached from the populace which pays the bills, the navy lives its own strenuously absorbed existence afloat.

The scout cruiser smartly swung out her boats and lowered away the captain's gig and two roomy launches called motor sailers. They foamed across the harbor or circled the ship to test the engines and then tied up at the booms to await orders. They suggested visions of liberty parties and another strange town to ramble through, curio shops and rickshas, pineapples, mangoes, cold beer, perhaps music for a dance. Zanzibar peculiarly appealed to the imagination. The very name sounded gorgeously exotic. It was different from the African coast and even more out of the world.

A long, slim youth, William Sprague by name, finished wiping the breech mechanism of a six-inch gun and stood gazing shoreward. High-pooped dhows, gaudily painted, whose brown sails had winged it from waters as distant as the Persian Gulf, were at rest among a huddle of smaller native craft. Beyond them the island was verdantly enticing, tall palms, bright gardens, and roads winding like smooth ribbons. The city was a mass of flat-roofed, white buildings that swam in the quivering glare. There were glimpses of streets so narrow that the jutting galleries of the Arab houses seemed to meet across them. On the coral beach crowds of natives in snowy garments stared at the unfamiliar sight of an American warship.

"Kid" Sprague, seaman, second class, wiped his face with a handful of waste and muttered bitterly:

"'Join the Navy and See the World!' Sure! Through a porthole! And I was dumb enough to fall for the bunk. Me with a perfectly good high-school education. Restricted to the ship for the last two ports and a sweet chance I have of takin' this Zanzibar to pieces and seein' what makes it tick. Still on the report, I s'pose."

In spite of this sinister hint of disturbing the town he looked like a young man whose diversions were harmless. Honest eyes with a glint of mischief in them, a smile disarming when in a cheerful humor—he was the typical recruit, clean, supple, and intelligent, that is the pride of the service. He was at that age when a pimple on his chin worried him seriously and he was ready to squander his pay on the ship's tailor to have his uniform fit just so. Impatience of discipline and a temper that flared now and then had involved him in minor punishments. At heart he was sound. First-rate stuff if he could learn to stand the gaff and become infused with the spirit of the organization!

He was still scowling when a brawny machinist's mate emerged from below, like a whale coming up for air. He was big-boned, hairy, and tattooed. The sweat dripped from his bare arms and heavy shoulders and spattered on deck. Continuous hot weather had melted him down until he was almost gaunt. With the ferocious aspect of a cave man, his voice was mild and his manner ordinarily gentle. This made him incongruous. With a grin he whacked the unhappy young seaman over the head and gruffly exclaimed:

"Cheer up, Kid! What's the grouch? You got it soft. Whew, it's cold up here. I'm shiverin'."

"Aw, quit that stuff, Donnelly. You're a great old josher, you are. This is the hottest darn hole we've hit yet. I guess I have a dose of sunstroke right now. My head feels awful queer and I am all hollow and faint on my insides."

"You'll get over that when you hear mess gear sounded," scoffed Martin Donnelly. "Chow is what you need. That's all you

young goofs think of. My gosh, do you want to eat all the time? Listen, Kid, you come from my home town and I take an interest in you, understand? You can crowd me just about so far. No more of this beefin'. Pipe down. Do you know what the temperatures have been where I stand my four-hour watch? A hundred and twenty-five degrees in the engine room and we call that chilly. The fireroom has been running as high as a hundred and sixty degrees. And you can smell your dungarees scorchin'. Now think it over. I wish I had you in the black gang."

"A hundred and sixty degrees? Honest?" exclaimed Kid Sprague. "I don't see how you birds stand it. I never heard of such a thing."

"Well, we don't holler, even if a fireman or a water tender has to be dragged out by the heels. On the level, Kid, I don't like the way you've been acting. You are lucky to have one of the best division officers in the ship, and he took a shine to you from the start. I heard him say so. He thinks you have the makin' of a gun pointer. I didn't size you up as one of those half-baked young jazz hounds with a yellow streak that mope because they have to sleep in a hammock and keep 'emselves clean and take orders. Come through. What's wrong?"

"No liberty," confessed William Sprague. "I was kept aboard at Mombasa and the other guys had a swell time there. And we had a pay day since then and I've got coin to blow."

"You deserved what you got, Kid," was the severe rejoinder. "Your locker was a rat's nest when the captain inspected it. Your hammock was lashed all wrong, and you were careless with a broom when sweepers were called. And didn't I hear you give a boatswain's mate some lip when he bawled you out?"

"Here, that's a-plenty. Let up on me, will you?" begged William Sprague. "I'll be good. What's the word to-day? One o'clock liberty?"

"Yes. The port watch shoves off. How do you know that you're still restricted? Go find out. Gee, but I do hate a gob with no snap to him."

Machinist's Mate Martin Donnelly stalked in the direction of the shower baths and a change of clothes. Then he would sit beneath the awning of the fantail, or after deck, and placidly admire the landscape, wondering about people and things in his large, contemplative fashion. The navy had long claimed him for its own. He had no other ambitions, no restless moods. Hades in the fireroom? What else could you expect? Scout cruisers were not built for service so close to the equator. But she had a hundred thousand horsepower in her turbine engines and could do thirty-five knots when they wanted to push her. Not a ship for a joy ride, but why fuss about it because she hadn't been designed as a yacht?

To his delighted surprise, Kid Sprague found his name on the liberty list. He had hoped for the best and expected the worst. Sharp on the minute he joined the light-hearted throng on deck as they stood in long lines and passed a rigid inspection—hair neatly cut, chins shaved, shoes polished, spotless white clothes and hats, black kerchiefs tied in the proper knot. Down the gangway they filed, into the motor sailers, until all the thwarts were filled.

They were ready to stroll through the streets of Zanzibar as though they owned it, with an air of being at home anywhere.

In charge of a junior lieutenant, the patrol had already gone ashore, a score of sturdy lads wearing leggings, canteens, and swinging solid nightsticks. They would enforce law and order, if need be, and woe betide an errant shipmate who might presume to dispute their authority. Kid Sprague was in a virtuous frame of mind. No ship's patrol or Zanzibar cop would have to look at him twice. He and trouble were going to be entire strangers. He felt a lively interest in seeing Zanzibar at close range. He had found a book about it in the crew library. Long before the Christian era, the venturesome traders and seafarers of the opulent kingdom of Sheba had found this luxuriant island in their quest of spices, ivory, tortoise shell, and ebony. Fought for by the Arabs and the early Portuguese explorers, in modern times Zanzibar had been taken over by England as one of her far-flung protectorates.

From the quay near the sultan's palace, young Seaman Sprague and his comrades pushed their way through a noisy, jostling mob of native loafers in flowing garments who yelled:

"Me George Washington! Bes' guide in

Zanzibar. Show you bazaar—nice places——"

"You know me, sar. Charlie Chapleen—number-one guide—plenty letters from navy sheeps. You buy amber—rugs—ivory beads—I show you cheapes' place."

"You come go wiz Teddy Roosevelt, mistar. My name Teddy—all same American sultan. You want good guide? You take me."

The impetuous bluejackets charged through the mob like a football team, with shouts of, "Beat it!" "Vamose!" "On your way!" George Washington and Charlie Chaplin were tipped heels over head. The liberty party soon scattered among twisting, paved alleys which were no more than gashes between the lofty Arab buildings. The fragrance of cloves was wafted from the stone warehouses with doorways of wonderfully carved teak, from the laden carts creaking past, from the wharves and lighters near by. This was the wealth of Zanzibar, packed in bags for the merchant ships to carry away.

The American bluejackets roamed at random, to explore the Hindoo shops and the dark cubby-holes in which the Arab craftsmen toiled at their tasks, to gaze at the picturesque tides of humanity that eddied through this market place of the Indian Ocean. There were half-naked Swahili laborers, piratical captains of dhows with daggers in their sashes, clerkly Goanese spinning around corners on bicycles, turbaned Arabs and Egyptians with red fezzes, brown men from Madagascar jabbering French, black men from Uganda who looked like cannibals, stately wanderers from Abyssinia, shrewd Chinese picking up bargains, Indian traders of every caste, and lording it over them all the sun-reddened Englishman under his white helmet, with his Malacca stick and his easy air of superiority.

A turn of these blind streets and a stranger was likely to lose himself. Kid Sprague halted to watch an ivory carver ply his delicate tools. When he turned to follow his mates they had gone from sight, following their own devices. He ran after them, soon gave it up, and picked up a chance acquaintance in the person of a British sailor from a light cruiser which had been several days in port. For once it was hands across the sea and an amiable meeting instead of some tactless remark about the battle of Bunker Hill as the fuse to touch off a fine, large shindy.

"You're not so worse, for a bloomin' limie," observed the candid Kid as they drifted arm in arm.

"And you ain't such a blinkin' blow'ard as most of the Yanks," handsomely returned Coxswain Torbett of H. M. S. *Spitfire.* "It's odd, now that us allies should always be a-punchin' of one another's 'eads when we meet in a foreign port same as this. I mind me one time in Sydney—we runs afoul of one of your battleships, and it was all friendly and polite till some perishin' Yank refuses to drink the 'ealth of the king, God bless 'im, and calls his majesty a stuffed shirt. I didn't see much of what followed, the reason bein' that some blighter hove the show case full of cigars and smashed it over my bean. Cheerio, Kid! We'll get on, you and me. Sorry I'm stony broke."

"Forget it, old top. I've got a bundle of kale. First we buy a bunch of bananas to pack along with us. Then I blow you to a couple of bottles of suds. I'm no souse myself. And after that we get hauled around in rickshas and look for a cool spot."

"Right-o," agreed Coxswain Torbett as they steered to find a banana merchant. Just then Kid Sprague spied a black-and-tan puppy that was making very heavy weather of it amid the press of traffic. It dodged two panting coolies bearing a bale of silk slung from shoulder poles, almost rolled under the wheels of a honking automobile, and was knocked sprawling by a donkey's hoof. A bandy-legged, nondescript derelict of a pup, desirous of sitting down to scratch its numerous fleas, destruction menaced it on every hand and it could find no place of safety. A naked urchin flung a stick at it. The forlorn pup yelped and fled to the nearest doorway, tail between its legs.

Young William Sprague forgot the coxswain from H. M. S. *Spitfire* and the bunch of bananas. This distracted, unlovely pup touched his sympathies and he dashed in chase. The orphan mutt had found no refuge in the arched doorway. A swarthy gentleman, about to enter, grasped it by the neck and tossed it into the street. Kid Sprague tacked to intercept it but the frightened pup mistook his intentions and madly scuttled into the nearest alley. Its

uncertain, crooked legs moved with incredible speed. They kicked the dust behind it.

The sailor dived, missed his quarry, and saw it scamper around the corner of a building. He was not to be baffled by the wretched little fugitive, so he loped the faster and finally pounced on it in a brass-worker's tiny shop. As a dog, it was dubious in the extreme. Its ancestry was mixed and clouded. Whatever the merits of the various breeds that made up its lineage, it had inherited none of their graces.

"Just plain yaller dog," said the Kid as he tucked it under his arm. "You never can tell. He may grow into something. Some of that well-known discipline aboard ship, and we'll make a man of him yet. Quit those yips, Moses Mahomet Ali. Get that? You are christened, and you've found a friend. Talk about curios! You sure do look it."

The soft-hearted young seaman attempted to retrace his course but soon found himself bewildered. It wouldn't be very far to the spot where he had left the impecunious British coxswain, he reflected, but if you took just one wrong slant you were out of luck. You steamed in circles until you met yourself coming back. Zanzibar was plain nutty, young Mr. Sprague would tell the cockeyed world.

Presently he gave it up in disgust. Every street was as crooked as a snake and so narrow that you couldn't see more than the length of your nose. Well, it made no great difference. Coxswain Torbett could not be regarded as a serious loss. Sooner or later he might have made some crack about why America was so late in coming into the war and it would have been necessary to poke him one on the jaw. Meanwhile the salvaged mutt, to be henceforth known as Moses Mahomet Ali, had snuggled down in the crook of the Kid's arm, with an occasional whimper that suggested a craving for nourishment.

"Hungry, hey, boy?" said its master. "Me, too. What you need is a bottle of milk and a beefsteak."

After a search, they moored in the haven of the Hotel Afrikan and found solace for man and beast. At one table was a group of chief petty officers, at another a dozen seamen from the *Toledo* who hailed Kid Sprague with cordial invitations. They were tactless enough, however, to hurl rude jests at Moses Mahomet Ali and to insult him in the most scathing terms. Thereupon the sensitive Kid refused to sit with them and marched out to find more congenial company.

He was passing the gorgeous Indian shop of Mooloo Brothers, dealers in ivory, amber, ebony, jewels, and silk stuffs, when he caught sight of Machinist's Mate Martin Donnelly looming at a counter. Here was a man of human feelings who would be kind to poor little Moses Mahomet Ali. Likewise Kid Sprague was beginning to feel lonesome and forlorn himself. He went in, therefore, and found Donnelly engaged in a windy argument with one of the suave, dusky Mooloo brothers.

Their animated gestures were aimed at the rows of elephants most cunningly carved from ebony, with ivory tusks and toenails, whole families and herds of them. Mr. Mooloo, a Hindoo of a nervous temperament, was evidently dismayed by the pugnacious countenance and muscular frame of his customer, but stuck valiantly to his prices and was not easy to intimidate. Donnelly smiled a welcome as he turned to say:

"Hello, Kid! This bird is the prize robber of the whole cruise, and that's goin' some. What have you got there? A dog? Why, sure it's a dog. Don't let any of those bimbos on the ship tell you it's some kind of a Chinese joss. Poor little beach hound! How come? Did you buy him?"

"No, found him," was the grateful reply. "Say, but he's got sand in his gizzard. You ought to hear him bark. Do you honestly like him, Martin?"

"I'll say so, right off the bat, Kid. I was sort of lammed around myself when I was a tike, and had blame few friends. Since then I've been better than I looked, if I do say it myself. A big brute with an ugly mug, like me, gets misunderstood, Kid. They give me the reputation of a ten-minute egg and I ain't that way at all. Now help me pry an elephant loose from this Bombay burglar."

"I am no burglah, sar—I beg you excuse me," courteously broke in Mr. Mooloo, rubbing his hands. "You ask to buy one beeg elephant—ver' beeg. It take one man t'ree weeks to make an elephant like that. I ask you pay me seexty rupees—ver' small price—speshul for American navee men."

"You cut my throat. It's plain murder," rumbled Donnelly. "Forty rupees

and be damned to you, Mr. Mooloo. And you'll be strippin' the shirt from my back at that."

Kid Sprague exclaimed, with delight, "Put it to him, old-timer. They marked up the prices when they heard we were coming. All Americans are millionaires, I don't think. Listen, what do you want that whale of an elephant for? He stands more'n a foot high and I bet he weighs like so much lead."

Donnelly shook his close-cropped head and the perspiration pattered on the floor. Patiently he explained:

"It's a present for my poor old mother in Hackensack, Kid. I promised to find her something elegant to put on the parlor mantel. I bought her a silver-lace shawl in Cairo, and leopard skins for a coat at Mombasa, but I'm still shy the piece of resistance."

The Kid smothered a chuckle and his face was demure as he commented: "When the old lady gets dolled up with a silver-lace shawl and a leopard-skin coat, and that big elephant to lead out on a string, she will be one sporty dame."

Donnelly looked rather troubled as he replied, "Maybe you're right. She ain't so young as she was once. Never mind, I'll buy her some ostrich feathers at Capetown and some lace at St. Helena. But this he-elephant does belong on the mantelpiece, Kid. There's no such elephant in the whole of Jersey. Now, Mr. Mooloo, guess again and have a heart. Forty rupees —thirteen dollars in honest money—or I'll tell the whole ship's company to lay off your place."

"Feefty rupees, sar," protested Mr. Mooloo, in deeply injured tones.

"Then take your butt-ended, left-footed elephant," thundered the machinist's mate, "and I hope you fall over him and break your neck."

He turned his back and was halfway to the street when the Hindoo merchant sighed aloud, like one bereaved. "Forty rupees, sar, and it is making a geeft of the elephant to your honorable old mothah."

"Fine! You and I know how to do business," amiably returned Martin Donnelly, whose good humor was restored. "Now, Kid, what do you want to buy for that girl of yours? I've got this Oriental highbinder on the run."

"A string of ivory beads, I guess, but I was afraid of getting stung. I don't know anything about the stuff."

"I do. I'm built of it—solid ivory above the ears, so the chief engineer told me yesterday. Mr. Mooloo won't cheat me. He knows better. Now act pretty, Brother Mooloo, and break out something classy for the young man."

"Yes, sar, I will show you strings of beads it take man t'ree weeks to——"

"Can the patter," sternly commanded Donnelly. "I'll name the price."

His masterful influence was potent to hasten the transaction. They were beautiful beads and undoubtedly genuine. Mr. Mooloo decided to take no chances of a return visit from this hairy djinn of an American sailor. Kid Sprague stuffed the beads in his pocket and sallied happily forth with the weary Moses Mahomet Ali slumbering against his breast. The machinist's mate carried the burdensome elephant as if its weight were no more than a feather. Together they halted outside. The sun had dropped low and the streets were in shadow. A cooling breeze came sweeping in from seaward. It was the beginning of the blessed respite that comes at nightfall.

"What's on your mind, Kid?" asked Donnelly. "I don't feel like hitchin' up to any noisy bunch of rummies. And you can search me where my own side kickers have strayed off to."

"Let's go find the native bazaar," suggested the youngster. "I like to poke around and look for funny junk."

"All set, boy," agreed Donnelly. "The pup been fed? Good. I'm glad I don't have to run a commissary for my elephant."

Comfortably they jogged in two rickshas which crowded to the wall to let the Sultan of Zanzibar drive past in an open carriage with liveried attendants. They envied this bored, middle-aged gentleman not at all. In fact, they lolled back in their two-wheeled vehicles with a grander manner and looked more at ease than did His Highness, Seyyid Khalifa himself.

"Ten o'clock liberty for you juicy young gobs," called out the machinist's mate. "I think I'll be goin' off myself by then. But the night is still young, Kid, and there's time for adventures and things. It may turn out to be one of those 'Arabian Nights' you read about. I have a hunch. Me and

you and Moses Mahomet Ali and the prize elephant."

"Go as far as you like," agreed William Sprague. "But, for the love of Mike, don't let me miss that ten o'clock boat."

CHAPTER II.

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA.

THESE carefree pilgrims from U. S. S. *Toledo* discovered much to amuse them while they idled among the dingy nooks and corners of the Arab quarter and bargained for queer trinkets, from earrings of hammered silver to inlaid ash trays. They ate cakes and sweetmeats from the stalls in the streets, drank pink, sirupy sherbets, and were sublimely indifferent to dust and microbes. The dusk of the day found the shopkeepers closing the heavy shutters. The noisy crowds melted away. Soon this area of the city was almost deserted. Martin Donnelly shifted his ebony elephant from one shoulder to the other and sagaciously remarked:

"Let's go sit down somewhere, Kid. I'm leg weary, and this ebony pet sort of drags me down on one side. He sure is hefty for his size."

"Moses Mahomet Ali squirms a lot," said young Sprague. "He ought to be put down where he can sleep steady. What do you say to driving out to a real native village? The moon ought to be up pretty soon, and she is due to be one gorgeous night. It's a heap sight cooler than that infernal teakettle of a ship."

Donnelly nodded assent. He was a sentimental man, in spite of his forbidding appearance. They would find the brown-skinned natives and the thatched houses under the coconut palms by the light of the Zanzibar moon. Fortune favored them in discovering one solitary ricksha whose two-legged steed was wearily plodding homeward. He permitted himself to be chartered by the hour, after finding another coolie to push while he pulled. It was no light cargo, what with the massive machinist's mate and his solid elephant.

Progress was slow with frequent halts when there was the slightest hill to climb. The two seafarers were not impatient. They smoked cheroots and admired the rising moon. A sense of peace and rest infolded them. Moses Mahomet Ali slept in the bottom of the ricksha. Beside him stood the noble elephant with trunk upraised and ivory tusks gleaming, as though vigilantly on guard.

The excursion was suddenly interrupted. A wheel of the overloaded vehicle collapsed with a crash of splintered spokes. Donnelly rolled out on the back of his neck. Kid Sprague sprawled on top of him. The dejected coolies stood and cursed the ancestors of all rickshas. Greatly excited, the pup tried to bite their bare heels. Only the elephant maintained a composure dignified and unshaken.

"Adventures! You said it," spluttered the Kid. "Is this one of 'em, you big stiff? You ought to take your moonlight rides in a truck. See what you did to a perfectly good ricksha."

"It does look as if we had expended it," said the machinist's mate, brushing the dust from his eyes. "It can't make port on one wheel. Broke down in mid-ocean, Kid, and no radio. Pipe the lifeboat crew to muster, eh?"

"Huh, you can't laugh this off," snarled the youngster. "Two miles to walk back, if it's a step, and my shoes hurt. And I'm hungry again. Well, come on."

"You don't have to lug this elephant," sadly remarked Donnelly.

"I'll spell you with him," said the seaman, repenting of his ungraciousness. "Oh, I don't mind much. It's a nice night, and we'll have time for some chow at the hotel before we shove off."

They trudged along the gleaming coral road. William Sprague felt ashamed to play the baby in the company of a shipmate whom no vicissitudes could daunt. Donnelly was whistling "Yes, We Have No Bananas," and presently they were singing it together. At the end of one hundred paces, and it made the journey shorter to count them, they exchanged the pup and the elephant.

"A stroll like this limbers you up, Kid. I don't get enough exercise aboard ship. This country looks like a picture. What do you bet we don't go bustin' into some kind of adventure yet?"

"Nothing to it, Martin. We picked up a jinx. I don't know whether it is the flop-eared pup or the double-ended elephant."

"Listen, William," seriously replied the big one. "Mr. Mooloo told me this elephant was shot with good luck. All you have to do is stroke his back and say

'Wallah, Wallah, Wallah,' three times, just like that. Too bad I forgot to stroke him before we signed on in that condemned ricksha."

"Better do it now, Martin, before we get in another jam," advised the Kid. "I'm not one bit superstitious, but out here in the East they do pull off some stunts you can't explain, and maybe this Mooloo bird told the truth for once in his life."

Accordingly they set the elephant down and knelt, with solemn countenances, to stroke its back while they chanted in unison, *"Wallah, Wallah, Wallah."* Things were bound to break right, hopefully ventured Donnelly. The Kid called attention to the fact that he was willing to try anything once. In a sanguine mood they toiled into the outskirts of Zanzibar city. They took their bearings from the beach beyond which they could see the *Toledo* at anchor, with a string of electric lights brilliantly illuminating her gangway.

"Not yet," said the machinist's mate. "Join the Navy and See the World."

There was no need of placing their tired feet, one in front of the other, all the way to the Hotel Afrikan. Here and there the moonlight filtered into the streets they trod, where the houses lifted like white cliffs. They moved in soft obscurity and so came to a lighted doorway that gleamed like a friendly beacon. The pace quickened. They could read the sign that swung above the pavement, "Japanese Coffeehouse." They halted to look in.

A front room with wicker chairs and tables, a vase of flowers, a painted screen, a gilded dragon writhing across a wall! All very neat and inviting! Through an arch they had a vista of a garden, dwarfed trees, a trellis hung with wistaria, rustic seats, a fountain tinkling. A long table and a tray of dishes hinted at a menu more substantial than coffee.

"Here we drop the mudhook and take on fuel," exclaimed Seaman Sprague.

"Stand by to secure engines," agreed the machinist's mate. "It looks beautiful, boy. Zanzibar is lookin' up."

In they tramped and a Japanese woman came from the garden to greet them. She bobbed courteously, with a broad smile of welcome. She was middle-aged, with strands of gray in the hair rolled smoothly back, a motherly person and a pleasant hostess. The visage of Martin Donnelly appeared so truculent that she stepped back with a quick intake of breath, but his gentle voice reassured her.

"Good evenin', ma'am. I was at Yokohama and Kobe one cruise, and there's Jap friends of mine there. Can you rustle us a man-size feed?"

"Ah, I am please'," she twittered. "Poor Yokohama, it is all smashed with earthquake. Americans give so much money to Japanese earthquake people! What you will have for supper?—soup, fish, chicken, melon, bamboo shoots——"

"You do talk lovely English," blissfully interrupted the Kid. "Please bring the whole works and make it snappy."

"You will come into the garden, please?" and she bowed again. "It is cooler and more nice for eats."

Into the garden they limped and discovered a shipmate seated at a small table. Pink petals drifted from an oleander tree to rest upon his bald head. He was a fleshy man of middle age with a large, pale face. His white uniform blouse wore the shoulder straps of a warrant officer. So impressive was his demeanor that one would not have been surprised to see him display the gold stars of a rear admiral. A man of long service and vast experience was Chief Pay Clerk Cassius Stackpole. He knew all the seas and ports. Wherever the *Toledo* touched on her long cruise, he had been there before in some other ship. He made friends with the most astonishing facility. As a linguist he professed a smattering of divers strange tongues.

His duties involved transactions with ship chandlers, fuel agents, dragomen, bumboats, money changers, and markets. As the veteran of the supply department he went ashore with the paymaster and showed him the ropes. Bland and all-sufficent, "Old Man" Stackpole revolved in his dignified orbit without waste motion.

Upon the table at which he sat was a chessboard. He was studiously engaged. Opposite him, and no less intent, was a bearded Arab of his own age, a personage with a hooked nose, thin lips, and an eye like a hawk. He was handsomely attired, the outer robe of dark blue, the *kanzu* of fine white cotton flowing from the neck to the ankles. Around his waist was a gold sash. Covering his head was the *kilemba* or turban of red-and-yellow stripes. A splendid emerald set in silver shone from

the sinewy finger that hovered over the chessboard.

To find the chief pay clerk playing chess with this imposing sheik or aga, or whatever he might be, was not in the least surprising. Majestically Mr. Stackpole beckoned the visitors. As a warrant officer, he might regard a seaman, second class, and a machinist's mate as not quite in his set, but he could afford to ignore rank in the seclusion of the Japanese Coffeehouse.

"Hello, boys, glad to see you," said he in resonant tones. "Meet my friend, Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin. I knew him out here when I was in the old *Brooklyn*. He is a topnotcher—second cousin of the sultan—and has the biggest clove plantation at this end of the island. He talks Arabic and Swahili, and a little English. I savvy enough to get by with."

They shook hands with the ornate clove planter, who resumed his preoccupied attitude at the chessboard. Old Man Stackpole, chin in his hand, looked up to say after moving his queen:

"The Jap woman will send out for beer, if you want it. She has no license. I brought along a flask of cognac to lace my coffee with. It brightens you up, but be careful of the mixture, or the top of your head will fly off."

It had so brightened Mr. Stackpole that after three more moves Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin had to admit himself checkmated. They rested and gravely conversed in a singular medley of phrases. Presently a Japanese girl came in to set the places and another appeared with the soup. They were quaint little creatures, giggling whenever Kid Sprague cast a merry eye at them, but he deferred acquaintance. He was a youth who could find little romance so long as the tooth of hunger gnawed and his shoes felt much too small for his feet. Lusty trenchermen were these two guests from U. S. S. *Toledo* and they scarcely looked up from their plates while the Japanese damsels fluttered in attendance. The splay-footed, sad-eyed pup and the ebony elephant tickled their childish sense of humor. Both animals were carefully put to bed beneath the table.

When the chairs had been shoved back Mr. Cassius Stackpole sauntered over to remark:

"Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin is anxious to learn to play poker. What do you say? We can use a peck or so of those big copper anna pieces for chips. Empty your pockets."

"He looks like a Barbary pirate," observed Martin Donnelly. "Don't you start no arguments with him over a deck of cards, Mr. Stackpole. He carries an arsenal under that white nightie. And there is room in his sleeves for all kinds of aces."

"A small limit," said the Kid, "and give me room for a quick get-away."

"You misjudge my friend, Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin," declared the chief pay clerk. "He is a high-toned gentleman and I'll guarantee he won't start any rough stuff."

They cleared a long table and distributed the stacks of copper coins. As a wise precaution, the machinist's mate hoisted his elephant to the table, stroked its back, and murmured, *"Wallah, Wallah, Wallah."* Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin turned out to be a ready pupil. Soon he suggested making the stakes worth while and dragged from his raiment an enormous roll of bank notes. Uneasily Donnelly whispered behind his hand:

"Here comes trouble, Kid. If we crab his game, he may get mad. And if we trail along with him, he'll get a streak of beginner's luck and leave the navy all flattened out. I don't want to hurt Mr. Stackpole's feelings, but I wish something would happen to break up this game."

This earnest wish was granted. Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin was not responsible, however, and he played the part of a spectator. His poker education was cut short by an intrusion unforeseen and calamitous. In from the street surged a party of British bluejackets whose cap ribbons bore the letters H. M. S. *Spitfire*. There were six of them, by Martin Donnelly's hasty count. At least three were stalwart men and no spindling recruits. They invaded the innocent sociability of the Japanese garden in a loud, overbearing manner. It was to be inferred that they were not altogether pleased with Zanzibar and desired to correct its manners and its morals. If the provocation offered, they might erase it from the map and parade among the ruins.

One exception should be noted. This was a scrawny man who hung back and displayed no bellicose intentions. Seaman Sprague, U. S. N., recognized a friend, Coxswain Torbett, whom he had unintentionally deserted while in chase of the orphan mutt, Moses Mahomet Ali. At sight of the

youthful Yank, the coxswain edged forward and hoarsely explained to his mates:

" 'Ere's my pal from the *Toledo*. It's all right. Introjuce yourselves and ask 'im and his friends to 'ave one with us."

The British tar with the widest pair of shoulders, whose eyes were red and slightly askew, returned in a bass voice:

"You're a dirty little liar, Torbett. The only Yank that's all right is a dead one. That's my motto to-night. Didn't one of 'em hit me behind the ear with a coconut a little bit ago and near bash my bally brains out? For what? Because I tipped his funny little round hat over his blinkin' eyes. I'll introjuce myself—'Battlin' Jack' Goddard, torpedo gunner, that was heavyweight champion of the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow. And I can whip any three Yanks that ever sailed in a Yankee tin pot of a cruiser."

This valorous speech was highly provoking. In fact, it was like tossing a bomb into this pretty, moonlit garden. His companions tried to argue with the web-footed champion. They were not anxious to declare war as abruptly as this. Contemptuously he brushed them aside. Coxswain Torbett slipped over to Kid Sprague and tremulously whispered:

" 'E is in a frightful temper and it was 'im that egged the others on to be nawsty. They're afraid of 'im. If you lads don't mind humorin' him a bit, it may blow over."

Old Man Stackpole was on his feet, unruffled and benignant, prepared to pour the oil of his oratory upon these troubled waters. The sight of his shoulder straps should have subdued the champion, but he glared wickedly and burst out:

"No silly old warrant officer can tell me wot's wot. I don't like this geezer's face. I ought to poke it."

"Men, this will not do," solemnly admonished the chief pay clerk. "There is the best of feeling between our two navies, let me assure you. We worked and fought together like brothers during the Great War. I enjoyed the pleasure of luncheon with your warrant officers on the *Spitfire* to-day. We toasted the president and the king. All I can offer you to drink is a nip of cognac, but you are heartily welcome. And we can clear up any little misunderstandings, I am quite sure."

The champion let his little red eyes rove up and down the comfortably cushioned frame of Chief Pay Clerk Stackpole, as if deciding just where to plant the fatal blow. Sneeringly he retorted:

"Drank up all the beer, hey, you bald-'eaded old guzzler? Just what I might ha' expected. Stow your gab, Spitfires. Don't interrupt me. We won't clear for action if the Yanks'll send out and fetch lashin's of beer. Hold 'em as 'ostages. That's the word."

Machinist's Mate Donnelly had been standing behind his chair, the back of which he grasped with both hands. As a weapon it was too fragile to please him. His heavy jaw was thrust forward. The muscles of his gaunt cheeks were contracted. The bushy brows met in a black scowl. His powerful body was tense. He had lost the shambling awkwardness of his usual posture. Licking his lips he spoke in a slow, hard voice unfamiliar to his shipmates.

"Stand by for orders, Kid. We are going to bust out of this and take Old Man Stackpole with us. Fetch beer for this big roughneck? I don't think."

The Kid was willing but for the life of him he didn't see how to get out with his colors flying. Coxswain Torbett was neutral, but this left the odds at two against five. With all due respect to Mr. Cassius Stackpole, he looked like a total loss if it should come to a free for all. There was Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin, but he could not be expected to unlimber his arsenal in such an international affair as this. The Kid gulped and his heart was thumping. He was no veteran shellback, trained by experience to fight his way to the beach in foreign ports. However, this looked like an elegant chance to learn, he said to himself.

Champion Jack Goddard, late of the Grand Fleet, hesitated to force the issue, although his ultimatum had been issued. Something restrained him. Two factors, to be precise. One was the extreme readiness with which Martin Donnelly had harkened to the call. He looked like an ugly customer who was not making his début in such episodes as this. The other factor was the bearded Arab gentleman who had remained seated and was indifferently flicking the pack of cards with one hand. He gazed at the British disturbers with open disdain and contempt. His right hand, as was noted, remained hidden in the folds of the blue robe. The champion surmised that

the hand was not empty. A few inches of cold steel driven between a man's ribs would not improve his health.

There ensued, for these reasons, a long moment of delay and silence. The Japanese woman flitted into the front room and back again. Her worn features were waxen with apprehension. She dared not speak. The two girls had vanished into the kitchen.

The crisis was precipitated, the deadlock broken, by that homely but beloved bit of canine flotsam known as Moses Mahomet Ali. He had been aroused from his nap beneath the table by the noise of heavy feet and loud voices. Out he scrambled, on the qui vive, to quell the disturbance. Sturdily he emitted what was intended to be a series of frightful barks. The shrill commotion drew the attention of Champion Jack Goddard. The pup ran at him, ears a-cock, tail up, intelligently deducing that here was an enemy to be attacked and driven off. He snapped at the man's ankles, yelping in a frenzied manner, and was resolved to die in his tracks if it had to be done.

Kid Sprague lunged forward to rescue his pet. He was an instant too late. The champion raised a heavy service boot and viciously kicked at little Moses Mahomet Ali. The pup soared like a football and alighted in a flower bed. By no means knocked out, he raised his voice in pained, indignant accents, "Ki, yi, yi!" The Kid rushed in to attack, with no other weapons than his clenched fists which were swinging in wild circles. Jack Goddard laughed and knocked him over the table with one deftly delivered blow.

The other Spitfires surged into the fray. One of them prudently made for Old Man Stackpole, who could lay hands on nothing more effective than a flower pot filled with lilies. This he hurled at close range. It smashed on his foeman who grunted and clapped both hands to his crown. This gave the portly chief pay clerk time to dodge behind the fountain while he sought other missiles. He was a courageous man, but better at firing broadsides than repelling boarders.

And so these two dodged around the fountain, playing tag at top speed, until Mr. Stackpole, whirling suddenly, bumped full tilt into his pursuer and floored him by sheer tonnage and momentum. It was proof that the tactics of ramming in naval warfare are not so obsolete as is generally supposed. With an agility that did him great credit, Mr. Stackpole dropped upon the prostrate Briton's chest, pinned him down, and used his ears like jug handles to bang his head against the flagstones. One unit of the enemy's squadron was definitely out of action.

Meanwhile Martin Donnelly had advanced to meet the heavyweight champion, not in a flurried rush but with a wary caution bred of other impromptu encounters. The others subsided and stood as spectators. This might be a rare bit of fighting. The hairy Yank was a two-fisted man and no mistake, and this Jack Goddard was not loved by his shipmates, being a loud-mouthed bully by nature.

Dazed and winking, Kid Sprague was nursing his jaw and trying to stand firm on his legs. He yearned to mix it up for another round, but he was not ready.

The British battler was a graceful man for his weight and inches, and light on his feet. He handled himself as one skilled in the ring. The American machinist's mate, strong but much the slower of the two, was unskilled in the art of boxing. He was at a disadvantage. This was quite apparent. But he came on, steady and taut, a man who had to be knocked cold before he would quit.

The haughty Arab personage, Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin, withdrew his right hand from inside his robe. It might have been conjectured that he had concluded not to take an active part in the performance. A brawl had resolved itself into a duel of pluck and strength. This was, in a way, no concern of his. His friend, Mr. Cassius Stackpole, was in no need of succor but was doing quite well for himself. He was still using his British sailor as a cushion. With a stately bow in farewell, Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin strode from the garden and was seen no more.

CHAPTER III.

ELEPHANTS AND OTHER THINGS.

BY all the rules of fiction, the Yankee hero should have cleaned up the place single-handed, undaunted by superior forces. The truth is, however, that he had bitten off more than he could chew. This he was sensible enough to realize for himself. His one hope was in waiving the formalities of pugilism and making a rough-

and-tumble party of it. This meant ducking the trained fists of Champion Jack Goddard and clinching as soon as possible. With this in mind, Martin Donnelly dived headlong into the fray.

The Briton was anticipating such procedure. He was quick and nimble. Stepping aside, he hooked an arm around the Yankee's neck and pounded his face with a sledge-hammer right. There was no holding Donnelly in such a vise as this. He wrenched himself free, whirled in his tracks, and struck out with both hands. They were awkward blows, but Goddard was not set to parry them. One smote him on the neck. It was like being hit with a club. He swayed, dropped to one knee, and seemed confused. Instantly Donnelly was on top of him. It was his unexpected chance.

They wrestled furiously, but the English bluejacket was resourceful. Somehow he squirmed from under, tore himself loose, and found room to lurch to his feet. The machinist's mate, panting, with a bloody nose, was slower to recover himself. Not yet braced, he was trying to cover his face when Goddard let drive for the body, a terrific smash to the heart and another to the ribs.

Donnelly groaned. His gaunt body quivered with pain. His features were distorted, bewildered. The spirit was still willing, but his energies were benumbed. For the moment Kid Sprague had been merely looking on. With the instinct of fair play he had been willing to let them fight it out. There was a mental reservation. He would mix in if his comrade was getting the worst of it. The time had arrived. Martin Donnelly was about to be knocked for a row of depth bombs. This was what the Kid said to himself as he shouted a war whoop and made a flank attack on the champion of the Grand Fleet.

It was the signal for the other Britons to abandon the rôle of bystanders. Two Toledos against four Spitfires was the situation. In a ruction of this kind the rules of chivalry were apt to go by the board. Coxswain Torbett still hovered on the outskirts as a pacifist. With the odds against him, Martin Donnelly was in no mood for surrender. Retreating to the long table, he snatched up his ebony elephant. As a mascot the beast had failed to deliver the goods, but he might be made useful in an emergency. That splendid trunk of his was upraised in a warlike curve. It served as a solid handle for Donnelly to grasp in his good right hand. He had a bludgeon such as only a strong man could have wielded. It was his intention to clear a path from the garden to the street.

Chief Pay Clerk Stackpole was quick to read this plan of operation. He abandoned his prostrate prisoner and maneuvered to follow close in Martin Donnelly's devastating wake. Kid Sprague hastened to salvage his precious Moses Mahomet Ali from the flower bed in which the astute pup had elected to remain. It looked as if the tide of circumstances had turned. The British front was broken. The Spitfires showed symptoms of panic retreat at the sight of the infuriated Yank and his brandished elephant. To collide with that ebony pile driver was one way of inviting a burial party and "Taps" on a bugle.

Even the champion of the Grand Fleet had never fought a bout with an elephant. But he was a game warrior, nevertheless, and he stood his ground while his comrades wavered. Then twenty-odd pounds of ebony hit him, with a desperate Yank at one end of it. The champion offered no more opposition, not the slightest. In fact, he was stretched so still and flat that he looked as if he might be dreaming of English pubs and barmaids on the Old Kent Road. At a casual glance, he was a complete ruin.

Martin Donnelly waved his elephant on high and steamed ahead at full speed like an armored flagship. In close formation behind him were Mr. Cassius Stackpole, Kid Sprague, and the black-and-tan pup. It had all the appearance of an honorable exit, with the Stars and Stripes still waving o'er the brave and the free.

These indications were misleading. The adventurous night, for which Martin Donnelly had yearned, had not yet drawn to a close. The Japanese Coffeehouse was destined to be no more than the prologue. The majestic Arab gentleman, Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin, had not remained altogether aloof and detached. A friendly solicitude for the welfare of his opponent at the chessboard had prompted him to summon the Zanzibar police. The British administration was excellent. Its native police were numerous and well drilled. When it became necessary to muster several of them

at a given point, they were there. Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin had made use of a telephone.

The Yankee sailormen were about to gain the doorway leading out of the garden when the brown, turbaned policemen in khaki trotted in at the double. They were armed. It was out of the question to persuade them by means of an ebony elephant. This much Martin Donnelly was quick enough to figure out for himself. Here was stormy weather. The Zanzibar cops would lock up all hands and let them explain later. They would be prejudiced in favor of the British tars to begin with.

"Full speed astern on both engines," roared the machinist's mate. "Then turn and beat it out the back way."

Obediently the Yankee cruisers retired into the garden, moving swiftly. This placed the chief pay clerk in the lead, with Donnelly prepared to cover the evolution as a rear guard. The police delayed to examine the slumbering champion of the Grand Fleet. Ah, ha, he seemed to be very dead! Was this a murder? During this brief interval Mr. Cassius Stackpole broke for the kitchen, a small tiled building set against the back wall of the inclosure. This was no time to address the assemblage in measured accents. Kid Sprague was at his heels. Martin Donnelly retreated more slowly. He was sullen and stubborn. He still grasped the elephant by its sturdy trunk.

His two shipmates vanished into the kitchen. The Sikh sergeant of police yelled to his men. They raced after him as he ran across the garden to reach the kitchen. He drew his pistol and sharply cried, "Halt!" Martin Donnelly spun about and raised his arms, but not in token of surrender. He could secure a better purchase on the ebony trunk by gripping it with both hands.

He paused at the threshold of the kitchen door. Inside he could hear his comrades floundering about. Then, with superb deliberation, he hurled the ponderous elephant. It was shadowy in this corner of the garden. The sergeant of police could not see clearly. He had no more than a dim glimpse of a black object whirling end over end, with curious little flickers of white. Ebony and ivory from Zanzibar! Romantic words, but the sergeant had reason to call them misplaced.

With a very loud "Whoof!" he clapped both hands to his stomach. He seemed to be propelled backward before he sat down in a manner curiously violent. It was a phenomenon that perplexed the other policemen. They hastened to gather about their fallen leader and to lift him to his feet. One of them stumbled over an ebony elephant which had fallen upon its four stout legs and stood with trunk curled high in a menacing, unterrified attitude. Donnelly would have told you that it had been worth while, after all, to stroke its broad back and utter the mystic, *"Wallah, Wallah, Wallah."*

Having chucked this ballast overboard, Donnelly delayed not his departure. As he darted into the kitchen, he recalled a line of an old sea chantey that fitted the case. It was time to leave her, bullies, leave her. Mr. Stackpole had blundered into a shelf and knocked off the candlestick. The room was in darkness. Kid Sprague, kicking a chair aside, found one of the pretty little Japanese girls hiding behind it and unceremoniously snatched a farewell kiss. It was taking his romance on the jump.

Donnelly had shrewdly guessed that a door might lead through the garden wall into an alley beyond. He plunged to find it, amid a prodigious clatter of falling pots and pans. From a pocket he jerked out a tiny flash lamp. With a long swoop he upturned a table as a barrier to hamper pursuit. Then he let the beam of light rove along the wall. Hurrah! there was a door of planks strapped with hammered ironwork. He wrenched it open. They crowded through even as they heard a policeman fall over the table.

"On your way," urged Donnelly. "I'll join you in a jiffy." He had slammed the door behind him and was fumbling with the clumsy latch. A wink of his flash lamp and he spied an iron staple set in the masonry. Ripping off his strong leather belt, he twisted it around the latch and buckled the ends together through the staple. This would delay pulling the door open from the inside. He galloped after the other fugitives. The broad, white-clad figure of the chief pay clerk was as conspicuous as a lighthouse. He was pounding along at a rapid walk, with Kid Sprague imploring him to hit it up.

Donnelly overtaking them, they veered

into a tortuous, unlighted byway and presently turned again.

"We'll do a couple more zigzags," said the machinist's mate, "and those ginger-colored cops'll have the devil's own time to figure out which way we went. If they can't break out through that door, they will pile out front or over the wall. What time is it, Kid? My watch got heart failure and quit on me. Too much excitement."

"Twelve minutes to ten, Martin," was the doleful reply. "Just time to catch the last boat if we run all the way to the beach."

"But we don't know which way to run, Kid, till we find a range. And if we start leggin' it through the streets, we spill the beans. What we did to the Zanzibar finest and the royal navy will sure stir up one hornets' nest."

"I get you," remarked Old Man Stackpole. "A general alarm will be sent out at once. And I'll be hanged if I can sprint very far. I am not built for it. Getting off in the last boat is not vital to me, as far as that is concerned. I make my own liberty hours. I could go to the hotel for the night, but it would be very easy to identify me from description, and the idea of being arrested by the local police is positively unthinkable."

"It sounds like putting Daniel Webster or William J. Bryan in jail," gravely agreed the machinist's mate. "The whole proposition don't look one bit good to me. They will be sure to head us off at the beach. They know it's where we'll steer in for. And we riled these Zanzibar birds. I'll say we did. That sergeant is on the repair list. I shouldn't wonder if he had to be surveyed and condemned. My good old elephant packed one powerful wallop."

"And you crowned the champeen," added the Kid. "He certainly did pass out pretty. S'pose you finished him?"

"No such luck. You can't knock that big stiff's brains out. They ain't there. Well, we miss that boat unless we step along faster than this. It would put you in dutch again, Kid. Too bad! Anyhow, we'll make a try and take a chance."

They stepped along, but with due caution. They would have much preferred to fall into the hands of their own shore patrol. Such a disturbance as they had figured in might result in a deck court, but they would be dealt with aboard their ship. This sounded even attractive when compared with being locked up in Zanzibar and held for trial before an English magistrate. The public scandal was appalling to contemplate. Besides this, the city was celebrating the visit of his majesty's light cruiser *Spitfire*. The streets were bedecked with flags. There was a program of dinners, dances, picnics, and sports which included boxing bouts. And the heavy champion of the Grand Fleet had been temporarily retired by a Yankee machinist's mate! Justice was most unlikely to be tempered with mercy.

"I'm shy my high-priced elephant that was a present for my poor old mother," grumbled Donnelly as they moved onward. "But I dunno as I'm sorry to lose him. It's hard to dope out whether he was a blessing or a curse. Look what he let us in for tonight. More like a jinx to me, Kid. Of course he did some nice work there at the wind-up, but I had to show him how."

"You had him darn well trained, on such short notice," said Seaman Sprague. "But our only original mascot is my sandy pup. It's up to him to pull us through. Give him a chance."

This seemed frivolous talk to the dignified chief pay clerk, who was in a low state of mind. His plight was a painful anti-climax after enjoying the society of Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin, with a chessboard between them. The warrant officers' mess would never let him hear the last of it. He had been in the thick of it, and there were witnesses to prove that he had played a star part. With a long, tired sigh he muttered:

"During all my years in the service I have never, never spent such a night as this."

"It's never too late to learn," said Martin Donnelly, "and the night is still young. Unless I miss my guess, there's more to come."

"Cheese it," warned Kid Sprague. "We're only a short way from the beach. And if that isn't a Hindoo cop under the awning yonder, I'll eat him."

Mr. Stackpole shuddered and halted in his tracks. The vague figure moved away from the awning and advanced in their direction. They wheeled into a cross street and trod softly Their nerves were easily startled. As rapidly as possible they lost themselves in a maze of silent buildings. There they waited for some little time. Kid

Sprague dismally looked at his watch. Ten o'clock! They fancied they heard the put-put of a motor launch. That would be the last liberty boat.

"That ditches you, Kid," said Donnelly. "You are on the report again, no matter what happens."

"I never thought that old ship would look good to me, Martin. Gee, but I just love the navy. Here, you and Mr. Stackpole sit tight in that tumble-down old stone shack across the road while I scout along the beach. Maybe I can dodge the cops and find a shore boat to take us off. The sooner I get aboard the less time I get marked for overstayin' liberty. And this town is mighty unhealthy for all three of us. Take care of little Moses Mahomet Ali for me. He sure did get off to a rough start as a bluejacket."

The Kid tiptoed away and disappeared in a furtive manner. With this opportunity for action, he actually began to enjoy himself again. There was a certain zest in trying to elude the snare that had been set for them. He managed to skulk until he could see the nearest strip of shining beach and the stone steps leading down to the boat landing. The *Toledo's* launches had used another quay, several hundred feet distant from this one, where the water was deeper at low tide.

From a secluded position, young Seaman Sprague scrutinized both these landing places and the road that connected them. The moonlight flooded the scene with a radiant illumination. In restless silver ripples the small surf washed the sand. The shadows of the palms were etched black and sharp. The watchful American sailor could count as many as seven men near the quays or on the road between them. They were avoiding the moonlight as much as possible, but the sharp eyes of a youth who had the making of a good gunpointer had no trouble in searching them out. Dubiously he stroked his nose and shook his head. Things were coming entirely too fast for him.

To hide in the city all night meant almost certain discovery and arrest in the morning. No American bluejackets on lawful errands would be straying about until the liberty hour of one o'clock in the afternoon.

"The dice couldn't roll worse," he reflected. "Here's where I kiss the beach good-by. It's all cluttered up with cops. It will take a wiser guy than I am to keep out of jail."

He resumed his stealthy march, choosing another route back to his comrades. He disliked crossing open spaces. This circuitous promenade led him across a narrow-gauge railway track. A little way beyond him were two or three sidings and a number of absurdly small freight and passenger cars. It looked like a toy transportation system. The weary seaman stumbled over the ties to find shelter, for a certain distance, between the cars. Perhaps, as a last resort, the three refugees might crawl into a car and snatch a little sleep while they waited for something to turn up.

Presently William Sprague stopped and stared. He was a young man suddenly wide awake. An inspiration, a forlorn hope, had hit him squarely between the eyes. His feet no longer dragged as he hurried along the platform of a clove warehouse, stole through an open shed half filled with sacks of rice, and so fled into the shadows of the nearest street. Unmolested he approached the roofless, ruined dwelling where he had left the others. Martin Donnelly ventured out to meet him.

"What luck, Kid? Any open water, or is the channel blocked?"

"Corked as tight as a bottle, Martin. You couldn't even shove the pup through. I saw the ship. That's all. Listen! Where's Mr. Stackpole?"

"Quiet and solemn as any other antique in Zanzibar," soberly replied the machinist's mate. "He acts sort of overcome. I wish I had a jolt of coffee and cognac for him. It's his self-respect that's all shattered. He just can't imagine himself gettin' this way. He sits and calls himself a victim of circumstances. I tell him he ought to know better than to let himself be seduced into a chess game with a high-class Arab pirate. Bad company led him into this six-reeler. I dunno as Bill Hart ever shot his way out with an ebony elephant."

They groped inside the desolated walls and came upon the chief pay clerk, who had removed his white coat and was using it as a pillow. He was saving his energies for the next act, whatever that might be. The Kid's discouraging report caused him to exclaim:

"I thought as much. From what I have seen of the police of Eastern ports, we

should steer very clear of them. Frankly, I am up a tree, boys. In my long experience——"

"That's all right, sir," broke in William Sprague. "New stunts keep a man freshened up. Otherwise you are liable to get ossified at the top. My sporty old dad took a jump in a parachute when he was past forty. Now let's get down to brass tacks. If we can sneak out of town a few miles, we can find a fishing village, can't we? We saw 'em when we came into the harbor. And we can hire a boat to pull us off to the ship without going anywhere near this Zanzibar dump."

"But we're too dead to walk it," objected Donnelly. "When that big English stew smacked me in the ribs, he started some of my rivets. I feel lame and sore. And Mr. Stackpole would have to be mounted on castors and pushed. He can't do walkin' matches all over this silly island."

"My feet don't fit either, Martin. Listen, for heaven's sake. I'm only a poor young gob on his first cruise, but maybe I'm not as dumb as I look. I've got something to show you. No false alarm, honest. We are desperate men. If you'll take a chance, we can pull this thing off."

"You can't scare me, Kid. What's the big notion? I showed you all my best tricks at the Japanese Coffeehouse. Show a leg, Mr. Stackpole. Rise and shine. The infant wants to take us in tow."

They permitted the infant to guide them over the course he had taken, down to the railway tracks and the cars strung on the sidings. They stole to this hiding place like hunted men, frequently glancing over their shoulders. Somewhere off to the right, they heard a shrill, metallic whistle. The police were engaged in combing the city by a method of their own.

What the Kid had to exhibit was a dwarf locomotive of an English pattern which had been switched from the main line to rest for the night. It had no cab, only a driver's platform, with a canvas shelter, and was resplendent with polished brass work. There was a slight noise of hissing steam. The boiler was hot to the touch. Martin Donnelly climbed on board. The furnace door was open to cool the fire which had been quite recently banked. The experienced machinist's mate poked it with a bar. He broke up the surface coating of gray cinders and found a bed of live coals underneath. He spat on his hands. The expression of his rough-hewn visage was no longer melancholy. With his flash light he examined the water gauge and tested various valves and levers. Then he climbed to the ground and announced:

"They must have been shifting cars with her no more than an hour ago. It won't take me long to make steam. You guys go hide under a tarpaulin on one of those dinkey flat cars, so no watchman can spot you. I don't dare use a shovel, but I can feed her with lumps of coal and break 'em up with a bar. But I got to work quiet and easy. Does anybody happen to know where this pony railroad runs to? Not that I care a damn. It's mere curiosity."

"To Bu-bu-bu," promptly answered Mr. Stackople.

"To what?" ejaculated Donnelly. "Are you weepin' about something?"

"Bu-bu-bu," insisted the other. "A native village seven or eight miles from here. They call the daily train service the Bu-bu-bu Express."

"I didn't know you stuttered, Mr. Stackpole. All right! The Bu-bu-bu Express and no stops to take on passengers. Yes, it ought to be connected with Zanzibar by rail. It sounds dippy enough. Run along now and leave me coax this cute little coffee percolator. If the jinx will let up on us, we run an extra trip to-night as a special."

Meekly they did as they were told. If a watchman patrolled the railway yard, he came no nearer than the warehouse. Nor could he be blamed for failing to suspect that the locomotive might be borrowed by three distressed mariners from an American man-of-war. With a skill acquired in coal-burning ships of his earlier enlistment, Martin Donnelly nursed the fire and watched the needle of the steam gauge begin to flicker. The miniature boiler was responsive. With no grades to climb until they were clear of the city, Martin was of the opinion that she might roll along.

At length he footed it over to the tarpaulin and summoned his train crew. In silence they clambered between the furnace and the water tank. Mr. Stackpole whispered:

"This line runs right through the heart of the city, Donnelly. The English people call it a cursed nuisance. You have to flatten yourself against a wall when you hear it coming."

"So much the better for us, sir. The police will have some job to stop us. I'll bet we make their eyes pop out. You and the Kid better scrooch as low as you can when we snort through Broadway, or whatever they call the main stem."

"But the police may pot you," exclaimed Mr. Stackpole.

"Grand-stand stuff!" grinned the machinist's mate. "'Dare-devil' Donnelly at the throttle! A gripping picture. All aboard."

The engineer jumped down to run to the switch points and set them for what he guessed to be the proper track. Then he swung himself to his station. Three minutes later the Bu-bu-bu Express, running light, rolled slowly out of the yard.

CHAPTER IV.

PHANTOM LADIES!

IT was unusual for the little locomotive to go rambling through the streets of Zanzibar at this hour of night. However, the few natives who happened to be astir were not visibly excited. As was their habit, they scurried out of the way and took refuge in archways and alleys. A fat man ran the risk of having his buttons scraped off if he lingered too long. Possibly some Englishman was in haste to go to Bu-bu-bu for a mad purpose of his own. Perhaps his automobile had broken down. Only Allah knew what a sahib might take it into his head to do. Several of them had built bungalows at Bu-bu-bu, where they spent the week-ends.

The trip might have been uneventful but for the Goanese chief clerk of the railway office who was sleepily ambling home from his club. He was, in fact, the acting manager and superintendent. Not a wheel turned without his knowledge and permission. He had issued no order for the locomotive to leave the yard after the regular daily schedule. The thing was incredible. He beheld his motive power approaching him with a clickety-click and a rumble while he stood between the rails and waved his straw hat to stop it. He puffed out his cheeks awesomely and shouted very angry words.

Fortunately he stepped aside in the nick of time to avoid being bumped into the Goanese hereafter. His knees trembling, he glanced up and caught a glimpse of a tall, ferocious man in white who waved a careless hand and laughed at him.

The agitated chief clerk of the railway office started wildly in pursuit, his linen coat flapping. His wits were scrambled by his narrow deliverance from death or else he might have comprehended that he was making a foolish spectacle of himself. In his ears rang the sounds of derisive mirth, so loud that he fancied two or three men were jeering him. His English education enabled him to catch the import of such taunting exhortations as these:

"Step on the gas, Charlie boy. You can make it in two yumps. Pick up those flat feet and sling 'em high and wide. It's a free ride. Blah! And also Bu-bu-bu!"

A policeman heard the commotion from afar. He surmised the cause of it. Those terrible American sailors, three of them, who had hidden themselves away, were again in eruption! As he sprinted in the direction of the uproar, he sounded an alarm which brought a second policeman to join him. They were lathy, thin-shanked men who could cover the ground like greyhounds. They flitted into the street through which the railway track ran and were amazed at what they saw.

The faster of the two made a leap for the footboard of the locomotive, but a large, hard hand pushed his face and he performed the intensely interesting feat of standing on his head and spinning like a top. His partner whipped out a pistol and fired in the air. It was not proper to shoot bullets into the Anglo-Saxon race even when, with audacity beyond belief, the Bu-bu-bu Express had been stolen.

It was hopeless to make a stern chase of it. By now this had filtered into the tottering intellect of the Goanese chief clerk. In a lather of perspiration, making noises like a whistling buoy, he came to a stop and tossed his arms in a poignant gesture of farewell. The policemen fired several more shots. He who had been stood on his head was in a temper so peevish that he was no longer reluctant to shoot a sahib. Bullets whistled past the disappearing locomotive. One of them pinged through a pane of glass in front of Martin Donnelly's nose. He stopped laughing and gave her a little more steam. Couldn't those poor fish take a joke without trying to assassinate somebody?

The iron steed snorted around corners

at a speed unheard of within the cramped confines of the city itself. It was all right, said Donnelly, so long as she didn't hop the track and crash into a parlor or a harem. No more rough stuff!

All hands were easier in their minds when they saw the pleasant countryside and the neat garden patches. There were whiffs of copra, rancid, pungent, drying in front of native huts, and the scent of blossoming clove trees. Mr. Stackpole climbed to the cushioned locker on the fireman's side of the platform and gazed about him with an air of absent-minded absorption in his own anxieties. As a sight-seer, the edge of his interest was dulled for once. It occurred to him to say:

"I don't want to throw any wet blankets on this excursion, boys, but we overlooked a bet. There are automobiles in town and a good hard road to Bu-bu-bu. These heathens may get out there pretty near as soon as we do. There's no doubt that we rubbed 'em the wrong way."

"I did think of tryin' to swipe a car instead of this brass-bound contraption," replied the machinist's mate, "but there didn't seem to be one handy, not even a flivver. Just the loan of it, I mean. We could have paid the owner for the trip—not now but later."

This was a delicate effort to soothe the conscience of a warrant officer of the supply department who dwelt in a complicated world of requisitions, vouchers, receipts, duplicate files, and endorsements.

"This making free with property does bother me," admitted the chief pay clerk. "Of course we can send a chit ashore and offer to settle for this special trip at so much a mile."

"On the level, Mr. Stackpole, you surprise me," exclaimed Kid Sprague. "Here we are, still hell bent and no place to go, and you worried about burnin' a few lumps of coal that aren't signed for. What about Martin Donnelly's elephant that cost him thirteen dollars? Who pays for that? If he wasn't so good natured he'd pick this engine up and throw it in the ditch when we finish with it. He loved that elephant."

Donnelly, poking his fire and trying his gauges, now spoke words of wisdom.

"You said an earful, Mr. Stackpole, about those cops chasin' us in automobiles. It's up to us to fool 'em. We won't go through to Bu-bu-bu. This train runs local from now on, and when we find the right stop we get off. If I wasn't so honest I'd take this engine home as a souvenir to put on my mother's mantelpiece."

Mr. Stackpole, seldom at a loss for information, now volunteered:

"Years ago I drove out to Bu-bu-bu in a carriage with my friend Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin. It was along this same road. We stopped for a picnic and a swim at an abandoned palace of the sultan, about four miles out of Zanzibar. It was close to the beach, with a large park behind it. Quite a lonely, secluded place. I should advise trying to find it. The palace is said to be haunted. For this reason the police may leave it alone."

"Always there with the dope, just like a guide book," was Donnelly's compliment. "All I hope is that British bluejackets don't haunt it like they did that Japanese coffee-house. Peace and quiet is what I need."

"And sleep," suggested the Kid. "I want to forget my troubles."

The locomotive was climbing a long, easy grade. The landscape was a rolling expanse of coconut groves, the slender columns lifting their graceful crowns in long aisles of exotic beauty. Donnelly turned to look behind him. The distant headlights of an automobile were faintly discernible through a pearly mist that curled up from the occasional stretches of marshland. The seagoing engine driver was evidently startled. He shut off his steam and applied the brakes. At a word from him, the others jumped from the footboard and alighted right side up. He delayed to do mysterious things to the machinery. The locomotive moved on but gathered headway very slowly. Donnelly made a flying leap and scrambled to his knees in the lush grass. He was gazing at his pocket mogul, as he called it, which was rolling away from him.

"My stars, are you letting that engine run wild?" sputtered Mr. Stackpole. "What do you suppose will happen when it comes to the end of the line at Bu-bu-bu?"

"Keep calm and collected, sir. I never did see you act so nervous. She'll stop herself inside of the next mile. She can't make the grade. I pinched her throttle way down and closed the drafts. She can't make any more steam. It will keep that automobile chasin' her a little longer while we retire in good order, me and you and

the Kid and one pot-bellied, flea-bit pup named Moses Mahomet Ali."

They crossed the highway and filed through a coconut clearing where the young plants were set out in orderly rows. Haste was advisable in order to find cover. After pounding the paved streets and coral roads, the soft earth was grateful to their weary feet. They went briskly, like men who had gained their second wind. Soon they came to a crumbling limestone wall almost hidden in dense verdure. Scrambling through a gap they found themselves in a wilderness of vines and interlaced trees which Mr. Stackpole declared to be the sultan's long-neglected park.

The moon revealed traces of terraced gardens and sunken pools, with the decaying framework of a rustic pavilion almost buried in flowering creepers. The wide paths had not been entirely obliterated. They chose one which wound in the general direction of the sea. Their gait slackened. They felt a certain sense of security. It was the calm after the storm. The Zanzibar night took on an aspect less turbulent.

Old Man Stackpole sat down upon a fragment of carved marble and fanned himself with his cap. He ceased to mourn his lamentable predicament. Martin Donnelly expressed a craving for a towel and a cake of soap. Soft coal had made him look remarkably like an African chief. He failed to suggest a spick-and-span American bluejacket on shore liberty. Kid Sprague let the puppy waddle in the grass and bark at a snake that moved with a rustling sound.

A few minutes' rest and they sauntered on, guided by the murmur of the surf among the rocks. Presently they came to the empty shell of a palace which overlooked a rugged foreland that jutted boldly from the sea. The building was an architectural nightmare of whitewashed stone walls, wooden pillars and verandas. It insulted the eye. It was conceived in the atrocious taste of an American summer-resort hotel of a generation ago.

The gingerbread woodwork was falling apart. The walls were cracked and dark with mold. The windows gaped, with sagging shutters, but the structure still stood to defy rain and sun and the Indian Ocean hurricanes. A flight of stairs led down to a bathing house at the edge of a strip of smooth beach. The three fugitives gazed in vain to find a fishing boat drawn up above high water. Kid Sprague hopefully exclaimed:

"There's sure to be some fishermen around here in the morning. I tell you we saw 'em right close to this point of land when the ship passed in. The sultan kept some harem, believe me. There must be quarters for dozens of black-eyed janes. Oh, boy! What a life!"

"Don't you go getting your principles demoralized," admonished Donnelly. "After all the chaperonin' I did to keep you clear of those Japanese dolls in the garden! How's the tide?"

"Running out strong, Martin. I know when it's due to turn because two of my buddies were overside in a punt this morning, slingin' gray paint down to the water line. It's a fierce tide, believe me. That punt 'most slid out from under 'em. If we found a boat to-night I don't know as we could pull back to the ship without a breeze to help us. It would be a stiff job for a whaleboat full of gobs. We can catch it on the flood after daylight and ride home easy."

"You show good sense for your age, Kid. Now it's hammocks and pipe down. Let's go find ourselves a suite in the palace. And please tell the number-one eunuch to bring me coffee, toast, and eggs at five o'clock. Unless they're fried on both sides he gets a hundred lashes and his ears cut off. It's the Sultan of Zanzibar that's speakin'."

"What do you know about the secrets of the harem, Mr. Stackpole?" demanded the inquisitive Kid.

The chief pay clerk yawned and manifested no interest in the topic. With the mien of one who knew his way about, he piloted them to the long veranda at the front of the building. They trod the rotten flooring with gingerly care and entered a large apartment whose flavor was distinctly musty. The flash light disclosed it to be bare of furniture. Tatters of tapestry swayed in the open windows. The frescoes were blotched and foul with dampness. The debris of picnic parties littered the floor. In a corner was a pile of dried grass and stalks and two rough mangers where horses or donkeys had been tied.

"Bedding!" devoutly breathed the chief pay clerk. "Better luck than I hoped for. I shall take off my coat and shoes, wind

my watch, and commend my soul to God. Sweet dreams, boys."

They followed his example, but, for some reason, all three were wakeful. The excitements and fatigues of the evening may have tended to banish drowsiness. At any rate, they were uneasy tenants of this melancholy room amid the scenes of a departed and profligate splendor. Mr. Stackpole snored off for a little while, but rolled over and sat up with a petulant remark. Martin Donnelly kicked himself out of the straw in which he had made his nest and swore that a peck of chaff had sifted inside his shirt and was tickling him fearfully. The Kid fumbled for a cigarette, found an empty package, and begged his comrades to search their pockets.

Mr. Stackpole fished out his silver cigarette case and carelessly let it slip through his fingers. He borrowed the flash light and recovered the treasure after burrowing in the straw like a gigantic white rabbit. They smoked and wondered why they could not go to sleep. It was natural enough for young William Sprague to inquire:

"What's the dope about this place being haunted, Mr. Stackpole? I don't doubt it myself. This big shack looks spooky and I'll tell the world it smells spooky. I guess that's what the matter is with us."

"The air is muggy in here," said the machinist's mate. "My shirt is wet through. I'd camp on the porch, but sleepin' in the moonlight in the tropics is bad medicine. First thing you know your face is all twisted out of shape with some kind of permanent cramps. I had a shipmate once that was took that way, and when he smiled you thought he was sneerin' at you. I dunno how many lads hauled off and pasted the poor dub."

The chief pay clerk fidgeted, but was politely silent until he could command attention. In that oracular, convincing style of his he now proceeded to say:

"In the old days, when Zanzibar was the greatest slave market in the world and the sultan was the high card, with no foreign spheres of influence or protectorates or annoyances like that, he did as he jolly well pleased. He had the pick of the ladies, and they were fetched to him from Persia and Arabia and other places. Money was no object to his supply department. When he got tired of one of these pretty pets or he caught her vamping some gent of his court, the sultan had a trick of ordering the lady to be buried alive.

"There was a curious belief that burial alive prevented the natural process of decay and dissolution. The body never turned into dust. The breath of life was still in it and could not escape. Therefore an unfortunate lady condemned to this fate remained always young and fair, and it was much pleasanter for the sultan to think of her that way. You get the point, boys.

"A most barbarous custom," continued Mr. Stackpole, "but not much worse than planting live slaves in the mortar when they were laying the foundations of a new building. This was done, no doubt of it, and the bones have been found in modern times when the city streets were dug up or some construction work undertaken. A friend of mine in Zanzibar gave me a skull and a shin bone when I was here in the old *Brooklyn*. Well, as I say, they tell you the same kind of yarn about the sultan's favorites. There is a little island as you come into the harbor, on the starboard side, where several of these ladies were buried alive, so tradition tells us. On one night of the year they come out and dance on the beach—not foggy like ghosts that you can poke your finger through—but warm and lovely and glowing, just the same as when they lived in one of these palaces. But if you get foolish and land on the beach to dance with them, you never come back."

The narrator paused to relight his dead cigarette. The others were silent. Because of the uncanny surroundings the tale had impressed them. They were in a credulous mood. The Kid's voice had a perceptible tremor as he exclaimed:

"You don't really fall for that stuff, do you, Mr. Stackpole?"

"You can take it or leave it, son. South of Suez queer things are talked about that you will never hear in Hackensack. My Arab friend, Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin, is a very intelligent man, but he has told me things to make your hair curl, and he believes them. I do know, for a fact, that two British officers rented a house near Bu-bu-bu a couple of years ago. It was an old villa of some dead sultan, where he used to have private parties when he wanted to kick over the traces. These two Britishers picked out a room for their cots and kits and set their native servants to

straightening things out for a vacation of a fortnight or so. They stayed there just four nights. Ladies walked in and out and refused to be shooed away from the villa. They tried moving the cots into another room and it wasn't so bad then, they said. Apparently they had camped over the niche or grave where one of these unhappy creatures had been buried alive, and she didn't like it. The noise they made disturbed her.

"However, another lady came and stood in the door and looked at them, and they could hear her sigh. But they couldn't get their hands on her. It was discourteous, but finally they lost their tempers and blazed away at her with pistols. She never turned a hair, but came and stood in the door the next night and they had to listen to her weep and moan. All they could think of was that the bullets had actually hurt her.

"This bothered the officers a whole lot because they knew the superstition about the breath of life staying in these poor girls and it seemed cruel to make one of them suffer. So they decided to pass up the haunted villa and go back to their bachelor mess in Zanzibar. Which they did. And there's that."

But now Seaman Sprague was terrifically wide awake. He held Mr. Stackpole's mature years and experience of the world in great respect. He might have scoffed at the story if told aboard ship by some buddy of his own tender age. Now he felt his scalp prickle as he said:

"There's nothing to it, of course, but let's go out on the piazza and sit. You get more air. And it's not as dismal as this dark old sweat box. It won't make you moonstruck if you just sit in it and don't go to sleep, will it, Donnelly?"

"You are liable to get moonstruck anywhere," was the gruff reply. "Come on, Mr. Stackpole. Let's go smoke a cigarette. There may be some air stirrin' outside. Ghost stories help pass the time. Not that I take any stock in such rubbish."

They adjourned to the long veranda with the round column and the sagging floor where they could overlook the cliffs and the placid, shimmering sea. The breeze was dying. The water sparkled here and there as the cat's-paws ruffled it, but there were wide patches as smooth as glass. Even out of doors the night air had become heavy and humid. Martin Donnelly slapped a mosquito and muttered:

"I wish I was out at sea, with the *Toledo* easing along at her fifteen-knot cruising speed and me with my blanket spread on deck top side and a bos'n's mate steppin' on my face when he came to turn out the watch. Put me back where I belong and punishment'll roll off me like a duck."

"I will do my best to soften the skipper's heart," said Mr. Stackpole in a fatherly voice.

"Huh, the skipper has listened to all the alibis that were ever invented," snorted the Kid, "but maybe nobody has sprung an ebony elephant and the Bu-bu-bu Express on him."

"It's this dilapidated morgue of a palace that makes us feel so downhearted," pensively observed the machinist's mate. "How long ago did the sultan——"

His voice died in a gulp as though something choked him. He was staring at the doorway of the room in which they had been. It was perhaps a dozen yards from where they sat. His eyes were round and unwinking. They protruded like marbles. Upon that iron visage which had reflected neither terror nor dismay when confronted by the champion of the Grand Fleet, was written abject panic. So alarming and mysterious were his symptoms that his companions carefully turned their heads to gaze in the same direction. They, too, became petrified, afraid to move a muscle. It was Martin Donnelly who broke the spell by absently stroking Kid Sprague's head and murmuring, *"Wallah, Wallah, Wallah!"*

Framed in the doorway was the slender figure of a woman. Although partly in shadow, they perceived that her face was veiled to the eyes, after the Arab custom. She was clad in white from head to foot. Such was the apparition which had come out of the very room in which these three adventurers had vainly tried to sleep. No wonder they had felt restless! They neither moved nor spoke, but held their breath and waited.

The wraithlike lady glided out from the doorway and was bathed in the brilliant moonlight of the veranda. Her eyes were darkly beautiful as she let them rest, for a moment, upon the silent watchers who had not the slightest intention of molesting her. They noted the glint of a gold neck-

lace on her bosom, of a bracelet set with precious stones that clasped her slender wrist. The filmy texture of the fabric that covered her hair and forehead floated like mist in the faint draft of air.

With the light tread of youth she moved across the veranda. Her dainty sandals made no sound. Once, twice, she turned to look at the three strangers in naval uniform. Her hand stole to her breast as though the sight of them had startled her. Then she seemed to drift like a cloud along a gravel path that ran in the direction of the somber, frowning cliffs which soared so abruptly from the surf. Presently she halted, perhaps halfway to the edge of the foreland.

"Maybe she aims to go and dance on the beach," Martin Donnelly was heard to whisper to himself, "but if she wants a dancin' partner you can count me out. Sultan's favorite—buried alive—the first ghost I ever set eyes on!"

"You're tootin' it's a ghost," came from Kid Sprague. "And I don't cut in on any fox trots with that phony jane. Now laugh that off!"

CHAPTER V.

THE GALLANTRY OF MR. STACKPOLE.

BECAUSE Mr. Cassius Stackpole, warrant officer, was bald and forty, the youngsters of the scout cruiser's berth deck were bound to regard him as a venerable relic. Such are the merciless verdicts of twenty years. He spent his days in the paymaster's office where yeomen pounded typewriters and were submerged to the ears in paper work. It was difficult, therefore, to take him seriously as a factor of the ship's fighting strength. This was William Sprague's impression. He respected Old Man Stackpole and was careful to remember the difference in rank, even in the peculiar circumstances which had stranded them together, but it never occurred to him that this portly, plodding person could display bravery positively superhuman. Martin Donnelly shared this opinion.

It therefore left them gasping when Mr. Stackpole rose heavily to his feet, jammed the visored cap on the back of his head, and descended the cement steps of the veranda. He was not in flight from the phantom of the sultan's favorite. Quite the contrary. This was made clear as soon as he stepped into the grass. He was advancing straight toward the gravel path that led to the edge of the cliff farthest from them. Like a lover going to keep a tryst or a hero marching to his doom, he trudged with no sign of hesitation to overtake the unearthly vision in white. The rational conjecture was that Mr. Stackpole had determined to investigate the phenomenon for himself. His comrades, however, were in no mood to be rational. To them it was inexplicable on any other ground than that he had been bewitched—was gone clean off his head.

The impulse was to rush forward and drag him back, but Martin Donnelly had to confess in hushed tones:

"I'm stalled, Kid. I can't turn a wheel to save me. My legs are numb and my feet won't obey orders. How about you?"

"I pass, Martin. Perhaps I'm yellow. That's the last we'll ever see of poor Old Man Stackpole. The department will have to notify his next of kin. It wouldn't do one bit of good for us to interfere."

Donnelly's rugged common sense shook itself free of the fantastic illusion as he grumbled in reply:

"Come on, Kid. Snap out of it. We simply can't let him get jerked to hell by this resurrected dame without tryin' to rescue him. It won't do no good to throw rocks at her. Remember what the Old Man told us? These midnight baby dolls are bullet proof."

"My gosh-amighty, Martin, look at him now! He has sailed right up to her with his cap in his hand, and it looks as if they are sayin' things to each other. String him along is her game, I s'pose, and coax him to dance—and it's good night! All right, Martin. Let's go to it. I'll stand by if you will. Please go first, will you? You're older and bigger. And don't let her vamp you with any smooth line of fluff. You are a hard guy and you won't fall for it as easy as the Old Man."

They were about to execute this valiant resolve when the black-and-tan pup came running out of the room in which he had curled up for a night's rest. He was lonesome, no doubt, and the fleas distressed him. But it seemed more than a coincidence that he should sit down with his wrinkled nose uplifted and break out into a shrill, mournful howl. It was not his impudent bark, but a howl. Although

juvenile it was unmistakable. The startled Kid exclaimed:

"For the love of Mike, just listen to that! Moses Mahomet Ali is a wise mutt. He is trying to tell us to let it alone. Dogs know a heap more'n humans when it comes to ghosts and haunted houses and letting you know when there's due to be a death in the family. That was a perfectly good howl, I'll say so, and it's the first time he ever tried to howl in his life. We better think it over. We can't do a darn thing for Old Man Stackpole. He is a goner, body, soul, and breeches."

Donnelly hesitated but was unconvinced by this hopeless speech. Never should it be said of him that he had refused to try to save a shipmate in dire peril. He swore at little Moses Mahomet Ali and gripped Kid Sprague by the arm to drag him along. They swished through the tangled grass, but not hurriedly. They were like rheumatic men who found walking troublesome. Soon they came to a full stop, unanimously. Were their eyes deceiving them? What they thought they saw was even more impossible than the amazing things that had already happened.

Mr. Cassius Stackpole gallantly offered his arm to the seductive phantom lady. These two seemed to stroll on together, still in the gravel path. They were distinctly outlined against the sky. Beyond them rose the grim rampart of a cliff. Where they walked the ground was bare. The view was unobstructed. There was neither rock nor tree to hide them for an instant from the gaze of Martin Donnelly and William Sprague.

And then they slowly vanished from sight, melted away, disappeared, the substantial bulk of Chief Pay Clerk Stackpole and the slender, graceful figure of the Arab lady in her draperies of white. They were there—they were gone—in the gorgeous splendor of the tropic moon which turned night almost into day.

They melted into the ground, or so it appeared to the two observers. In broken accents Martin Donnelly conveyed the idea that delirium tremens was nothing at all compared with this show. He displayed no eagerness to rush forward and explore the area in which the chief pay clerk had been so uncannily obliterated. Discussion was advisable. Daybreak seemed soon enough to look into the matter. No hope of finding Old Man Stackpole. He had left not even a brass button as a memento.

"H-how did it look to you?" implored the Kid, who could not control a stammer. "They d-didn't turn and g-go down to the b-bathing beach to dance. They just w-went out of sight."

"Down among the dead men, boy. It was like a mermaid and some poor guy of a sailor gone to Davy Jones. I can't believe it's true, but there you are. This is some night in Zanzibar."

"You're tootin' it is, Martin," exclaimed William Sprague who had begun to pull himself together. "Well, Mr. Stackpole was old enough to know his own mind, and he wished this on himself. He would get gay with a spook. Now see what happened to him."

"Yes, and we'll have an elegant time explainin' it to the ship, Kid. Large as life—his bald head shinin' grand in the moonlight, and—*bing*—out went his glim. I wonder we don't smell brimstone in the air. Witches used to leave a trail of it when they snatched you into kingdom come."

"All I smell is cloves and guava bushes," said the Kid. "Now we can *never* go to sleep."

"Not inside that haunted room," declared Donnelly. "The lady may have a sister or something. What we did was to stow ourselves right over the spot where one of 'em had been buried alive and she didn't like it. We can go round to another porch where the moon won't strike us. It's my advice that we stand watch and watch. If another lady takes a notion to stroll out and look for a dancin' partner, I am sure going to see her first. And she'll have to do nothin' less than forty knots to catch this bird. The Bu-bu-bu Express won't have a thing on me."

"I wish we could go somewhere else for the rest of the night, Martin, but it would be just our luck to crash into more trouble. And it don't seem right to walk out on the late Mr. Stackpole. Maybe his guest will come back with a message for us. You get me. The Conan Doyle stuff."

"Huh, we have Conan Doyal and the rest of those hopheads skinned both ways from the jack," grunted the machinist's mate. "Don't talk to me, Kid. I'm full of solemn thoughts. Here to-day and gone to-morrow. Let the women alone."

They prowled to another side of the building and sat hunched in brooding silence. After a time the youngster dozed off. Donnelly mournfully regretted that Mr. Stackpole had taken the silver cigarette case with him. After an eternity of waiting a cloudless dawn began to flush the horizon. Swiftly the sea took on its shifting hues of roseate splendor. The strange enchantments of the moonlight were dispelled. The dilapidated ark of a palace ceased to be a place of fantastic illusions.

The two seafaring fugitives felt less like men who had been drugged by infernal magic. The cobwebs were clearing from their brains. Martin Donnelly struggled to his feet, went through a brisk setting-up drill to ease his kinked muscles, and shook the Kid awake. They were unkempt, haggard with fatigue, but habit compelled them to assume a certain briskness of demeanor. It was time to shake a leg and turn to. Donnelly's voice was matter of fact as he said:

"Now we go rustle a boat somewhere, Kid, and report to the ship. First we scout over to those big rocks and look over the ground where the chief pay clerk did his fade away. His friends will want to know."

"It don't seem the same this morning," replied the young seaman. "Last night I could believe anything. Now you'll have to show me. Mr. Stackpole is too broad in the beam and draws too much water for any lady to fly away with."

"There might be something in this opinion," agreed Donnelly. Reviewing the night's events, he knew that he had been perfectly sober. With no more argument, they set out to explore the barren stretch of gravel and broken stone between the palace and the cliff. It was William Sprague who yelled and waved his arms like a lunatic. He had discovered an opening in the ground. In fact, he almost fell into it.

Donnelly joined him at a gallop. Upon their knees they peered into a small round chamber walled with cement. It had a floor, half a dozen feet below the surface. Steps led down to this floor. In the seaward side of the wall was the entrance of an arched tunnel which appeared to descend at a steep slant. The fascinated sailors stared at each other in a sheepish manner until Donnelly said:

"I certainly did get your number, Kid. Of course I knew Old Man Stackpole couldn't have been turned into a ghost. You were easy."

"Pipe down! I heard your teeth chatter last night," scoffed the lad. "Come on. Let's go below and find out."

"The chief pay clerk never gave me back my flash light after he borrowed it to find his cigarette case," said Donnelly. "Now I know how he found his way down this tunnel. Anyhow, he left me a box of matches."

No longer terrified by things that could not be understood, they went down the steps of the little antechamber or vestibule and gazed into the entrance of the dark passage. There they found the beginning of a longer staircase of limestone which pitched down underneath the cliff.

"Wait till I go and get my pup," said Sprague. "We may not come back this way. Mr. Stackpole didn't."

"He started one sudden romance, Kid. For a hard-boiled old bachelor he is a fast worker. He chased off with the lady as if he had a date with her."

"It's what they call the dangerous age, Martin. I read a novel about it. Men like that are awful easy to vamp. And I'll say this girl had some class to her, even if she had a veil across her nose."

Having secured the wriggling Moses Mahomet Ali, they began their cautious journey down the underground passage. Pausing to strike matches, they found no great difficulty in descending toward the sea. They were compelled to stoop low to avoid banging their heads against the roof, but the steps were wide and regularly spaced. They could imagine the gallant Mr. Stackpole as venturing into the unknown, leading the veiled lady by the hand and using the flash light to guide her.

It was cheering when they discerned a patch of daylight below them. The sound of breaking waves came to their ears with a murmurous echo. It was like many voices whispering together. This startled young Seaman Sprague and he went stumbling down two steps at a time. Presently they emerged into a dazzle of light which made them blink and rub their eyes.

Almost at their feet was a small pier constructed of solid masonry. It thrust itself out from a shelf of rock which was wide and flat, a natural platform at the

base of the stark cliff. The water that lapped the pier was deep and clear. The bottom was perhaps two fathoms down. Native vessels of considerable size could be moored to such a quay as this.

A glance at this secluded haven, and the Yankee sailors stood gazing at the sea beyond it. A few hundred yards from the shore a large sailing dhow rode at anchor. The lofty brown lateen sail swayed in a breeze which had begun to freshen. It resembled the craft which had made their way across the Indian Ocean from Muscat in the dim, dead days of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The high poop and square stern, with the massive tiller head of carved timber, made the dhow look clumsy but the low bows were as sharp as a clipper's. Battered and sea worn, it was evident that the dhow had made a long voyage, with the northeast monsoon to blow her along.

Now it was to be inferred that she waited a favorable slant of wind to waft her into Zanzibar harbor. On her decks moved wild-looking sailors, brown and black, wearing loin cloths. The colored sashes and turbans of the Arabs lounging on the poop gave them an aspect singularly picaresque.

The two refugees on the stone pier were beginning to piece the puzzle together.

"That big dhow must have anchored off here last night," said Donnelly. "The tide was against her, and you remember how calm it got, hardly any breeze at all."

"Yes, and we couldn't see the dhow from where we sat on the porch, Martin. She was too close under the cliff. Listen, though, that ghost lady might have sighted the dhow if she had been wandering around the second story of the palace, before she came out of the room and scared us stiff."

"Pretty good dope, Kid. And she was on her way to the pier, down through the tunnel, when we saw her float off the porch and hit the gravel. And 'Papa' Stackpole, havin' his nerve with him, decided to stand by and lend her a hand. But where in time is he, and why didn't he come back and report? It don't seem like him, to leave us flat on our backs."

"Aboard the dhow," said the Kid. "Fast asleep or eating breakfast. And I don't blame him. Well, we can't swim out to him. Too many sharks."

"It makes me sore," grumbled Donnelly. "I don't mean to butt into the old coot's love affairs. We all have our failin's. But he might have said good-by."

This reasonable exasperation subsided when the small boat tied astern of the dhow was hauled alongside and two black sailors jumped in. They paddled in the direction of the pier, singing in time to the stroke. One of them paused to wave his paddle in a beckoning gesture. The stranded Yanks responded by waving their hats. They were about to be rescued, although the details were obscure. Where Mr. Cassius Stackpole had led, they were prepared to follow.

The boat approached close to the pier and was fended off in the swell which washed its spray among the rocks. The black seamen jabbered and were most amiably disposed. It was a waste of breath to ask questions. Donnelly stowed his long legs on a grass mat in the bottom. Kid Sprague precariously balanced himself, hugging Moses Mahomet Ali, who barked furiously and disliked the motion of the skittish boat. Anxiously they surveyed the anchored dhow, expecting to see a dignified chief pay clerk wave a welcome from the deck. He was invisible, however, and they felt perplexed.

Arriving at the vessel they climbed a ladder of coir rope and stared about them. Amidships was a flimsy shelter of deck-house made of coconut matting, but no Mr. Stackpole came out of it to greet his shipmates. They were proceeding aft in quest of him when an Arab advanced from the poop to meet them. A dominant figure, he commanded instant attention. He was obviously the master of the dhow. A sinister mariner, at first glance! A scar crossed his leathery cheek and forehead to mark some old sword cut that had destroyed the sight of one eye. The other eye was that of a man who was accustomed to being obeyed. Lean, sun dried, he conveyed an impression of repressed energy and a volcanic temper. He had a bizarre taste for color, a saffron turban of many folds, crimson sash, wide blue breeches stuffed into wrinkled boots of soft brown leather.

Lawless sea rover though he looked to be, his demeanor was distinguished by the innate courtesy of his race. To the visitors he bowed gravely and indicated by a gesture that they, his guests, should follow

him to the lofty poop deck beneath which the main cabin was evidently situated. He halted to show them the earth-filled fire box and an antique copper coffeepot steaming with an entrancing aroma. Conical silver cups were filled and passed, together with a platter of flat, crusty cakes or bread.

The light refreshment was what Martin Donnelly devoutly hailed as a life-saver. The bitter black coffee was a stimulant so potent that he tingled to the heels and, as he said to himself, was ready to capture the dhow from this "One-eyed Reilly" and give him the first bite.

Eager to learn what had happened to Mr. Cassius Stackpole, they went into the cabin which was lighted by square windows cut in the stern, like an old Spanish galleon. It was a spacious room but, like an Arab house, contained little furniture. It was scrupulously clean and neat. The polished floor was covered with rugs, Persian and Turkish, whose patterns had become softened by age and wear.

On one of these reclined the lost chief pay clerk of the U. S. S. *Toledo*. His back was propped against a huge wooden chest elaborately studded with brass nails. A silk pillow was stuffed under his head. His chin had dropped. He slept peacefully. Angrily Kid Sprague exclaimed:

"Just look at him! Pounding his ear as if he was in his own bunk! And he went and left us all spraddled out and half crazy. If he wasn't a warrant officer and weighted down with years and everything, I'd wake him up mighty swift and sudden."

"Don't be a dumb-bell," advised Martin who was bending over the sleeper. "He is a casualty. I wonder who put that bandage on him. It's as shipshape a job as a pharmacist's mate could do."

One leg of Mr. Stackpole's white trousers was turned up. The foot and ankle had been so dexterously wrapped with strips of gauze, even to the adhesive tape securing the bandage, that the compliment was deserved. The cabin was rich with the perfumes of dried fish and bilge water, but these could not conquer a strong smell of iodine.

"This wild Arab skipper can't be as nifty at first aid as all that," said Donnelly.

"Blow in Mr. Stackpole's ear and wake him up," advised the Kid. "Ask him what he did with the lady spook. Let's tackle one mystery at a time."

They were saved the trouble of blowing in Mr. Stackpole's ear. He raised his chin and opened his eyes. A frown of pain wrinkled his ample brow. He removed the pillow from behind his head and bent forward to place it beneath the bandaged foot. Then he brightened, but put a finger to his lips before he softly warned them:

"S-s-ssh, boys! Please be as quiet as you can. Don't rouse her out yet."

He nodded toward a partition at the forward end of the cabin. It was built of boards with battens to cover the cracks. Apparently it walled off a small stateroom of a temporary nature. Mr. Stackpole seemed oddly perturbed, almost afraid of something. This puzzled the machinist's mate who demanded:

"Why so gun shy? You didn't get rattled last night when the lady floated right out of her grave to give us the once-over. It's polite and nice to be quiet if she is wore out and needs the sleep, but that ought'n to make you so fretty."

"Oh, it is not the young lady at all. It's the other one that ails me," was the chief pay clerk's astonishing reply. He glanced at the stateroom partition in furtive fashion before going on to say, "She took excellent care of me—bandaged my sprained ankle—washed my face—gave me a slug of brandy, and fixed me for the night. But she is a very strong character—sort of domineering—and I was in no condition to assert myself. She thinks she can ride right over me. She tells Selim Majid where he gets off. He is the captain of the dhow. I suppose you met him?"

"One-eyed Reilly, you mean?" said Donnelly. "Tamed *him?* For God's sake, Mr. Stackpole, who is this other woman you have gone and afflicted us with? Are you collectin' a harem?"

"Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison, an Englishwoman," was the rather plaintive reply. "This dhow is under charter to her. She is a humdinger—about my age, forty or so. She has knocked all over the world by herself—crossed the Arabian desert with a camel caravan—went up to Nairobi to shoot big game—thinks nothing at all of cruising the Indian Ocean to get away from tourists and find color for a book she wants to write. In my long experience, I have never met anybody like her."

Martin Donnelly rudely broke into the recital. He had never met a woman who

could take the upper hand with him. Phantoms were excepted.

"One skirt at a time, if you please, sir," he exclaimed. "We'll break this Miss Fyffe-Harrison out of storage directly. How come you to get yourself on the hospital report?"

"Fell down the steps in that confounded tunnel. Turned my ankle badly, but managed to limp to the pier. I signaled the dhow with your flash light. This competent Englishwoman happened to be on deck and she sent a boat ashore. I took the unfortunate girl off with me, of course. That was my duty as a gentleman. She was in a devil of a lot of trouble, boys. I did the proper thing. When I met her, up there in the moonlight, she was trying to escape like ourselves. She had run away from the establishment of a wealthy Arab of Zanzibar. She was his latest favorite and had cost him a whacking price. A bride in hard luck, I should call her. She was very cruelly treated. This brute of a husband had a trick of beating her with a rhino-hide cane and threatening to cut her throat. I regret to say that his name is—er—Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin, my old friend who was playing chess with me in the Japanese garden."

"I sized *him* up," observed Donnelly. "Sure he would ha' killed the girl if he didn't like her style. It's a wonder he didn't pull some fancy stuff like buryin' her alive. So she decided to beat it, did she?"

"Yes, she took a chance of finding some way to get back to her home town, Dar-es-Salaam, on the mainland of British East Africa. It's not more than sixty or seventy miles from Zanzibar. Last night she sneaked out, when her lord and master was away, and hid in the old palace where we were, hoping to strike a bargain with some native vessel or other. She happened to see the dhow get becalmed and drop anchor. So she started to make her way down to the pier through the passage that had been made by some dead sultan to land his slaves and plunder. She had heard of the tunnel and knew where it was, because Mr. Azzan-bin-Hassin had taken her to the bathing beach, on the other side of the cliffs, for picnics and such."

"So you rescued the heroine, Mr. Stackpole," exclaimed young William Sprague, "and got knocked out yourself. You certainly were there with bells on! Of course you couldn't come back and put us wise."

"No, son, I couldn't climb up all those steps. The sailors refused to take a message because the palace was haunted. So I came aboard the dhow for the night. Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison ordered the captain to send a boat in and find you first thing this morning. Under the circumstances it was the best I could do."

"Darn well done, I'll tell the world, for a man with a flat wheel," was the Kid's fervent tribute. "I thank you, Mr. Stackpole. Where is the young lady stowed—in with Miss Beatrice Fyffe-and-Drum?"

"Yes, William. As a chaperon, this Englishwoman is the goods."

"But look here, sir," chimed in Donnelly, his voice growing deeper and louder. "This lovely ghost dancer of yours wants to sail from here to Dar-es-Salaam. And here's three navy guys that have got to get back to their ship and can't wait around for no more romances and hard-luck stories. What about it? Will this British female tramp act sensible and take us into the harbor, pronto? I never get rough with a woman, understand, but if there is to be any argument on this proposition she had better clamp down before she starts it."

Mr. Stackpole twisted his sprained ankle and said "Ouch!" He had changed his position in order to keep an eye on the partition at the end of the cabin. Now his fingers picked at a button of his shirt and he chewed his lip. The door of the little stateroom had opened. Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison stepped out briskly. A woman still handsome, she was trimly built and straight. She wore a white shirt with a rolling collar, khaki riding breeches and cloth puttees. Her hair was bobbed. The tint of wind and sun was not unbecoming to her well-cut but somewhat severe features. In a clear voice she exclaimed:

"Which of you called me a British female tramp? And who proposed to clamp me down? Such extraordinary language!"

CHAPTER VI.

A CHANGE OF WEATHER.

FOR the trio of unfortunate pilgrims from U. S. S. *Toledo* it was an acutely embarrassing moment. Even the machinist's mate, blunt of speech though he might be, had a fine sense of deference

where a woman was concerned. Young William Sprague had been taught at home to mind his manners nor did he forget them now. Off flew his round white hat while he stood abashed and waited for his elders to open a somewhat difficult conversation. This duty seemed to devolve upon Mr. Cassius Stackpole as the diplomatic dean of the group. He coughed and ventured to say, with an anxious expression:

"Why, good morning, Miss Fyffe-Harrison. Er—I fear we may have disturbed you. Is the young lady any the worse for her adventure?"

The imperious Englishwoman was not so easily appeased. Ignoring the disabled Mr. Stackpole, she impaled poor Donnelly with a barbed scrutiny that made him wince. He was the villain, because he looked the part. Striding across the cabin to confront him, she said:

"You will apologize, my man, or I shall order Captain Selim Majid to throw you off the dhow. You are a depraved character, as I can readily see, but I am accustomed to dealing with all kinds."

"Yes, ma'am. I beg your pardon," faltered the stricken villain, who was blushing to the ears. "I am clamped down. You can't jimmy another blessed word out of me. I admire your nerve. To tramp—excuse me—to travel all alone as the lady commodore of this crew of Arab yeggs is a stunt that has Hollywood stopped."

Miss Fyffe-Harrison permitted herself a twinkle of amusement. As usual she had cowed the braggart sex whose qualities were so absurdly overrated. In a patronizing manner she said to Mr. Stackpole:

"You told me you were a warrant officer. There is a difference between warrant and commissioned rank, I believe. The latter is the gentleman, as one might say."

This was too much for the mellowed philosophy of the chief pay clerk to endure. With an indignation that startled Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison he declaimed:

"This is no time to air your notions of social caste. Don't be so silly. Save it for the Ritz. You took good care of me last night and I feel under obligations. But for heaven's sake, madam, let's show some common sense."

The woman was dumfounded. That she had wealth and connections so aristocratic that she could afford to disregard conventions and give rein to her eccentricities was unknown to these Yankee sailormen. Nor did she realize that this prestige had helped to guard her from mishaps and annoyances among desert tribes and Arab seafarers, among the naked Africans of upland and jungle. British administrators and agents had spread the word, and the far-flung influences of the empire were kept in touch with the audacious wanderings of Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison.

That Mr. Cassius Stackpole should dare to be impertinent, should presume to challenge anything she might take it into her head to say, was enough to provoke a temper already ruffled. The man had displayed a certain chivalry toward the luckless girl who had been fleeing from the harem of Azzan-bin-Hassin, and for this reason his urgent plea that his two shipmates be brought off to the dhow had been granted. They had been in some trouble in Zanzibar, the details of which were not at all clear. It had been a duty to bandage Mr. Stackpole's ankle and try to make him comfortable for the night. Now, however, these visitors were in the way. To herself Miss Fyffe-Harrison put it even more strongly than this. They were a bother and a nuisance and she had precious little sympathy to waste on their plight. So much for first impressions, in which they had been singularly unfortunate. It must have been the jinx. She was a woman of hasty judgments and strong prejudices in which she had the utmost confidence. She addressed another remark to the smoldering Mr. Stackpole.

"These other men are common sailors, are they?"

"Uncommon, to hear us tell it," spoke up Martin Donnelly, with that black scowl of his. "I am a chief petty officer of the engineer's department and I amount to something in my own ship. Not a gentleman, though, and thank God for that. The Kid is a seaman on his first cruise, snatched right out of the cradle. It seems as if you ought to be gentle with him because you look old enough to be his mother."

This was ungallant and he should have been ashamed of himself, but his feelings had been deeply hurt and his resentment was bitter. The middle-aged woman colored. The insolent machinist's mate was on her punishment list. This was apparent. The graceless Kid snickered. Miss Fyffe-Harrison had not appealed to him as a

motherly sort of person. She seemed better qualified to be the executive officer of a scout cruiser. There was a spark of affection in her heart, however, but the object was the pup, Moses Mahomet Ali, which happened to be engaged in tugging at Mr. Stackpole's bandage.

"What an ugly, intriguing little creature! Has he had anything to eat this morning?" cried the mistress of the dhow. He barked at her and refused to be cajoled. He disliked this woman. She was unkind to his friends.

"No, miss," respectfully answered William Sprague. "He will take his breakfast with us when it's time for mess call."

This was a reminder that strong men could not long sustain life on coffee and bread. It was overlooked by Miss Fyffe-Harrison, who had a single-track mind and was not in a hospitable humor. Ceasing to waste endearments on the pup, she seated herself upon the edge of a low divan. Martin Donnelly, tired of standing, assumed a cross-legged posture on a rug. The Kid followed his example. It looked like a council of sheiks in which impatience was bad form. The woman passed cigarettes and lighted one herself. Blowing smoke through her nose, she began to speak as follows:

"I am enormously interested in the fate of Zuleida, the girl whom you brought aboard my dhow, Mr. Stackpole. She is very beautiful and clings to me as her one hope. I have promised to restore her to her own family in Dar-es-Salaam. It is my first duty. If she falls into the clutches of the unspeakable brute from whom she escaped, he will probably kill her. And nobody will be the wiser. Personally I should find pleasure in horsewhipping him on sight."

"Please excuse me," interrupted Kid Sprague, who had pulled out his watch. Each remorseless tick had a tragic message for him. The longer he overstayed liberty the heavier the punishment. "You aren't planning to make sail for Dar-es-Salaam right away, are you? This gob has another date and a mighty important one."

"I am discussing the problem. Keep your tongue in your head. Boys should be seen and not heard," was the crushing rebuke. "With the northeast monsoon blowing, Captain Selim Majid can make the run to Dar-es-Salaam in a day. If he finds that he can't beat back to Zanzibar, it really makes no great difference to me. I can visit Zanzibar at some other time. As the capital of what used to be German East Africa, Dar-es-Salaam sounds rather jolly. The shooting upcountry is said to be good."

This was to ignore the destinies of the unhappy Yanks who stared at her and at each other. Dealing with a woman who always had her own way was going to be difficult. Navy regulations did not seem to cover it. Struggling to repress their emotions, striving to be courteous, they allowed her to continue her forceful address.

"I have a dilemma on my hands and I dislike them frightfully. If I take my dhow into Zanzibar harbor and anchor there, the word may get ashore that I have this girl, Zuleida, concealed in the cabin. In an affair of this sort I would not trust Captain Selim Majid. He will be very much afraid of the power and vengeance of Azzan-bin-Hassin, the husband of poor Zuleida, who is a cousin of the sultan, so you inform me, Mr. Stackpole. And he will be greedily expecting a handsome reward for the delivery of Zuleida to Azzan-bin-Hassin's harem."

The adventurous Englishwoman was carried away by the sound of her own arguments. They thrilled her. It was as though her naval audience had ceased to exist. They were still endeavoring to behave like gentlemen but patience was growing frazzled. The crisp, cultivated accents of Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison went on to inform them:

"You can see what a terrible risk it would be to sail in any closer to Zanzibar town. You may ask why I don't place Zuleida under the protection of the British resident, Sir Howard Brismayne, to whom I have letters. I'm sure he would refuse to interfere in the private concerns of a prominent Arab like this Azzan-bin-Hassin. It might mean complications with the sultan himself. The British policy avoids meddling with native life and customs as far as possible."

Mr. Cassius Stackpole had been fighting down the desire to smother this woman with her own pillow. Here he was, almost helpless with a sprained ankle as the result of a deed of unselfishness, and a bobbed-haired tyrant in riding breeches talked as if she meant to kidnap and carry him to

Dar-es-Salaam. He was by no means a submissive lump of a man. For years he had wielded an authority of his own, and the service had stamped him. Suavely but with a stubborn set of the jaw, he exclaimed:

"You appear to forget our situation, Miss Fyffe-Harrison. Far be it from me to risk harm to a hair of the head of the beautiful Zuleida, but why not talk it over with us? We must find some way of getting back to our ship this morning. We have not the slightest intention of being shanghaied for a trip to Dar-es-Salaam. Our cruiser sails for Mozambique at noon to-morrow as the next port of call. And we are not going to be left behind. It would mean that we could never catch up with her again."

"And you are willing to make no sacrifice at all to save Zuleida?" cried the Englishwoman. "My word, but men are detestable creatures when you scratch the veneer. Always thinking of themselves!"

"Life is full of dilemmas," replied the chief pay clerk. "In the service we call them emergencies. Why not send your small boat in to the *Toledo?* We can crowd ourselves into it. The ship is no more than four or five miles from here. And you can wait out here with the dhow."

Miss Fyffe-Harrison's fine features were clouded with thought. She ran a hand through her wavy mop of hair before saying:

"But my black sailors might carry a message ashore to that beastly rotter, Azzan-bin-Hassin. One or two of them overheard the story last night when I was talking to the girl. He might organize a party and board the dhow before we get enough breeze to work out to sea."

Martin Donnelly upheaved his gaunt frame from the rug. He shook himself and glowered at Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison. She mistook his intentions and clapped a hand to her hip pocket. Clenching a small, flat pistol she waved it at him.

"Shucks, miss, don't go dustin' me with them little bullets," was his weary remark. "Women are so high-strung! Shoot at Mr. Stackpole. He's a target you can't miss, and anchored besides. Come on deck with me, Kid. Maybe we can hail a fisherman's boat and strike a bargain, which is what we intended to do in the first place. I never did get so tangled up in a line of talk."

This left Mr. Stackpole to fight it out alone with the arbitrary lady of high degree. The dhow was waiting for sailing orders. It still swung to a cable although the flooding tide rippled past the sharp bows. A haze had spread over the sea. The sky was no longer a bright blue bowl. It was becoming overcast, watery, with cloud banks climbing from the horizon.

The change of weather had been sudden. To Donnelly's profound disappointment not a solitary fishing boat was visible alongshore or among the islands at the harbor entrance. Usually the water was flecked with their sails at this hour.

"They don't like the look of the weather, Kid," suggested the machinist's mate. "Play it safe and stay under cover. We lose. Now what? We got off on the wrong foot with this strong-handed woman. Calling her a British female tramp just naturally threw her into reverse, and then she stalled. Of course we can ask her to dump us on the beach right here where she picked us off from. But that's a last resort. It means gettin' tossed into jail after all the trouble we took to keep out of it. And we might have to hoist Old Man Stackpole all the way up that tunnel and then find an automobile to carry him to town in. It looks awful grievous to me."

"Throw the sailors on the beach and take the small boat away from 'em," was the Kid's impulsive advice. "Once we get clear of the darn dhow, we can paddle the boat in as far as the *Toledo.*"

"There it is again," was the rueful reply. "You just can't treat a woman the way you would a man. It's a bright idea, Kid, but it would be stealing her boat. And it don't seem right to leave her and the dhow out here without any boat at all. Seems different to me from the Bu-bu-bu Express. We borrowed that, and it was promptly returned."

"How many sailors aboard this dhow?" hopefully exclaimed William Sprague. "Not more than a dozen or so? Can't we start an old-fashioned mutiny?"

"You flatter me, Kid, and I'm shy my ebony elephant. This is positively the most ridiculous kettle of fish I was ever dropped into. That woman turned spiteful and enjoys teasin' us. You can't tell me she wants our company on the trip to Dar-es-Salaam. I can speak for one guy she didn't fall in love with."

"She is all set to adopt me," gravely observed the Kid. "Let's go forward and look the dhow over while Mr. Stackpole softens her hard heart. He can handle her if anybody can."

They climbed down from the poop deck, after scowling at Captain Selim Majid, who made no mention of breakfast. "Starved as well as kidnaped," grumbled William. Women could be cruel. Amidships was the deck house or shelter made of stout poles and matting which had caught their attention when they had climbed over the side of the dhow. Now the Kid was moved to investigate it on the chance of finding a turbaned cook and a meal of rice and fish. Carelessly he raised one of the brown mats which hung like a curtain. He was surprised to discover that it had covered a row of iron bars set into stout timbers at top and bottom. Behind the bars was a shadowy compartment whose sides were solidly built. It was like a huge box, with the structure of poles and matting to protect it against blazing sun and boisterous weather.

Something moved inside the cage. Young Seaman Sprague leaped back and collided with Martin Donnelly. Together they stepped forward and lifted another mat. The tawny shape of a half-grown lion was plainly to be seen. Martin swore it was as big as a cow, but this was an exaggeration. He was not quite himself. This episode followed too closely his interview with Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison. Life was one shock after another.

The unexpected lion was comfortably sprawled against one end of the cage. He regarded the spectators with drowsy, yellow eyes in which there was no hostile threat. It was a truce if they would be good enough to let him alone. Lazily he switched a tufted tail against the smooth planks of his prison. His mouth opened in a prodigious yawn. The fangs were in excellent condition for business, as Donnelly noted. He was ready to give this lion a high rating for efficiency.

However, to judge by first impressions, it was a peaceable lion, but much too large to be cuddled as a household pet. The iron bars were badly rusted. This occurred to Kid Sprague as another urgent reason for saying good-by to the dhow. He was so diverted that he forgot all about little Moses Mahomet Ali who had been allowed to follow along on deck. Now the pup dashed madly forward and exploded in a volley of barking to prove that no lion could make him turn tail. The Kid shouted and lunged to save the warrior mutt from instant obliteration. Moses Mahomet Ali paid no attention. He was otherwise engaged, for he had spied the tufted tail the end of which was switching outside the bars. It was a challenge.

The Kid made another effort just as the pup flew at this taunting tail and nipped it with his sharp teeth. The astonished lion emitted a throaty growl and hastily moved its tail to a safer place. The pup accepted this as a gesture of cowardice. In his homely, grotesque carcass there was no such attribute as fear. Pooh! What was a lion more or less? Eluding the Kid's wild swoop, he bolted into the cage, easily slipping between two bars.

William Sprague retreated a pace or two and closed his eyes. He could not bear to see the finish. One anguished yelp, and his master would have to say it with flowers. After what seemed like an eternity, William opened his eyes. The puzzled lion had lounged to its feet and was striking out with a padded paw in a hesitant, half-hearted manner, as if to cuff the intruder. The cavernous jaws showed a rough, pink tongue. In short, the king of beasts had encountered a phenomenon so novel that it flabbergasted him.

This state of mind encouraged the pup to renew his insolence by using profane language and dashing to and fro in the cage. A chance blow from the furry paw whose claws were sheathed, and Moses Mahomet Ali was batted like a ball. He bounced to his feet and was undismayed. His anguish beyond words, Kid Sprague watched his opportunity and thrust an arm through the bars. The pup was whisked out by a hind leg, its outcry indicating that it would have made that lion throw up the sponge in one more round.

"I'm glad the mutt didn't get rough with that valuable lion and damage him," grinned Martin Donnelly. "You don't want to have to settle a bill like that, boy. Your pay will be nicked bad enough as it is, for losin' yourself on liberty."

"Some pup, Martin. What does a lion mean to him? I'll bet he'd sass a rhinoceros. Do you s'pose this lion belongs to Miss Fyffe-Harrison? There is a dame

that would pick out just this kind of a pet to play with. Listen, we *gotta* get busy and start something before this Arab junk pulls up anchor. I say we go back to the cabin and find out what Old Man Stackpole has to report. If it wasn't for leaving him in the discard we could take a gamble on the sharks and swim for the beach as a last, desperate measure of brave men at grips with fate. On the level, Martin, this is a superfilm."

Donnelly was indifferent to this empty chatter. He was morosely studying sea and sky. Wetting a finger, he held it up. The light breeze had shifted and was drawing out of the south. It was exceptional at this season of the year. Machinist's mate though he was, much service afloat had given him something of the sailor's knowledge of wind and weather. In his bones he now felt that they were in for some local disturbance of considerable violence, a severe rain squall, perhaps, or a tropic gale. Evidently the Zanzibar fishermen had been of the same opinion.

Presently the sailors of the dhow were receiving orders from their barbaric captain. Whenever he spoke obedience was instant, even fearful. He ruled this mixed company with a rod of iron and there was no law to restrain him. He was as primitive as the vessel itself. Therefore his crew toiled swiftly while he told them what to do. The one boat was hoisted to the deck and lashed bottom side up. No more words about getting rid of the refugees from the American man-of-war! The die was cast. They could sink or swim for it. The salvation of the dhow and all her company was at stake. The anchor came home to the creaking of a clumsy wooden winch. The great brown sail was reefed down. The first strong gust of wind came whistling up from the southward. A flurry of rain spattered from the lowering clouds. The harbor was obscured.

The dhow gathered headway. Her course was laid to fight clear of the sandy islands that threatened to trap her. It was impossible to thrash into the harbor of Zanzibar and avoid the deadly peril of a lee shore. It was out of the question to make for Dar-es-Salaam which was almost due south. The dhow, if she was lucky enough to weather the shoals and survive the weltering seas, would be driven to the northward and the wide reaches of the Indian Ocean.

Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison, a woman with a mind of her own, had dallied too long with her dilemma. It had tricked her. Love of authority, the power of making these Yankee sailors unhappy because they had offended her, had made her neglectful. She had not listened to the warning of Captain Selim Majid that it was dangerous to ignore the signs of foul weather. He had awaited her command to make sail, but she had been too intent on wrecking the patience of Mr. Cassius Stackpole.

Seeking a sheltered corner of the deck, Martin Donnelly said to his boyish shipmate:

"This one-eyed shellback will have to run for it if he don't want to pile her up. The Lord knows where we are bound for now, Kid. We're elected again, me and you and the chief pay clerk and little Moses Mahomet Ali. Wow, look at those black thunder clouds and feel the weight of the wind already. It's due to be a screamer."

"I'll say it is, Martin, old-timer. I wonder do we eat."

"We better had, son, before this junk begins to roll and pitch. Where do we berth? On the floor of the cabin?"

"Too near her stateroom," objected the Kid. "If nobody minds, I'd sooner take my chances in the cage with the lion."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRIENDLY LION.

A VETERAN mariner of the Indian Ocean was Captain Selim Majid, who feared neither men nor evil spirits. Seldom had he been guilty of a blunder such as waiting too long at an anchorage when a change of weather was presaged. In this instance he had been expecting every moment to hear Miss Fyffe-Harrison order him to clear the dhow of the unwelcome strangers for whom he felt no affection whatever. By the beard of the Prophet, one Christian was enough —and a woman at that! He could have cut her throat and plundered her room with an easy conscience, but England had a long arm and a heavy hand.

As for these three men from the long, gray warship in Zanzibar harbor, it might be impolitic to knock them on the head. That cruiser with the flag of stripes and stars was incredibly swift and had many guns that shot ten miles. Also the Americans were a proud, high-tempered race and

might think nothing at all of blowing an Arab vessel out of water.

The dhow was in flight over a wind-whipped sea which had not yet begun to swell and break. It was a carpet of foam beaten by a downpour of rain that descended like a flood. The low islands were veiled excepting in glimpses when the sheets of rain were parted by the furious gusts as one might draw somber curtains asunder. The great sail with its slender, pliant yard had been reefed down close. Soon the naked seamen were clawing at the gaskets to shake out and hoist more canvas. It was a choice of sagging off to leeward and crashing on a shoal or the risk of losing mast and sail.

Four men strained at the tackles of the massive tiller. They could be trusted to defy exhaustion so long as Captain Selim Majid kept that one good eye on them. He was more to be dreaded than a typhoon.

Driven below for shelter, Martin Donnelly timidly entered the cabin. He hoped that the intrepid Miss Fyffe-Harrison might have talked herself to a standstill. William Sprague was not so hardened to life's rude contacts. On second thought he preferred staying on deck as less tempestuous than the woman in the cabin. His uniform needed washing and he would let it dry on him.

He found thrilling enjoyment in watching the vessel struggle to gain open water under her lee. Touch and go! A sporty game, he said to himself, and One-eyed Reilly was the sundowner to make the old bucket crack herself wide open before he eased up on her. Why, there was more pep to this than a scout cruiser doing a test run on all twelve boilers.

The dhow drove hissing past the nearest island with the breakers leaping no more than a cable length away. Flogged by the shrieking wind, the seas were beginning to rise and curl in frothy crests. They swung the small vessel with a giddy motion. The square stern lifted. The low bows squattered or were buried in cascades of green water. The dhow seemed to lunge headlong like a frightened horse, but at a sharp word from Captain Selim Majid the sweating helmsmen checked the impulse to yaw this way or that.

To his chagrin the Kid was conscious of qualms in the region of his belt and a mind darkened with melancholy. He had been seasick when the slim *Toledo* had rolled forty degrees during a norther in the Mediterranean, but since then he had flattered himself that he was a gob with his sea legs under him. This crazy dhow, however, had a motion all its own. It was a drunken dance in which she tried to stand on end. The young man wondered why he had raised such a fuss about breakfast. How foolish! The way some people talked about wanting food was disgusting.

Wanly this sufferer clung to a rope's end like a barnacle to a reef and let the rain and spray pelt him. The best thing the dhow could do was to hit a shoal and finish the job. Any guy that would join the navy to see the world was a nut!

During this sad crisis the drooping Kid beheld Martin Donnelly rise out of the cabin hatchway, rugged and untouched by calamity. He had borrowed a tarred storm-coat from a peg on the wall. He turned to lend a hand to none other than Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison who was enveloped in yellow oilskins. They passed quite close to William Sprague, who saw Donnelly grin and hated him for it. The woman, however, seemed to regard him with almost human pity. He loved her for it. She was forgiven.

She clung to the arm of the machinist's mate as they lurched forward. The wind blew their words away. Anyhow, the Kid was not listening. For all he cared, they might be in search of a parson to marry them. What Donnelly was saying ran like this, shouted into the woman's ear:

"Yes, ma'am, I'm glad to help you see that your lion is secured all taut and proper. The crew is too busy. We don't want that cage to go adrift, do we! And I can lash those mats so they will keep some of the salt water out. An elegant lion, I'll say it through a loud speaker. How come you to park him on this dhow? Was he a marked-down sale or something?"

"Precisely, Donnelly," the Englishwoman replied with the first trace of responsiveness she had displayed. "I discovered George—the lion's name is George, by the way—in the yard of a Mombasa trader who had him fastened by a chain. The poor beast had been caught as a cub but was growing so fast that his owner had decided to kill him for his hide. George was really too big to play with any longer. The natives were afraid of him."

"But you weren't, madam," earnestly exclaimed Donnelly. "You walked right up to George and scratched his head and he purred like a kitten."

"How in the world did you guess it?" cried Miss Fyffe-Harrison. "You are ever so much shrewder than you look."

"You didn't have to tell me. Actions speak louder than words."

She seemed to take this in the complimentary sense intended and explained in a brisk voice:

"George purred when I petted him, but not like a kitten. My word, no! It was more like a motor exhaust. Will you believe that I was able to purchase George for twenty pounds? An enormous bargain!"

"Women can't resist a bargain, ma'am, not even in lions," commented her escort. "And what do you expect to do with George? He wouldn't fit on anybody's parlor mantelpiece."

"What a quaint remark, Donnelly! I shall have to remember that. Fancy saying such a thing of a lion."

"It was an elephant I had in mind," was the cryptic remark. "But he got away from me in Zanzibar. He was a present for my poor old mother in Hackensack."

This was entirely too much for Miss Fyffe-Harrison. It made her forget that she had appraised this American sailor as a ruffian. He was an odd character, and she collected them as other people go in for pottery or baskets or old furniture. Nor could she help admiring his hardy indifference to the raging rain squalls and the peril of the laboring dhow. She was about to ask him about the fascinating riddle of the elephant when a wave roared over the bulwark and knocked them flat. Unharmed, they resumed the slow journey along the reeling, slippery deck. What Donnelly had to say was in fragments like these:

"Steady, ma'am, here comes another walloper—and so the elephant kicked a native cop in the stomach—grab hold of that hatch cover—it was time for us to catch the Bu-bu-bu Express—when this dhow sticks her nose clean under like that, I don't expect to see her come up—and there was no box car for the elephant so I had to leave him in the garden——"

Miss Fyffe-Harrison had swallowed too much salt water to keep up the conversation. They came to George's cage and found that the curtains of matting had been hastily tied down. But the wind was flapping them to tatters. Inside crouched a disconsolate lion, drenched by spray, with its head between its paws. He looked up, stalked grandly to the bars, and balanced himself against the erratic motion of the deck. Miss Fyffe-Harrison put out a hand and rubbed his black muzzle, stroked his ears, and tickled the heavy neck which had not yet grown a mane. George purred.

"Will you listen to that?" chuckled Donnelly. "Who stepped on the self-starter? Hittin' on all six and plenty of power. Don't you feel nervous, ma'am?"

"Not a bit. Pat him yourself. He dislikes Captain Selim Majid. I suspect the man hasn't been nice to him. The Arabs are a cruel race. They seem to enjoy tormenting animals."

"George had him right," said the machinist's mate. "Your scar-faced skipper looks like a man that would murder an aged and decrepit widow for the gold filling in her teeth."

Dexterously Donnelly passed additional ropes around the cage and bound the matting tight. Then he found a coil of light hawser and pulled it over the roof, making fast to a cleat and a ringbolt in the deck. If not comfortable, George was at least secure against disaster unless the dhow should be pounded to pieces. His mistress was cordially grateful. The supposed villain had done her a favor and was most entertaining besides. Carefully he conducted her back to the cabin without mishap, a strong man and competent, who seemed to take the hazards as commonplace. Her verdict was that he might be endurable.

Having seen her safely to the door of her own room, the brawny cavalier turned his attention to Mr. Cassius Stackpole, who had attached himself to the heavy wooden chest by means of a bit of line passed around his middle. The chest was belayed to a beam wherefore Mr. Stackpole could not slide back and forth across the floor. Never florid and seldom exposed to the sun, his complexion had now bleached to an ashen hue and he was unable to force a smile of good cheer. Recognizing the symptoms, Donnelly said soothingly:

"You never were in destroyers, sir. It might have educated you to stand this.

For years you paraded around in battleships and——"

"In my long experience," dolefully murmured the chief pay clerk, "I have never, never felt like this. I am not actively ill, Donnelly—you understand—but depressed—woozy in the head—no initiative. Do you think the dhow will live through it?"

"Like a duck, sir. Noah did a voyage in a tub like this, only bigger, and never sprung a leak. He had lions in his cargo, too, same as us. You and the lady lion tamer still makin' faces at each other, are you? She sort of thawed with me just now. Her temperature climbed almost up to zero."

"I asked her please to let me alone," sighed Mr. Stackpole. "I needed company more sympathetic. Where is the Kid?"

"Takin' the air, in gulps. His spirits are battened down for once. He hasn't even asked a question about the beautiful Zuleida, pearl of the harem, who is still under hatches. This dirty weather'll blow itself out by to-morrow. These rainy gales never last long. Then the old northeast monsoon can resume business. And we can shove along south."

"Where to, Donnelly? The *Toledo* will sail sharp at noon to-morrow from Zanzibar, if the weather clears. She won't mind poking out into a heavy sea. Ten days' absence without leave and we are declared deserters from the United States navy. You can't buck the regulations on that. It is strictly enforced, and extenuating circumstances haven't a ghost of a show unless you drop dead or something like that. It's bad enough for you and young Sprague, but a man of my long service and excellent record—a warrant officer——"

Mr. Stackpole's emotion halted his speech. He was in a state of mind and body to weep over his misfortunes. Donnelly comprehended this and strongly answered:

"They won't tie the can on us until the ten days is up. And that's ten days from now. With that much leeway, miracles may happen. Look at the things you couldn't possibly believe that have happened to us since the sun went down yesterday. My word, old top! Carry on!"

Mr. Stackpole looked the picture of pessimism and had nothing more to say. He had been wrenched from his methodical, dignified orbit into a mad world of violence and commotion. Never had he appeared to poorer advantage.

Misery loves company. He almost smiled when Kid Sprague came sprawling into the cabin, rolled over on a rug, and feebly chanted:

"'"We are lost," the captain shouted, as he staggered down the stairs.' Say, Mr. Stackpole, do I look as awful as you? I'll match you to see who pays the undertaker."

This levity awakened no jocular response. The Kid subsided. With his head on his arm he went to sleep. The rug slid with him but he showed signs of life only when his head bumped something. Miss Fyffe-Harrison remained in her stateroom. Once she was seen to come out and collect a tin of biscuit, a teapot, and a pot of jam from a closet for which she had a key. Mr. Stackpole averted his head. It was heartless for the woman to flaunt the fact that she felt interested in eating.

Martin Donnelly was reminded by the aches in his bones that he, too, needed sleep. There was nothing to interfere with it. Captain Selim Majid appeared to require no extra men. The cabin therefore became silent but for the incessant lamentations of the pegged timbers of the straining hull and the swash of water on deck.

"No watches to stand," muttered the machinist's mate, "and no hundred and sixty degrees in the fireroom to wilt you like a rag. Things are never so bad that they couldn't be a hell of a sight worse. Atta boy! Rocked in the cradle of the deep!"

Occasionally one of the Arabs flitted into the cabin, barefooted, dripping—the captain or the mate or the boatswain. They kindled a fire box and brewed coffee, gobbling bowls of rice and fish or munching dates. By turn they stretched themselves on rugs and slept an hour or so, excepting Captain Selim Majid, man of iron, who took no rest and maintained his vigil beside the long tiller on the poop deck.

Soon after nightfall the rain ceased and the wind was shorn of its ferocious strength. It still blew half a gale, veering from the south to the east and urging the dhow away from the African coast, farther out into the wastes of the rolling Indian Ocean. More reefs were shaken out of the sail. It lifted toward the stars which were beginning to gleam through rifts in the gloomy

canopy of clouds. The main sheet was hauled closer inboard while the wearied sailors tailed on in a row and gasped out their singsong pulling chantey that was perhaps as old as the ruins of cities buried in the sands of Arabia. The vessel was steadied by the bellying canvas. Obediently she leaned to its pressure and no longer dreaded to be overwhelmed by the onrush of following seas. This craft of ancient pattern had vanquished the evil spirits that seek to slay stout ships and mariners.

Through the night the easterly wind crept more to the north until at dawn the seasonable monsoon, cool, steady, and strong, had resumed its sway.

The dhow could now turn to retrace her path, back to Zanzibar or elsewhere, in a southerly direction. In dazzling sunlight, on a sea that breathed in long swells all blue and silver, the battered vessel plowed her lonely furrow. It was a day joyous to behold. Something of this altered mood communicated itself to the people who had been imprisoned in the cabin.

Mr. Stackpole had ceased to mourn his blasted career. For him Donnelly was making a neat crutch from a piece of bamboo pole. William Sprague whistled as he helped a half-grown Swahili cabin boy set the place to rights. They ate breakfast on deck and were sociably inclined. After that, Donnelly borrowed a razor from the boatswain and a cake of salt-water soap. Later in the day he would wash his clothes, wrapping himself the while in yards of cotton sheeting. Kid Sprague was exhorted to do likewise. Slackness was a cardinal sin. They still belonged to Uncle Sam's navy. Detached duty, Donnelly called it.

They were discussing their situation, not in a whimpering vein, but with a touch of humorous philosophy. Fair weather had restored their normal spirits. To them appeared Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison. Her presence was like an intrusion. They were silent, on the defensive. It did not escape them that she looked more feminine, less austere. Instead of riding breeches and puttees she wore a white skirt and silk stockings. A finely woven straw hat covered the bobbed hair. For a woman of forty her trim figure and supple carriage conveyed an impression almost youthful. Time had penciled its tiny lines at the corners of her eyes. The wavy hair had lost its sheen. But as she stood with the sky behind her on this bright, breezy morning she was a woman to arrest the eye.

Forgetting his injured ankle, Mr. Stackpole made a courteous effort to rise, but she bade him be sensible and inquired how he had fared. He thanked her with gusto. His admiration was undisguised although he felt uncertain how she might take a compliment. Martin Donnelly was painfully polite and noncommital. The only bond between them was George, the lion. A party in which a lion and a woman were actors was both skittish and uncertain. The volatile Kid had something on his mind which he hastened to express.

"You sure do look well this morning, Miss Fyffe-Harrison. The idea of that poor simp spilling it that you were old enough to be my mother. A few breaks like that and he'll rate as a Mormon—I mean a moron. By the way, how did Miss Zuleida stand the rotten weather? I'm interested to have a look at her, of course, because the only time I saw her she was a ghost."

Did this self-sufficient woman, so superior to the follies of her sex, wince a little at this? Did she feel the sting of a vanity which dreaded comparison with the springtime of youth and beauty? Absurd! She made this plain as she answered William's eager question.

"Zuleida is in the cabin. I shall be glad to present you to her. She is very anxious to thank Mr. Stackpole for his great kindness to her. She calls him her benevolent parent."

The laugh was on the chief pay clerk whose doctrine it was that a man is no older than he feels. Just now, in his revived condition, he was feeling not at all like the benevolent parent of a grown-up daughter. Donnelly helped to prop him on the crutch and lent a hand down the cabin stairway.

The girl who had fled from the household of the dread Azzan-bin-Hassin was standing at one of the square stern windows, dreamily gazing at the azure sea. Her face was unveiled. Possibly her scruples in this respect were no more than skin deep. At any rate she made no effort to conceal her loveliness from the sight of these other voyagers with whom her lot had been cast.

It was rather cruel, in a way, for the

Englishwoman, twice this exotic creature's age, to have to suffer the comparison. This may have been Zuleida's intention. Life had no savor unless men were inflamed by the desire to possess her, unless they regarded her as a prize to be won by purses of gold or the verdict of the sword. In threatening to kill her, Azzan-bin-Hassin may have had provocation. He was reputed to be a jealous lord and haughtily intolerant of rivals.

Mr. Cassius Stackpole, worldly-wise and observant, was conscious of some such impressions as these. In the enforced rôle of a benevolent parent he could study the girl and arrive at his own conclusions which were apt to be sagacious. Arab she was, but he wondered what other blood might be in her veins, of the wanderers who had peopled the ports of the East African coast. A warm tint was in her olive cheek. Her smile was vivacious, like the Latins of the Mediterranean. The dark eyes sparkled with a coquetry that made no pretense of shyness. She was as much at ease among these infidel strangers as in the white-washed courtyard of her own home in Dar-es-Salaam.

Offering her hand to Mr. Stackpole in the European fashion, she said in a voice like soft music:

"T'ank you, effendi. I no spik ze Eengleesh."

She didn't have to make herself understood in words, Mr. Stackpole tried to convey. It was delightful enough to look and listen. Her glance wandered from his bald brow and portly person to the debonair young seaman, William Sprague. Her expressive eyes kindled with interest. She turned to Miss Fyffe-Harrison and said something in the Swahili vernacular of the coast. It was so obviously in praise of the engaging Kid that he appeared distressed. He feared the mirth of Martin Donnelly who was nudging him in the ribs.

The fair Zuleida let her long lashes flutter. Dutifully the Kid stepped forward. Her little hand lingered in his hard palm until he snatched it away.

He was a lad who had much in his favor and the girls at home had frankly displayed their liking. But no beautiful doll could play him for an easy mark, he said to himself, and it would take a smoother line than this to get him going. With an air of polite indifference he informed the susceptible Zuleida that he was pleased to meet her. Then he withdrew, at which she was visibly piqued. He rejoined the cynical Donnelly who whispered:

"Watch your step, Kid. You can't help breakin' their hearts, but don't you go trifling with this here belle of Dar-es-Salaam. She fell for you hard. This voyage is crazy enough without any dynamite in it."

"A peacherino, I'll tell my diary, Martin," was the serious reply, "but she can't lure me on to destruction with her fatal charms. I'm too wise a guy. And I got a girl in Hackensack."

"The one you bought the ivory beads for at Mr. Mooloo's?" said Donnelly. "Well, Kid, she had better say, *'Wallah, Wallah, Wallah,'* or she is liable to lose you. When this Zuleida flashes her lamps on you a couple of times more——"

"Listen, old-timer, there's one thing I won't let you josh me about," William sternly exclaimed. "I like to meet people and look 'em over when I am on a tour of the world this way, but I have no intention whatever of falling in love with anybody. Not that I'm engaged to the girl in Hackensack, understand—she has sort of put me on probation—but she has first call and there's that."

Mr. Stackpole was airing his curious smattering of Arabic and Swahili to which Zuleida paid absent-minded attention. Her gaze roamed to the obdurate young seaman. She was wistfully appealing. He was her chosen champion. He could comprehend her even though they spoke only the language of the heart.

It was a romantic tableau interrupted by the entrance of Captain Selim Majid. He had resumed his garb of bright and clashing colors and was unusually adorned. An inlaid sword was thrust through the crimson sash, a white jacket covered the lean, brown shoulders. Silently he joined the group in the cabin. Zuleida was startled. This one-eyed rover with the seamed cheek had been described by her only as a vague figure moving in the moonlight when she had found refuge in the dhow. Was it recognition or apprehension that caused her to shrink from his presence and hastily to draw a fold of the white drapery across her face?

He stared at her with a savage cupidity. If she was, by nature, desirous of making

men greedy to possess her, it was manifest that she had swiftly kindled the savage ardor of this Arab mariner. For once, however, she had found a man whom she felt no impulse to beguile or ensnare. On the contrary she was mortally afraid of him. He strode over and addressed her in accents harsh and masterful. It was his fashion of paying homage to her attractions.

The girl clung to the arm of Miss Fyffe-Harrison. The Englishwoman was perplexed but her poise was unshaken. A cool gesture, a sharp word or two, and Captain Selim Majid was persuaded to betake himself elsewhere. The duties of a chaperon carried a hint of difficulty. Curious how the atmosphere of the cabin had become surcharged, as if a spark might explode it. Zuleida's coquetry had been snuffed out. Her warmly tinted cheek had paled. She watched the spare figure of Captain Selim Majid until he had vanished through the hatchway. Then she murmured something, a hand at her breast. She would return to the stateroom, she intimated. The rough weather had tried her strength. The motion of the vessel still affected her head.

Mr. Stackpole returned to the deck with Martin Donnelly, who confided:

"I dunno as I ever saw a party get itself all set for trouble as sudden as this. Reminds me of when a neighbor in Hackensack was experimentin' with home-brew. This goof blew his kitchen up and a stove lid whizzed so close to my poor old mother that it knocked a clothespin right out from between her teeth."

"The situation does require tact and vigilance," agreed Mr. Stackpole. "We must warn the Kid to keep out of this girl's way. She is going to act foolish about him. What do you think about this Selim Majid? Has he seen her before?"

"Maybe, and couldn't steal her. These Muscat dhows make a voyage a year down this way. Anyhow, he wants her now. And I size him up as a go-getter."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PEARL OF THE HAREM.

THE Englishwoman was so accustomed to wield an unquestioned authority that she was not one to be easily alarmed. Unmolested she had lived and traveled among wild peoples whose customs were primitive. Although he looked like a pirate Captain Selim Majid had served her with fidelity. The scene in the cabin had revealed him in a new rôle, but this was no reason for distrusting him. He was merely an Arab who coveted a comely girl as he might be greedy to own a handsome horse or a graceful ship.

Had it not been for the distracted behavior of Zuleida, after fleeing to the privacy of the stateroom, Miss Fyffe-Harrison might have dismissed the episode from her sensible mind. But the girl was in tears, shaking with terror, a pitiable waif of fortune who had no other friend to confide in.

Yes, she had seen this Selim Majid once before, when he had made a trading voyage to Dar-es-Salaam. He had been in search of a beautiful young wife, as one of his errands. Her parents had bargained with him but he had been unable to satisfy their demands. He had sailed away, swearing to come again. Now the conditions were all in his favor. Poor Zuleida was damaged goods. In Zanzibar she had not even been divorced by Azzan-bin-Hassin. Her parents would be anxious to get rid of her. She had disgraced them. Such inducements as Captain Selim Majid could offer would be accepted after the usual period of wrangling to extort a little more.

Zuleida was young and loved life. She longed for a husband whom she could love and worship—who would be kind to her—such a man as the adorably boyish sailor from America—she had no objection to being the wife of such a Christian as that—and being taken far away from home.

Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison was properly shocked and told the girl to banish such thoughts from her silly little head. She ought not to be talking such utter rot. Captain Selim Majid was an impossible husband for her, this much was granted, and to pass into his hands would be out of the frying pan into the fire. It seemed to be a duty to protect her, and Miss Fyffe-Harrison was never one to shirk a duty thrust upon her.

If necessary, Zuleida would be placed under adequate protection in Dar-es-Salaam until Selim Majid should have vanished below the horizon. Miss Fyffe-Harrison had made up her mind to forsake the dhow at the next port and travel more conventionally. She was getting fed up with this sort of picturesque experience. It had begun to wear on her. The emotional Zu-

leida was a trying person, not to mention the problem of the three involuntary passengers from U. S. S. *Toledo*.

The Englishwoman needed a friend with whom she might confer and whose judgment could be respected. Later in this same day she found such a one. It was Mr. Cassius Stackpole who was taking his ease in the shade on deck. He was alone. His comrades were somewhere forward scrubbing clothes. There was a solid maturity about him that comforted Miss Fyffe-Harrison now that she had begun to make his acquaintance. He had the bearing of a Roman senator. One might have supposed him to be a man of greater consequence in the world than his rank in the naval service denoted. It was to wonder why his merits had not been more generously rewarded.

This may have occurred to Miss Fyffe-Harrison as she found a place to sit beside him. He seemed to have much more force of character than she had given him credit for during the earlier hours of the voyage. Fortune, indeed, had played him one scurvy trick after another during that night in Zanzibar. What she failed to realize was that he had determined to assert an authority of his own. A sense of responsibility had stiffened him. He was the "senior officer present." This meant something in the code of his blue-water clan. It was for him to show that he was something more than "Old Man" Stackpole of the paymaster's office.

"What are your plans, if you please?" he demanded of Miss Fyffe-Harrison who was unaware of this change of attitude.

"Dar-es-Salaam, as I intended when the wretched gale interfered. We ought to arrive there to-morrow."

"To put the girl ashore? Does any other business call you there?"

"Allah seems to have left Zuleida on my hands, to do what I can for her, Mr. Stackpole. And I have also decided to pay off the dhow and wait for a mail steamer."

"Um-m, that sounds as if you meant to leave us stranded."

"No more stranded than you will be anywhere else on the coast," said she, not without sympathy. "I am very sorry that I didn't put you aboard your ship at Zanzibar. You tried to dictate to me. I resented that, and the whole affair was confusing—Zuleida's horror of recapture and so on. Then the weather raised the deuce with everything. But I have no intention of turning you adrift as derelicts. I shall insist on leaving you with ample funds to carry you to the United States, if you have to go that far."

"The idea of becoming objects of charity makes no hit with me," pursued the warrant officer. "We were obliged to let you run away with us because one has to—er—to make allowances in dealing with a woman. It was a queer situation for naval men—it jammed our wits—we couldn't force the issue without being confoundedly rude to you. As you put it, all hands were confused. Now, however, I must talk straight from the shoulder. You may be a rich woman—I know nothing about it—but you haven't money enough to square it with us. Wounded honor cannot be healed by a poultice of dollars. Losing our ship is far worse than an inconvenience. It means the stigma of desertion."

"My word, Mr. Stackpole! Was it letting you in for anything as serious as that?" cried the woman, genuinely perturbed.

"You didn't know what you were doing," he bluntly informed her. "Now listen carefully to every word I have to say. Please don't interrupt me. I am no navigator but I've learned to know my way about after a fashion. It has been one of my hobbies to study charts and pilot directions and to learn to know the stars. It was not my ambition, when a young man, to be a chief pay clerk, but that is—er—that is another story. The *Toledo* left Zanzibar at noon to-day. She will lay a straight course for Mozambique which is about six hundred miles to the southward. Her schedule calls for a three days' visit in port. There is a fighting chance—a very small one—that with this prevailing wind the dhow might reach Mozambique before the *Toledo* sails from there. It seemed a perfectly hopeless gamble until I did some careful figuring."

Mr. Stackpole paused to let this sink in. Miss Fyffe-Harrison was amazed, but for once felt reluctant to assert her own opinion. Her only comment was:

"To Mozambique? Captain Selim Majid has never been farther south than Zanzibar and Dar-es-Salaam. He would feel lost."

"Then I shall have to show him," roundly declared Mr. Stackpole. "Good heavens, he can aim in the general direction, can't

he? And he is bound to know it when he hits the African coast. Then he can ask a policeman or something. I'll tell you one thing straight. I'd sooner see the dhow founder or break her back on a reef than to let myself be whipped without playing the odds, no matter how big they look."

Miss Fyffe-Harrison sat with her chin in her hand. It was a feminine chin but a stubborn one. She gazed at the heavily built, dogmatic warrant officer. Her interest in him was grave and inquiring. She had conceived a lively respect for him. Thwart him and he might take her by the shoulders and shake her. It seemed better to treat him with kindness, like George the lion.

"I agree with you, that I deserve very little consideration," she went so far as to admit, after an eloquent silence.

"But that is not what I meant," was his hasty reply. "We shall do everything in our power for your comfort and safety. What it amounts to is that you will have to stay in the dhow a few days longer. I hope you will consent to the scheme. We should feel infernally awkward about kidnaping you, in spite of what you did to us."

"Oh, bother the feminine equation," she cried. "I am sick and tired of it. Save that rubbish for Zuleida and her kind. Why can't we touch at Dar-es-Salaam and leave the lovely young nuisance there?"

"We can't afford to lose a day. And I doubt whether your cutthroat of a skipper would leave the girl behind and then steer for Mozambique. She might run away again."

"I understand. You are a clever man, Mr. Stackpole. Mozambique is in Portuguese East Africa. I presume I can find a British consulate and make some arrangement to ship Zuleida home by steamer. It doesn't matter about me. My plans are quite adjustable."

"Then you are game to see it through to the finish with us?" delightedly exclaimed Cassius Stackpole. "I was afraid you might throw into reverse again, as Donnelly calls it."

"Am I as horrid and balky as that?" she asked. "Probably! Well, this adventure will be frightfully sporting. I like it. I shall offer the captain and crew a months' pay if they can catch your cruiser."

"I have some money with me, Miss Fyffe-Harrison. When I went ashore in Zanzibar I expected to buy two or three good rugs. Let me encourage the crew. If money fails to get results——"

He stopped with this. There was no display of bravado. His massive features were calm and resolute. He had spoken as the senior officer present. To Miss Fyffe-Harrison it was a glimpse of something profoundly significant which hitherto she had failed to visualize. The man was as solid as a boulder and as difficult to thrust to one side. In his unemotional way he was preparing to take command should the emergency arise. Quite respectfully she inquired:

"If we have trouble in persuading my captain to proceed to Mozambique, you say you will get results?"

"Well, Miss Fyffe-Harrison, it would be humiliating to knuckle under to a one-eyed rapscallion from Muscat, don't you think? A warrant officer of the United States navy —er—and a machinist's mate, and a seaman, second class? We should certainly dislike ourselves if we took orders from a filthy Arab in a spit kid of a dhow. You get my point."

Mr. Stackpole stated the facts simply, like a problem in bookkeeping. Two and two inevitably made four. The woman glanced at the crutch and the swollen ankle with an air of solicitude. He read her mind and said, "Two or three days more will see me limping about."

"I hope so," she devoutly exclaimed. "Meanwhile I wonder if you would mind doing me a favor. The firm of London solicitors which has my estate in charge has sent me a most ridiculous heap of accounts —bills, receipts, dividend statements, corporation reports, tax returns, and so on. They had been accumulating for months and finally found me at Mombasa. It is enough to drive me mad. As an expert, you could check up the figures and all that so wonderfully well——"

"With pleasure. I flatter myself that my training has been thorough," replied Mr. Stackpole, immensely gratified by this mark of confidence. "Now supposing you send for Captain Selim Majid and give him his orders to change course for Mozambique. The sooner we find out where we stand, the better."

The turbaned mariner came quickly. He bowed in courteous obeisance. His predacious visage was almost friendly, nor did

he manifest anger or surprise when told that the dhow must undertake the longer voyage in seas unknown to him. It was for him to obey. Wherever her noble and exalted ladyship wished him to carry her, he would be her willing servant. With the aid of the sun and the stars he would find the path to the strange coast of Mozambique. The dhow would be urged to the utmost. Aye, the dogs of sailors would feel the bite of the lash if they slackened effort. And he, the faithful Selim Majid, the boldest seaman of Muscat, would sleep not at all while the wind blew by day and night.

When he had retired beyond earshot, Mr. Stackpole felt moved to remark:

"Too easy, Miss Fyffe-Harrison. Much too easy. By right he should kick up a fuss and have to be bullied into it. He isn't forgetting that girl for a minute. At Mozambique she will get away from him. A slippery gent, and much harder to handle than if he turned rough."

He talked of things more agreeable and found a ready listener. Travel had made him an entertaining companion and one peculiarly congenial to a woman whose own contacts with the world had been so varied. Before the end of the day they met in the cabin and began to examine her manifold documents of a financial nature. He went about it with unhurried efficiency, refusing to accept any figures as correct until they had been verified as far as possible.

Several errors were discovered. They were to Miss Fyffe-Harrison's disadvantage. The painstaking investigator suspected costly carelessness or worse. Give him time and he would delve to the bottom of it.

On the following day he was compelled to lay aside this task. It was the frivolous William Sprague who disturbed things in a violent manner. It exemplified the adage that children should not play with fire. Escaping the notice of his wiser companions, he had no trouble in coaxing the infatuated Zuleida to accompany him to a pleasant nook on deck, in the shadow of the lofty sail. She veiled her face for this excursion and was able to make the youth comprehend that only his splendid courage could lull her fear of the evil Captain Selim Majid.

William had no intention of getting himself entangled. It was a case of passing an idle hour and having nothing better to do. Also he had concluded, after due reflection, that it might be a valuable experience, as a man of the world, to be vamped by such an artist as this pearl of the harem.

It occurred to him to teach the responsive Zuleida to speak a little English. She was an apt and eager pupil. Trustfully she echoed his words as well as she could. Soulful were the glances wasted on her schoolmaster, in vain the passion that thrilled her voice. Demurely, earnestly William repeated the lesson and she strove to memorize it. Soon she was dutifully assuring him:

"I loafe my husban', but, oh, you Kid!"

"Once more, Zuleida, and put more snap into it. 'I *love* my husband,' not *'loafe.'* And bear down on *'Oh, you Kid.'* That's more like it. Now say, 'Hello, Donnelly, you big stiff.'"

Her eyes aglow with tenderness, Zuleida clasped her hands and leaned closer to murmur:

"Ullo, Donnellee, you beeg 'tiff."

"That's hot off the bat, girlie. The machinist's mate will kiss you for that. Let me see. Can't we hang one on Mr. Stackpole? You savvy him? All right. *'How's your wife and six children?'* He is sort of taking notice of Miss Fyffe-Harrison. I'm wise to his symptoms. All set, Zuleida. *'How's your wife and six children, old man?'"*

The deluded flower of Dar-es-Salaam repeated, with deep feeling: *"'Ow's youah wife an' seex childun, ol' man?"*

It was enough that the superb young sailor was talking to her. Love knew no language nor required one. Love was swift and hot like the wind that blew from the desert. Somehow Zuleida felt that the outpourings of the heart could be most fervently expressed in the phrase, *"But—oh, you—Kid!"* It sounded like Arabic as she murmured it over and over.

The perfidious William was becoming intoxicated by the very sound of these caressing words. Forgetful of the girl in Hackensack who had advisedly placed him on probation, he wanted Zuleida to remove her veil. "Stow awnings!" was the correct order. He might take a chance and snatch a kiss himself. She wouldn't scream or pull any stuff like that. Alas, it will be apparent that William Sprague was skidding. His pupil was aware of the fact. It was she who glanced to left and right to make sure they were unobserved. Her slim fin-

gers stole to the gold pins which held the filmy white fabric across her shapely nose. In William's ear she softly breathed, *"But —oh, you—Kid!"*

At this highly interesting moment there came striding from forward of the mast the lean, truculent figure of Captain Selim Majid. He had been forward on some errand of inspection and so caught this sentimental couple unawares. The creaking of the spars and the monsoon piping through the cordage made his approach inaudible. The misguided William was keeping a slack watch. He was otherwise occupied, very much so.

Zuleida's veil fell from her glowing face. Her scamp of a tutor slid an arm around her neck and—there was a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. It was a thwarted kiss.

Captain Selim Majid could be a sudden man. His methods were not always indirect. His one baleful eye beheld the jewel of his desire profaned by the hand of an infidel lover. To kill them both was the instant purpose of this vengeful Arab who saw them through a red mist of rage. He pulled the curved sword from his sash and whirled it over his head as he bounded forward.

The victims were still and frozen by the shadow of death. They could do nothing to save themselves. Instinctively the unhappy William drew the pallid Zuleida closer. Her eyes were tight shut. It was the end, such an end as she may have averted when fleeing from the threats of her lawful master, Azzan-bin-Hassin.

Martin Donnelly had been in the bows of the vessel washing clothes. If cleanliness is next to godliness, he was sure of salvation. Strolling aft with the wooden bucket in his hand, he stepped around the mast at the instant when Selim Majid's sword was flashing in the preliminary flourishes essential to the art of killing as practiced by the fierce tribesmen of Muscat.

Donnelly's bare feet slapped the deck in two great strides. He swung the heavy bucket, but not with graceful flourishes. He disliked waste motion. The bucket smote the sinewy wrist of Selim Majid. The sword flew from his hand and tinkled on the planks. Deliberately the machinist's mate picked up the weapon and tossed it overboard. It was a precious sword, wonderfully chased and inlaid.

The owner was not entirely disarmed. He plucked at the knife inside his jacket but thought better of it. The hairy ogre of an American had a long arm and he possessed a wooden bucket. Discreetly Selim Majid withdrew from the field, rubbing a bruised wrist.

He said certain things as he retreated. They were so dreadful that Zuleida clapped her hands to her ears. She was no fainting heroine. Now that she lived and breathed again, it was all deliciously exciting. Strong men were fighting over her. They would be at each other's throats before the voyage was finished. She was the prize!

Martin Donnelly was in no such blithesome mood as this. Sourly he looked down at the guilty William and snarled:

"You miserable bonehead! I've a good mind to spank you with this bucket. Now the beans *are* spilled!"

The accused had nothing to say. It was Zuleida who rose to the occasion. It was in her heart to thank the preserver of her life, to call him by name and greatly please him by a tribute in his own tongue. Sweetly, fondly she exclaimed:

"Ullo, Donnellee, you beeg 'tiff."

CHAPTER IX.

WILLIAM STANDS A WATCH.

IN all likelihood the beans were spilled, agreed Mr. Stackpole after listening to Donnelly's lurid report. A pity that flogging had been abolished in the United States navy many years ago! Seaman Sprague, second class, deserved a dose of the cat-o'-nine-tails. However, there was no sense in crying over spilled beans, said the middle-aged philosopher. It was better perhaps to have Selim Majid show his hand than to continue his masquerade of obedient servility. If the rascal meant mischief the sooner he declared himself the better. The Arabs were a treacherous breed who seldom struck in the open. The Kid's dalliance with Zuleida had cleared the air of a fog of deceit.

True enough, observed Donnelly, but perhaps the ruckus might have been postponed by stringing this One-eyed Reilly along until they were closer to Mozambique. The Kid's damn foolishness had put Selim in such a bad temper that there would be no handling him at all. And it was all important to crowd the old hooker for as many knots a day as possible. Otherwise they

would surely miss out on the scout cruiser, and then what?

"Forget the *Toledo,* Donnelly," was Mr. Stackpole's advice. He weighed his words. "It is a question of reaching port at all. There has been more or less comedy in our adventures so far, but it looks like something else from now on. Even the Kid will have to take it seriously if we can manage to put the fear of God in him."

"I'll try if I have to skin him alive, sir. I never did borrow trouble, but this Arab is liable to act unreasonable. I insulted him with a wooden bucket and he is surely bugs over that girl. Seems like I'm unlucky about hurting people's feelings with ebony elephants and things. What's your idea of organizin' ourselves, sir? I'm not anxious to have a knife stuck in my back. It makes me nervous."

"If he intends to do anything like that, Donnelly, he will try to wipe out all hands of us. He may be mad enough for that. Um-m, I wish I had left Zuleida alone in the moonlight to paddle her own canoe."

"When she did the phantom stuff, Mr. Stackpole? I tried to tell you to lay off. When they can't jolly you into dancin' with 'em on the beach they seduce you into going to sea in a hoodooed dhow with a lunatic skipper. Two women for us to check through. Pleasant!"

"Awkward," said the chief pay clerk. "Quite awkward. In my long experience—er—well, we mustn't be downhearted. Miss Fyffe-Harrison will stand by. She is a wonderful woman for a crisis. She increases our complement to four. Against how many Arabs and natives? Thirteen?"

"Thirteen is right," grunted the machinist's mate. "The jinx again, and tomorrow sounds like Friday. Never mind, it was three to one when we ruined the royal navy and the Zanzibar police force."

"Keep a sharp lookout on deck, Donnelly, while I confer with Miss Fyffe-Harrison. What's become of that confounded Kid?"

"Hiding under the wooden bucket, sir. He feels plenty small enough for that."

Mr. Stackpole was admitted to the stateroom, explaining that his business was highly confidential. Zuleida sat on a stool like a naughty girl while she polished her finger nails and powdered her pretty nose. She was still very much pleased with the afternoon's work. Scolding had made no impression on her. Her unconquerable American lover would kill Captain Selim Majid. And she had been the one to bring it about.

For the Englishwoman the prospect was not so merry and bright. Selim held the crew under his thumb, said she. They were a hard lot, ready to welcome any pretext to turn pirates. So long as the captain remained loyal, they had been afraid to turn against her. She had been able to manage him as she always managed men of inferior races, by means of an unbending will. Now these bonds were broken. Unlocking a leather case she lifted out two sporting rifles.

"Thank the Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Stackpole. "A thirty-thirty, and a heavier one."

"I bagged a bull elephant with it," said she.

"And you have an automatic pistol, Miss Fyffe-Harrison."

"Yes. I'm glad I didn't pot Donnelly with it, when he first came on board. He rather grows on one. Now, my dear man, what do you advise?"

"Well, either we hold the fort in these quarters below, or we stay on deck and try to drive them down here. We can't be mixed up with them as we are now. We shall have to decide before long."

"You can count on me to help keep the beggars under," she crisply assured him.

The details would have to fit themselves to the circumstances. Night would soon be coming on. It was uncomfortable to wonder what might happen in the dark. Selim Majid was an enemy with a tortuous mind who preferred to plan his purposes ingeniously and in ambush. This was the chief pay clerk's theory. He was not expecting an immediate clash. Nor did he consider it perilous for his party to spend another night below decks. That they would be imprisoned under hatches seemed improbable. They had Zuleida with them as a hostage. His sudden frenzy of anger cooled, Selim would no longer wish to slay her but rather to capture her and perhaps punish her as he might see fit. She was an object of great value to be kept unharmed.

If it came to the worst they might endure a siege of several days in the cabin. Two earthen jars had been filled with fresh water from the barrels in the hold, as was the daily custom. Miss Fyffe-Harrison had her own stores of rice, tinned food, biscuits and

tea. And she had laid in a special stock of tinned beef for George, the lion, until she could find provender ashore. Mr. Stackpole made an inventory in his thorough fashion. The rifles were ready for use and the ammunition broken out. It would be disastrous to try to rush the cabin. Doubtless the Arabs had a few firearms of one sort or another. What they were had to be left to conjecture.

"I don't want to be a false alarm," soliloquized Mr. Stackpole, "but this dhow will be a poor place for a pacifist from now on. I have never met a person who impressed me so unfavorably as this bloodthirsty son of a sea cook from Muscat. I'd enjoy blowing the daylights out of him."

Word was sent to the son of a sea cook that his passengers wished to reserve the cabin for their own exclusive use. It annoyed them to have him and the mate and the boatswain underfoot. They could sleep on deck or find shelter forward in bad weather. This was a blunt declaration of war and so intended.

"Force his hand," said Martin Donnelly. "Make him strut his stuff. This ought to pop the lid off. No skipper likes to be kicked out of his own quarters. Imagine tryin' to pull it on the *Toledo*. Now set the watches, Mr. Stackpole, from midnight on. We'll all feel wide awake till then, at least."

The subdued young seaman dared to make himself heard.

"If Miss Fyffe-Harrison has a deck of cards, we might kill time with a little poker game."

"You muffle your oars, Kid," rasped Donnelly. "All I want to hear from you is silence. Poker? Remember what happened to the last poker game? I was just sayin' that I wished something would happen to break it up. It did, didn't it? I'm off poker for life."

Mr. Stackpole nodded in grave acquiescence. He felt the same way about chess. To help the evening pass, Miss Fyffe-Harrison read aloud to them from a novel of adventure. It was a brisk, colorful tale but the audience found it flat. The climaxes failed to thrill. Donnelly posed as a literary critic.

"That author guy lacks the punch. He never saw and did the things he wrote about."

"Bunk!" came from the Kid in the corner. Until Donnelly threw a shoe at him he crooned that plaintive ditty:

"Oh, he never cares to wander from his own fireside.
He never cares to wander or to roam.
With his children on his knee,
He's as happy as can be,
And there's no place like home, swee-e-t home."

William was assigned to stand the first watch, from midnight until two o'clock. He was armed with the automatic pistol. The Englishwoman bade them adieu and turned in fully dressed to respond to any call. Mr. Stackpole and Donnelly stretched themselves on rugs, the two rifles within reach. It was necessary to sleep in this methodical manner and so conserve their energies. Otherwise they would soon be worn out and useless.

William Sprague walked up and down for some time, but the rocking motion of the dhow made this awkward. Also he had to turn his back to the short stairway leading down from the poop deck. This was the entrance which it was his duty to watch and guard every moment. Therefore he decided to sit where he could keep an eye on the stairs.

The cabin was lighted by two lanterns swinging from the beams overhead. They cast long shadows across the polished floor. William pulled a rug over to sit on and rested his back against the low divan. It was an excellent strategic position. He could forestall any attempt to descend from the deck. He was ready to shoot and give the alarm.

He felt supremely wide awake. A sense of responsibility rode him with spurs. For a green gob on his first cruise, he was holding down a man's job. It was splendid of Mr. Stackpole to trust him after he had made such an awful bust with Zuleida. All he asked was another fair chance to make good.

An hour passed. There were no sounds on deck to cause uneasiness. William stole to the stairs and listened. He heard Captain Selim Majid give an order to the helmsmen. The boatswain shouted something to the seamen of the watch. William returned to his post.

Presently one of the cabin lanterns went dim. He reached up and shook it. The oil had burned out. He did not know where to find a supply. The other lantern was half full. He shifted it to another iron

hook in the ceiling where it threw its light on the entrance from the deck.

This deepened the shadows in the after spaces of the cabin. The large room was partly obscured in wavering darkness as the single lantern swayed to and fro. The lonely watcher was untroubled so long as the stairway was clearly visible.

The tension relaxed. His thoughts wandered, as the thoughts of youth will ever wander, blown hither and yon by the idle winds of fancy. He was not so drowsy as lulled into a sense of repose. Occasionally he started up, nerves tingling at some slight noise, his fingers on the pistol. Then he sat back, his mind roving again.

It was difficult to realize that his life was in danger. The whole thing was more or less incredible.

The mongrel pup slept on the rug at his feet, arousing when he did to cock its ears and wrinkle its nose interrogatively or to scratch a flea with a crooked hind leg. Moses Mahomet Ali wished it to be understood that he was everlastingly on the job, for better or worse. His success in bluffing an African lion had given him a certain swagger. He was a pup with a record.

Half an hour more and it would be time to turn the watch over to Donnelly. Nothing had happened. Perhaps they were overplaying it. But Selim Majid was a bad actor. You didn't have to tell William Sprague. He could see that curved sword upraised to split his head like an apple.

The boyish seaman became remorseful. Why hadn't he steered clear of Zuleida? He had been untrue to the girl in Hackensack. This pricked his conscience so severely that he felt sorry for himself. Donnelly was right. Women did ball things up unless you watched your step.

William still kept an eye on the cabin stairway or gazed at the swinging lantern which affected him curiously. It was like being hypnotized.

The two square windows in the stern of the dhow were open. The heavy wooden shutters had been fastened back to let the cool wind gush into the cabin. The starboard window was almost invisible, for the lantern flung the black shadow of the stairway into that region of the cabin.

It was unperceived by the sentry when something filled the window space and blotted out the stars. The object was a man, naked but for the dark cloth wound round his middle. His brown skin was inconspicuous. Like an acrobat he had slid down a rope belayed to the heavy rail. For a moment he hung suspended while he peered into the cabin. Gripping the rope with one hand, he used the other to jerk a knife from his loin cloth and place it between his teeth.

He could see two men asleep on the floor, the third with his attention fixed on the stairway. Stupid young pig! Sitting there and waiting for his throat to be cut! Selim Majid would accomplish it with skill and dispatch. To leap from the window and flit across the floor, as dim and silent as one of those shifting shadows—Selim smiled. It would be no trick at all. In the confusion he might be able to stick his knife into the other swine. They would be blundering about, pawing for the rifles, while he was swiftly escaping to the deck.

All this sped through his active brain while he poised himself upon the window ledge. He had overlooked one factor. From the rug at his master's feet, Moses Mahomet Ali flew as if shot out of a gun. The wind had brought him an alien scent. He was instantly awake and cleared for action. He barked with staccato fury, prepared to intimidate lions or any other beasts that prowled by night. He hated Arabs on general principles. They had pelted him with stones and sticks in the streets of Zanzibar. His nose could not mislead him. Straight he scampered for that starboard window in the stern where he saw something move. For a pup of his dimensions he made an astonishing amount of noise.

Kid Sprague sat bolt upright. He wrenched his absent gaze from the lantern. The pistol was in his hand. Chills chased up and down his spine. The pup never made a commotion like that unless something was wrong. Scrambling to his feet, the Kid fancied he discerned the figure of a man against the velvet sky in the square frame of the window. It was already vanishing most uncannily. He raised the pistol and took a flurried snapshot. Then he ran to follow Moses Mahomet Ali.

Leaning from the window, a rope brushed his face. A moment and the rope was snatched upward. It fairly tore through William's hand. He pulled in his head and hastily closed the wooden shutters, securing them with the iron bar that hung on a swivel.

By this time Martin Donnelly was up and coming. He threw himself flat, for Miss Fyffe-Harrison had emerged from the stateroom with the elephant gun at her shoulder.

"Cease firing, for the love of Mike!" bawled the machinist's mate. He ran to make the port stern window fast. Mr. Stackpole came lumbering after them, demanding a report.

"Ask the pup, sir," answered the Kid who was breathing hard. "He sounded a general alarm and went to quarters before I got under way. I thought I saw a guy in the window. When I tried to plug him he wasn't there. Spooks are your long suit, sir. S'pose you go ask this one."

"Not to-night, William." Mr. Stackpole registered chagrin. "I overlooked those stern windows. Whew, it's hot in here, but we'll have to stand it. Hum-m, the pup will be recommended for the navy cross. He ought to get it."

"He gets a rating right now," declared William. "Sea dog, first class. What did I tell you about that pup? I had a hunch that he was a hundred per cent better'n he looked. Thank him pretty, Donnelly, old-timer. 'Slippery' Selim slings a mean knife and he meant to work fast."

"You said a bucketful, Kid. I'll take the watch. You've earned a snooze."

"The pup takes the watch," proudly retorted William. "Listen, if anybody offered me a hundred dollars for that Zanzibar bloodhound, I'd give him the nasty laugh."

CHAPTER X.

A COMPETENT MACHINIST'S MATE.

IT seemed reasonable to expect no more trouble during the night. Mr. Stackpole insisted on taking the watch from four to six. His disabled condition was no handicap to vigilant picket duty. At dawn he limped on his crutch to one of the stern windows and opened the shutters. The air in the cabin was insufferably close. He stood enjoying the breeze and the cool of the morning. It was revivifying. Leaning out, he watched the sun wheel gloriously from out of a molten sea. It fascinated him. He was never tired of the pageantry of sky and ocean.

Now, however, he frowned and appeared much perplexed. He was making a disagreeable discovery. The sun was rising in its accustomed position. No doubt about that! Granting this, the course of the dhow must have been changed in the night. She was no longer steering south to make the port of Mozambique. Instead of this, her bow had swung to slant away from the African coast. Mr. Stackpole became aware of something else. The vessel was heeling to starboard instead of rolling easily as when the wind had been more astern. The great sail had been trimmed closer aboard in accordance with this change of course.

The evidence was enough to convince a man who had spent many years at sea. Moving away from the coast? Neither to Dar-es-Salaam or Mozambique nor to any of the ports between? What dark purpose now impelled the master of the dhow?

The chief pay clerk tried to map the Indian Ocean in his mind. To the southward of them was the wide Mozambique Channel between the mainland and the enormous island of Madagascar. At a plausible guess the dhow had shifted direction to head for the northern coast of Madagascar. It could not be Selim Majid's intention to pass beyond it into the illimitable, empty expanse of the Indian Ocean that rolled away to Australia. There was food and water on board to serve no more than a fortnight longer. This Mr. Stackpole had been at pains to find out.

The nearest Madagascar coast was so lonely, so unpeopled except by untamed natives, that it was unfamiliar even to the French administration which nominally ruled it. Parts of it were as wild as when Captain William Kidd, the flamboyant Captain Avery, and other English pirates of renown had careened their ships or caroused in its harbors in days gone by.

Mr. Cassius Stackpole felt his stout heart sink. With his passengers disposed of by some bloody means or other, Selim Majid might hide his dhow in some remote inlet, refill his water barrels, obtain supplies from the natives, and sail away to lose himself in the Eastern seas. As far as Miss Beatrice Fyffe-Harrison was concerned, the dhow would be missing with all hands, gone to the bottom in the gale which had swept her away from Zanzibar.

Mr. Stackpole shivered when he remembered that he and his shipmates of U. S. S. *Toledo* had left no clews whatever in their flight from Zanzibar. They had vanished

from that romantic island in the middle of a moonlit night. There was no possible way by which they could be traced to the wandering dhow of Captain Selim Majid.

These cogitations were not of a kind to inspire a jocund morning spirit. They persuaded Mr. Stackpole that action could not be delayed. The aspect of affairs had been brought to a sharp and sudden focus. As a refuge the cabin had become untenable. It was vital to gain the mastery of the vessel and so thwart this menacing shift of helm for Madagascar.

Grim tragedy was thereby foreshadowed. The rising sun was like the handwriting on the wall. To wait below for another night meant that Selim Majid might wreak wholesale destruction.

"Perhaps he would declare a truce if we turned this Zuleida girl over to him," Mr. Stackpole said to himself. "At least he wouldn't be so dead set on murdering us. But there is positively nothing doing. We play the cards as they lie."

Miss Fyffe-Harrison was preparing breakfast on her spirit stove, with a pot of coffee as black as Selim Majid's heart. Mr. Stackpole broke the news to her nor attempted to break it gently. The Englishwoman was on a footing with the rest of them. She could fairly be rated as an able seaman of the armed force. Quite unemotionally she agreed that they were hopelessly trapped if they stayed below. She knew a good deal about Madagascar, having visited Tamatave in a French mail boat. The dhow might hide on the northern coast for weeks without seeing a white man or a gunboat from the naval base at Diego Suarez.

"Right you are," said this admirable woman. "It is now or never. But just how we can get the best of the blighters is a bit too thick for me. I shall have to pass it on to the American navy."

"Right-o!" exclaimed Martin Donnelly who had been scowling to show that he wrestled with a thought. "What's in the hold just beyond your stateroom bulkhead, ma'am?"

"No cargo. Stone ballast. On top of that a lot of grass mats, spare canvas, some wooden crates containing curios of mine, tables, trays and so on. And three of my boxes—you Yankees call them trunks."

"Thanks. And is the stuff close to the bulkhead or farther forward in the hold?"

"Quite close to the wall of my room, Donnelly. I was down there after we left Mombasa. The boatswain lashed my things so they wouldn't tumble about in rough weather. And he piled a lot of mats on top of them in case the hatch leaked."

"Yes, ma'am," said Donnelly who looked as pleased as the cat that swallowed the canary. "Stroke my back, Kid. *'Wallah, Wallah, Wallah.'* We're bound to get the break some time. Well, buddies, I guess we'll have to set fire to this lopsided old excursion boat. And I hope to God we can put it out later. But even as swell a cook as you are, Miss Fyffe-Harrison, you can't make an omelette without breakin' eggs."

"My word!" she gasped. "Will it be any pleasanter to be burned to a crisp than to be drowned or have our throats cut? This dhow is a tinder box."

"It's a rotten choice," agreed Donnelly. "If we can put the fire out, we win. If we don't, we lose. But it gives us a Chinaman's chance."

Mr. Stackpole, a brooding listener, looked up to say:

"You seldom go off at half cock, Donnelly. Suppose you give us the specifications. If we are smoked out of the cabin we have to take to the deck. And they can finish us one by one."

"Shucks, there won't be any fire in the cabin, sir. We can choose our own time to boil out of here. That bulkhead wall is solid plank. It seals the cabin quarters from the cargo hold. A hot fire can't eat through timber like that in a hurry."

"But you can't get into the hold," objected Mr. Stackpole. "The only entrance is through a hatch on deck."

The machinist mate's attitude was respectful but his face hinted that the chief pay clerk's mentality had slowed up. Patiently it was explained:

"I don't expect to get into the hold. You've been in the navy long enough, sir, to know there's more than one way to skin a cat."

"Go to it, Donnelly. The rest of us will stand by for orders. I lack your practical training."

"Aye, aye, sir, we'll now proceed to start something."

The practical man had made an impression. His self-confidence was stimulating. Miss Fyffe-Harrison called him perfectly ripping. He bucked her up most fright-

fully. To her he now turned but blushed and hesitated before he said:

"I've got to work in your stateroom, ma'am, if you please. If Miss Zuleida is still in bed you had better tell her to shake a leg—good Lord—I mean rise and shine—turn out. Get me?"

"Precisely," was the reply, with a very feminine giggle. "Zuleida will promptly rise and shine. What next?"

"Set the girl to tearin' cloth into strips—petticoats—ahem—sheets—any kind of cotton stuff. I need a lot of it. What about a heavy knife for me?"

"Hunting knives?" she asked. "I have two of them, good English steel, and several native knives that I picked up as souvenirs."

"Better than I expected, ma'am. If I have to have a hammer I can use the Kid's head."

This drew fire from William Sprague, who spoke bitterly.

"When a bunch is looking death in the eye, you big cheese, I should think they might act like gentlemen. On the level, what can I do to help?"

"Dump the kerosene from the lantern into a big brass bowl and see if you can find any more of it in the lockers."

Miss Fyffe-Harrison's chaperonage was so vigorous that the indolent Zuleida appeared from the stateroom in short order. She was drowsy and refused to be alarmed. Of course she cooed and made eyes at William, but found him coldly unresponsive. He was taking life seriously.

Donnelly knelt in the stateroom and explored the bulkhead wall. It was stout and tight, as he had surmised. Auger and saw would have made speedy work of it. He was compelled to attack the planks with a two-edged hunting knife. Selecting a thin crack where the wood had shrunk a little, he began to whittle very carefully. It was a job which could not be hurried.

The wood was old and very hard, with a brittle quality. He had to hack at it instead of peeling off clean slivers. He judged the planking to be at least two inches thick. The knife soon lost its keen edge. He threw it aside for another one. Strong as his wrists were they began to ache. The sweat soaked his shirt. After a while he let young Sprague relieve him while he whetted the dulled knives on a rifle barrel.

The Kid lacked the strength and skill of the brawny machinist's mate who handled tools with a kind of artistry. Presently Donnelly shoved him away with one of his harmless oaths. He had found a bit of iron which he muffled with strips of cloth to use as a hammer. With the stateroom door closed, the tap-tap was unlikely to cause suspicion on deck. He drove the point of the knife through the widening crack and pounded the back of it to slice splinters from the tough wood.

Putting an eye to the crack he could see into the hold where the daylight sifted from the open hatch. But he was unable to discern just how and where the grass mats, crates, et cetera, were stowed. Unless they were actually piled against the bulkhead, directly underneath where he was working, the forlorn hope might be in vain. It was a blind gamble with destiny.

A knife blade snapped. The native knives were poor stuff. One of them bent like soft iron as he put too much muscle in a downward stroke. He refused to admit the possibility of defeat. In dogged silence he whittled while the others waited. They, too, found little to say.

Their attention was diverted by a terrifying commotion on deck. It was the guttural, rasping roar of a half-grown lion goaded to anger. The sounds diminished to a snarl and swelled again. Miss Fyffe-Harrison dropped the white garment which she was tearing into strips and exclaimed in great distress:

"Poor George has had nothing to eat today. But hunger would never make him raise that kind of row. Selim Majid is tormenting him, I'm sure. I caught him at it once and threatened to shoot him. The rotter!"

"Prodding George with a sharp stick or the point of a sword," suggested Mr. Stackpole who had not made the acquaintance of this interesting animal. "To harrow your feelings, as well as the lion's!"

"I'll make him pay for it," she snapped, "if I can shoot as straight as usual."

The fair Zuleida remained pensive and downcast. To no effect had she murmured, *"But—oh, you Kid."* Her adored one was preoccupied. He was eying that narrow hole in the bulkhead wall as a cat watches a mouse. The hour was near noon when Donnelly straightened his back for the last time and held up his blistered hands. He

could do no more with the dulled, nicked knives. The opening he had cut was perhaps a foot long and four inches wide.

"I hoped to make it big enough to poke my head through," said he, "so I could take a look-see. But it can't be done. Lady Luck is our only friend from now on."

"Here is one young gob that's perfectly willing to say his prayers and not ashamed of it," confessed William Sprague.

With a maternal impulse the Englishwoman's hand caressed the lad's smooth, tanned cheek. She, too, was unashamed to offer such a petition. Donnelly let her bind his smarting palms with tape. Then he told them to roll the strips of cloth into balls no larger than could be squeezed through the hole in the bulkhead wall. The Kid had discovered a can of kerosene in a locker, also a jug of cooking oil. These were precious assets.

Donnelly dumped the two ingredients into an earthen bowl and stirred the mixture. In these he soaked the balls of cotton cloth until they were saturated. They absorbed it like so much wicking. They were sure to burn for some time. He was rather proud of his handiwork. A man who seldom betrayed his feelings, his fingers trembled a little as he placed the dripping cloth balls, one by one, in a bucket to carry them into the stateroom.

He asked Miss Fyffe-Harrison for the cleaning rod of a rifle. With this as a skewer he held one of the fire balls ready to light. The Kid scratched a match. The ball ignited with a gush of red flame and black smoke. Donnelly pushed it through the bulkhead and withdrew the cleaning rod.

"One down," said he. "Here we go again."

A second burning ball of cotton rags was shoved through the narrow, aperture, and then another. Donnelly counted those left in the bucket. Half a dozen more. All of them might fall upon the stone ballast and fail to set fire to the combustible stuff in the hold. Perhaps he, too, said a wordless prayer. The last fire ball flared at the end of the cleaning rod and was crowded through to drop unseen. The stateroom was foul with smoke. Donnelly retreated to the cabin where Mr. Stackpole had been keeping watch against surprise from the deck.

"Any results?" he anxiously inquired. "I suppose we had better get organized to make our sortie."

"You're tootin' we had, sir," exclaimed William as he cast an unhappy glance at Zuleida. She would probably be wished on him to take care of and keep out of harm's way. A doll like that would be perfectly useless in a scrap. One of those pampered Oriental parasites, bitterly thought William, who lived to be petted and muss things up.

This the beautiful parasite proceeded to disprove, with an energy that was sensational. There was nothing languorous in the swiftness with which she bounded from the divan and snatched up a wicked African knife. The red lips were drawn back from her dazzling teeth. She ran a thumb along the blade. It had too many nicks. She caught up another one. Her black eyes were hard and bright. She ran to Mr. Stackpole. He was the chief of this fighting band. She was ready to obey his commands.

"Whew, but I was a poor guesser," muttered William.

Miss Fyffe-Harrison took the lighter rifle, giving Donnelly the other. This left the pistol for Seaman Sprague. Mr. Stackpole, compelled to use his crutch, was cast for the part of commander. They were pitifully few, but all their souls were valiant.

Donnelly wrapped a wet towel around his head and opened the stateroom door. Smoke eddied out in choking volume. It was pouring through the hole in the wall. He pressed the towel to his mouth and nose and stumbled into the little room. He stood listening. Small crackling noises came to his ears. The planks felt hot to the touch. He smelled burning wood and the peculiar tang of dried grass alight. The random fire balls had found their target.

Out into the cabin he bolted, slamming the door behind him. Coughing, half strangled, he managed to say:

"We're off. Advance—close formation. The smoke must be pourin' up through the hatch and the deck seams. Hark! Hear that? The crew has been mustered to fight it."

They stood silent and tense. They heard shouts, the patter of bare feet, the strident voice of Captain Selim Majid as he ran from the poop toward the smoking hatch. There were no farewells, no dramatic moments in the cabin. The American navy was going into action. The Englishwoman

had joined it. William Sprague begged for one minute while he tied little Moses Mahomet Ali close to an open stern window. For once the pup would be absent from the firing line.

"Come along, son," said Mr. Stackpole. "Let's go."

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN SELIM MAJID TRIPS.

MARTIN DONNELLY'S reckless stratagem had cleared the poop, or quarter-deck, of all hands but the two black men at the tiller. These had a high regard for their own skins. When the armed passengers suddenly confronted them, they rolled their eyes and scampered madly to join the rest of the crew, expecting to be shot as they fled. Minding the vessel had ceased to interest them.

This made the confusion worse. The dhow was an awkward craft to steer and carried a weather helm, as sailors say. The tiller deserted, she fell off from the wind instead of rounding into it and riding hove to as a well-behaved vessel should do. The unwieldy lateen sail thrashed for a moment and then gybed over with terrific force. It seemed as if the short mast would pull out by the roots. The sheet blocks banged the deck before the ropes tautened with a twang. The long yard which supported the sail could not withstand this violent strain. It cracked and collapsed. The canvas dropped in bulging folds slatting to and fro. The dhow was like a great sea bird with a broken wing, rocking in the trough of the sea.

Nobody paid much heed to this disaster or thought of its consequences. From the raised deck aft, the Americans saw Captain Selim Majid at the smoking hatch. Flourishing a long-barreled pistol, he tried to drive his men into the murky hold. Two or three were dragging a length of canvas hose wrapped with tarred cord. Others were already bending at the handles of a clumsy wooden pump. The rest hung back, refusing to risk suffocation below. Selim put a bullet into one of them by way of encouraging the others. Then he glared aft to find out why his helmsmen had let the vessel run wild.

He perceived that he was caught between two fires. His passengers had outwitted him. He would have to dispose of them before trying to save the dhow from burning to the water's edge. He yelled to his men. They were already panicky. This new alarm bewildered them. The burly Arab mate ran for the chest in which the guns were kept locked. Miss Fyffe-Harrison sensed his intention and stopped him with a shot from her rifle. He rolled over and over and sat up to stanch a hole in his thigh.

Selim Majid, a wolf at bay, knelt to steady his elbow upon his knee while he fired the heavy pistol. The bullet whisked Mr. Cassius Stackpole's white cap from his head and grazed his bald scalp. He was both pained and surprised to find an Arab shooting with such deliberate accuracy as this. Tearing a sleeve from his shirt, he bound it around his head.

It was to be no helter-skelter mêlée at close range. An anticlimax, in a way, after the suspense and foreboding of those cruel hours in the cabin! The refugees were able to crouch and find some shelter while they awaited the turn of events. Rash haste might forfeit the advantage they had so adroitly gained. The drama would soon unfold itself.

Selim Majid was not mad enough to throw his life away. He took cover behind a water barrel lashed on deck. Rifle bullets whined past him as he threw himself flat.

"I hope we plug him," said Martin Donnelly as he reloaded, "but it don't seem right to shoot those sailors. We've got 'em on the run."

This was evident. It was a crew which could see no sense in charging rifles with knives or empty hands. They forgot the conflagration in the hold. Most of them were running toward the bows of the vessel where there was a sort of forecastle into which they could tumble. They found it full of smoke. A few popped on deck again, but the report of a rifle from the poop drove them down. For the present they could be disregarded.

The boatswain of the dhow was a hardy rascal of Selim Majid's stripe. Instead of retreating to the forecastle, he hid behind the mast, ready to snatch at opportunity. Two men and a woman to be conquered! The big one with a crutch was negligible. There were weapons enough if the crafty Selim Majid could scheme to lay hands on them. Pistols had been sufficient to hold the prisoners in the cabin.

The dhow was on fire. It could not be smothered without the crew to help. This done, the vessel was still disabled with a broken yard. The few infidels could not sail her anywhere alone. The boatswain had a pistol inside his dingy shirt. He would waste no powder in random fusillades. Some kind of truce would have to be arranged. Then he could square accounts.

It was a temporary deadlock, as Mr. Stackpole comprehended.

"We hold the deck," said he, "but what are we going to do with it?"

"Move lively or get burned up with the ship," growled Donnelly. "That bonfire of mine is going too good. Looks as if it had more fuel than grass mats and bric-a-brac. I shouldn't wonder if the timbers had caught. The smoke is certainly rolling out of that hatch. I didn't figure on our wastin' so much time."

"I shall have to call for volunteers, then," reluctantly exclaimed the chief pay clerk. "I refuse to order you men to tackle a mess like that."

"You don't have to tell us, sir. I doped it out myself. There's only two ugly customers, Selim and the bos'n. Put the kibosh on them and the sailors can be set to work under guard. Come on, Kid. Miss Zuleida don't need you."

"Let's ramble," promptly answered William. "But listen, Martin, if I get bumped off, you be sure to take my string of ivory beads to the girl in Hackensack."

"And I'll give you an excellent report besides, Kid. You take the automatic and go get that buzzard of a bos'n, understand. Bring home the bacon. I'm due to have words with One-eyed Reilly myself."

Before they moved forward there came an intervention. Overlooked and forgotten was the half-grown African lion in the wooden cage covered with matting amidships. The smoke had drifted to annoy and frighten him. When it billowed in blacker clouds from the open hatch, the instinctive dread of fire aroused him to frenzy. The cage was in a stifling fog of smoke. The lion threw himself against the rusty bars, biting and clawing them. For the first time in his life his full strength was unleashed.

The iron bars buckled but could not be forced from their sockets in the stout timbers. Rebounding from them, George hurled his weight against one end of the cage. It had a wooden door, hinged, with a bolt to secure it on the outside. The door had seemed amply strong for its purpose. Now, however, it yielded. The fastenings were ripped out. The lion crashed against the door again. It toppled to the deck.

Out leaped the tortured George, intent only on fleeing from the smoke. Sneezing, coughing, he stared stupidly at the sea, his tail lashing his flanks. He was bedazed, harmless. Miss Fyffe-Harrison could have coaxed him to follow her like a dog. She was unseen, however, in another part of the vessel.

Suddenly George stiffened and was like a figure of bronze, but the tufted tail flicked his lean sides with a nervous, rhythmic motion. His head was lowered. He was the great jungle cat preparing to stalk its prey. Captain Selim Majid had jumped to his feet from behind the water barrel. He felt aware of this new peril which his own cruelty had created. The lion saw him and nothing else. The yellow eyes were implacably hostile.

For a moment the Arab stood as still as the lion that hunted him. The observers on the raised poop deck let their rifles rest in idle hands. It was not for them to interrupt this duel.

"My money goes on George," whispered Donnelly. "It's his turn."

"But he is so gentle," mourned the Englishwoman. "Selim Majid is afraid of nothing, and he has a pistol."

"Never mind that, ma'am. One-eyed Reilly loses. I have a hunch."

The lion advanced a stealthy step or two. His muscles rippled beneath the smooth tawny hide. The Arab moved backward, as if he could not help it. His own volition had ceased to be the master. He leveled the long pistol and fired. The bullet missed its mark. He pulled the trigger again. The hammer clicked on a defective shell. The lion crept nearer. He was not yet close enough to spring. In despair Selim flung the useless pistol at the beast which intended to slay him.

Step by step the Arab retreated, nor dared to look behind him. As though playing with him, George continued this silent, creeping march, nearer, nearer, now sagging until his belly almost touched the deck. The wicked claws were unsheathed. The white

fangs gleamed between the slavering jaws. The lion was ready to make its kill.

They had moved in a haze of smoke, but George was not to be routed by it. He was a lion of one fixed purpose and nothing could distract him. At the very instant when his body tautened for the leap, Captain Selim Majid, clutching at his knife, was seen to totter, sway, and throw up his arms in a wild gesture. His heel had struck the coaming of the open hatch through which the smoke rolled up.

He swayed again, lost his balance, and plunged downward, unable to save himself. A dozen feet down, and falling head foremost to land upon the stone ballast in the bottom of the hold!

The baffled lion was unable to account for this disappearance. With a growl like thunder he walked to the hatch, shook his head, rubbed a paw across his smarting eyes, and turned to gallop away from the smoke. Glaring this way and that, he espied the boatswain who had nimbly climbed to the head of the stumpy mast. Another foe! George crouched again and went slinking toward the mast. Roaring his wrath at being unable to climb this smooth, round tree, he reared on his hind legs and tore splinters with his powerful claws.

The frightened boatswain had been willing to let the lion eat Captain Selim Majid. At least, he had declined to waste precious pistol cartridges in trying to save him. Now he was vitally concerned about himself. Clinging to the mast with one hand, he fired at the lion directly beneath him. It was an excellent shot. A bullet in his broad chest, George fell on deck and lay there. Presently, however, he regained his feet and stood poised as though unhurt. He gazed about him. Slowly he walked aft, no longer with the quivering intensity of the jungle cat stalking its prey.

His gate was uncertain but he managed to walk in this slow, halting manner until he had almost reached the ladder that led up to the poop deck. The Englishwoman ran to meet him. She broke away from Mr. Stackpole's grasp. He hobbled after her, brandishing the crutch as a weapon. He numbered no lions among his personal friends and was very much disturbed by this one. When he looked down from the edge of the raised deck, Miss Fyffe-Harrison was holding George's shaggy head in her lap. Affectionately she stroked the black muzzle and the heavy neck. The rough tongue licked her hand. Very soon after this, George was dead. His mistress wiped her eyes as she brokenly exclaimed:

"He was the d-dearest lion in the w-world."

"Finished in the line of duty," was Mr. Stackpole's eulogy. "Much better than if he had died in a cage."

Martin Donnelly joined them. He, too, was sorrowful. William Sprague was reminded of the pup which he had left tied at a window in the cabin, expecting to plunge into scenes of carnage. As things had turned out, there was no reason why Moses Mahomet Ali should not be rescued and brought on deck. He was alive but groggy with smoke when William plunged into the cabin after him. Fresh air soon revived him and he was left in charge of Zuleida. Alas, there was no lion for him to terrify.

Donnelly proceeded to muster the party. This was no time for mourning. The cloud had a silver lining.

"Not a yelp or anything out of One-eyed Reilly since he tipped himself down the hatch," said he. "Smoke couldn't have smothered him that quick. Stunned or broke his neck when he lit. Either way he has been painlessly removed from our midst. It sounds rough to say it, but hell surely did yawn for that snoozer. Now we have a burning vessel on our hands. Go get that bos'n, Kid. It's easy. The lion treed him pretty. Make him come down. Then tie him up and fetch him aft. He is one mean hombre. We don't want to let him mix with the crew."

"Can't you drag out some of the sailors and set them at work?" anxiously asked Mr. Stackpole.

"Sure thing. If we don't get the fire under control somehow, we're out of luck."

This was putting it very conservatively. Donnelly hurried to the forecastle where the cowed sailors were huddled on deck, unable to remain below. They expected to be shot but he surged among them, using the butt of a rifle to enforce respect for law and order. Miss Fyffe-Harrison stood guard as Donnelly hauled them out and searched every one for concealed weapons.

They manned the pump and the rotten hose line. Deprived of Captain Selim Majid, they were more like sheep than com-

batants. The ruling impulse was to try to save their own lives. The chance to retake the ship might come later.

The feeble pressure from the pump was enough to split the worthless hose. They bound it with strips of canvas but the leaks spurted in small cascades. The stream that trickled into the hold merely turned into clouds of steam. A line of men was formed to pass buckets and water jars but such labor was futile. The fire had gained too much headway. Donnelly had hoped for a quick rush on deck and a chance to stamp out the blaze before it began to consume the structure of the vessel itself. This had been the throw of the dice.

"Fifty feet of good hose," he lamented, "and those sailors to pump their hearts out, and we could douse it even now. But we're licked."

"I dislike to gloom it up," said Mr. Stackpole, "but we could never sail this dhow to Mozambique with a broken yard and a crew of treacherous natives. That is to say, we couldn't do it in time to catch the *Toledo*."

"Better be live deserters than dead heroes, sir. As the last card in the box, we can scuttle this tub. Chop a hole through her bottom, up in the bows and let the ocean in. She won't sink. That is, maybe she won't. She rides light, with no great amount of ballast in her, and there is an awful amount of solid timber in the hull of a junk like this. If she stays awash we can roost on the cabin roof and rig an awning. And there's the small boat to take to if she drops out from under us. Being adrift in the Indian Ocean is no tea party for the ladies. But it looks better to me than a barbecue in this blazin' dhow."

"What about the crew?" asked Mr. Stackpole.

"Tell 'em to go build a raft. If the vessel don't drown herself, they can stay forward. We can hold 'em there."

"Scuttle her, then," cried the chief pay clerk. "There seems to be mighty little room for argument."

Donnelly found an ax and disappeared in the forecastle. The Kid herded the sailors on deck. They respected a magazine rifle. Donnelly had not confessed the fear that he might be unable to hew through the stout planking in a brief space of time. But he was fortunate enough to start a butt that was spongy with decay. One blow after another drove it free of the wooden pegs which fastened it to a frame. The smoke blinded him but he could not be driven out until he heard the sea water gurgle in and felt it splash on his feet.

Then he staggered on deck and wheezed for breath. Recovering, he told the Kid to make a dead line and keep the crew forward of it. The dhow settled by the head as the water rose in her burning hold. The sun-blistered small boat was launched with the aid of block and fall. Such food was collected as they could lay hands on. The heat and smoke in the cabin had so increased that they could not get at Miss Fyffe-Harrison's private stores. They had to supply themselves with flour, dried fish, dates, and preserves. A keg was filled from the water barrel on deck.

These castaways had endured many things together but the prospect had never seemed so forlorn as now.

"About time to sight a sail," murmured Mr. Stackpole, his mind stored with tales of shipwreck.

"We need it," said Martin Donnelly, "but the jinx won't let us."

"Guess again," shouted the sharp-eyed Kid who displayed symptoms of acute delirium. He was pointing at the eastern horizon against which the sun shone on a tiny patch of canvas. It was too close to the ocean rim to be a wisp of cloud. A pillar of smoke and pearly vapor still curled upward from the hatch. The rising water in the hold was making charred embers where the flames had been. Unless mistaken for the smoke of a steamer's funnel, the dhow displayed an eloquent signal of distress to be read afar off.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DARKEST HOUR.

THE fleck of sail was growing larger. After a period of watching it in tormenting uncertainty, it seemed certain that the stranger was steering to pass within sight and hail of the distressful dhow. An act of Providence, that this salvation should be vouchsafed on a sea so wide and trackless where vessels seldom spoke to each other! Sailing fast was this unknown craft that came bowling out of the eastward, lifting steadily higher against the bright sky.

An hour passed. The waterlogged dhow

had settled until her main deck was almost level with the heaving surface. Would she stay afloat or plunge under in a little while? Smoke curled lazily from charred beams not yet submerged. Donnelly cast anxious eyes at the ship's boat which was hauled alongside ready to jump into. Forward the frightened sailors were lashing broken spars and bits of board together as a makeshift raft.

Suddenly they appeared to be in better spirits. They cried out in a clamor of excitement, laughing, slapping their thighs. Miss Fyffe-Harrison ran to overhear what they were saying among themselves. It was bad news for her comrades.

"The vessel yonder is another dhow—from the Persian Gulf, they tell me," she announced. "They know the cut and rig of her sail. Heaven knows what it's doing in these waters. Blown away, perhaps. They are apt to be a precious bad lot. My word! We are in for it now!"

"We are that, when these natives of ours get a chance to spin their yarn," agreed Mr. Stackpole. "Selim Majid lost the number of his mess. You put a bullet in the mate. And we set fire to the vessel and then scuttled it. We'll be very popular with his new friends."

"Very dead, my dear man," was the woman's crisp retort. "The beggars will deal out Arab justice. I think I'd rather shoot myself before falling into anything like that. Poor Zuleida will be so much booty."

Soon their own vision convinced them that the approaching vessel was larger than their own and, in all likelihood, carried more men. They were not much better than pirates, and there would be the provocation to violent deeds in reprisal. It seemed odd, but perhaps it wasn't, that the chief pay clerk and the valiant Englishwoman should clasp hands and so stand in silence while they watched the buoyant dhow sweep nearer. Donnelly roused himself from a sort of stupor to say:

"Our rifles ought to hold 'em off for a while. But they can get us easy enough after dark."

And now the miraculous occurred. The oncoming dhow was perhaps half a mile distant, not too far for her to distinguish white men in uniform on the quarter-deck. Then, inexplicably, the sinister sea hawk changed course. Gracefully she swept wide of the sinking, smoking dhow and resumed her voyage to some unknown port.

Mr. Stackpole felt so overcome that he limped to the tiller and leaned against it. The woman dabbled her eyes with a handkerchief. Donnelly's logical mind was trained to link cause and effect. Those salt-water coyotes had been frightened away by something. Certainly it was not the foundering dhow. He wheeled about to scan the whole circle of the horizon. Glory be, how dumb they had been! But why expect them to be looking for such a sight—it was as fantastic as the phantom ladies of Zanzibar.

Their own ship, the *Toledo,* had already passed to the southward on the road to Mozambique. But there she was, four tall stacks, radio masts climbing as high as the spars of an old-time clipper. There was no ship like her in all the Indian Ocean. Banners of smoke trailed in her wake.

"Firing on more than two boilers," said the machinist's mate. "No cruising speed about that. She is turnin' up knots. But if she left Zanzibar on time—and of course she did—with a skipper that's daffy on making his schedule—am I drunk or crazy? Ahoy, Kid, what about it?"

"Don't ask me," the Kid shouted back from his station forward. "Things like this don't really happen."

"Yes, they do, son," boomed Mr. Stackpole. "But in all my long experience, I never——"

"And never will again," chuckled Donnelly, "if you live to be twice your age. My good old elephant was there with the luck from his elegant trunk to his ivory toenails. Sufferin' mackerel, who ever thought a scout cruiser could look so beautiful?"

Beautiful she was indeed, slim, high-prowed, the power of a hundred thousand horses in her engine rooms as she tore through the restless seas.

They saw her veer from her path to take a look at the helpless dhow with the smoke drifting from her deck. Mr. Stackpole and the Englishwoman had turned aside for some confidential business of their own. It had something to do with meeting in New York later in the year. Miss Fyffe-Harrison was a veteran traveler. This much Martin Donnelly overheard. He walked away. He was too much the gentleman to linger. He guessed that middle-aged ro-

mance had blossomed amidst all these perils and escapes. Why not? It was never too late, he said to himself. He was willing to bet even money that the dignified, capable chief pay clerk resigned from the service within the next six months.

A signalman jumped to the end of the *Toledo's* bridge and waved his flags in the language of the sea. The Kid spelled the letters aloud. He had learned the trick at the naval training station.

"W-H-O A-R-E Y-O-U?"

"No wonder they had to ask?" grinned Donnelly. "We look awful, for navy men. Give 'em the office, Kid. Report us as returnin' from a liberty party."

The Kid nodded and made his message brief and snappy. He was not expert at signals.

"G-O-B-S I-N T-R-O-U-B-L-E. H-E-L-P!"

The *Toledo's* bridge buzzed with excitement. The flags waved violently.

"W-I-L-L S-E-N-D B-O-A-T."

"Not a word of welcome," grumbled the Kid. "You might think they'd be glad to see us."

"They will, unofficially," said Mr. Stackpole. "We are on the punishment list."

Zuleida, the pearl of the harem, smiled again. She would be restored to her kinsfolk in Dar-es-Salaam and might hope for better luck with her next husband. The marvelous Yankee warship would snatch her peerless young sailor away. He was a finished episode. It was to Mr. Cassius Stackpole therefore that she turned, as to a benevolent parent. She wished to show her gratitude and affection. He it was who had saved her from the odious Azzan-bin-Hassin of Zanzibar.

Around her waist, hidden beneath the graceful draperies, was a string of amber beads which she unclasped and held up to view. Beads of clouded amber, so many of them, so perfectly matched, that the chief pay clerk had never beheld the like. An inheritance, the girl explained—nobody knew how long it had taken to collect such a string of beads. One bead here, another there, from Arabia, Persia, the Sudan, from as far away as Stamboul and the Black Sea—beads from desert caravans and tents, from bazars, from traders in ships. It was a poor gift to Zuleida's preserver and friend, but her heart would be broken if he refused to accept it.

Mr. Stackpole was deeply moved. He felt compelled to take the beads. After this episode they all stood transfixed while a whaleboat was dropped from the *Toledo's* davits and a crew slid down to man the oars. In the stern sheets was a dapper young lieutenant. The boat danced away from the cruiser. When it neared the dhow, Zuleida blushed and sparkled. The lieutenant was a delicious young man with gold lace and a little mustache.

Expeditiously they were transferred to the man-of-war. There was no luggage to hamper the operation. When they left the dhow the sea was lap-lapping across it. Hundreds of men crowded along the *Toledo's* rail. They raised a tremendous cheer. Then came loud gusts of laughter. Never had three members of the ship's company returned from liberty as bedraggled as this. It tickled the immaculate navy's sense of humor.

A gangway had been hastily rigged for the ladies. Seaman William Sprague, a smoked pup under his arm, escorted Zuleida to the steel deck amid loud greetings of *"Oh, you Kid!"* The executive officer was at the gangway to meet Miss Fyffe-Harrison. Restraining his rampant curiosity he said:

"My cabin and bath are at your service. The young lady will find the divan very comfortable. Dinner will be sent from the wardroom at your convenience. The captain presents his compliments and hopes to see you this evening. You have had an unpleasant voyage, I take it."

"Well, rather," she replied, "but it was frightfully sporting. Thank you so much. I had three trumps with me. They were excellent value."

Martin Donnelly shoved a hilarious crowd of shipmates to right and left as he started for the chief petty officers' quarters. He was placidly contented to rejoin the navy. Adventures were all right, but a man could overplay his hand. A good night's sleep and he would be ready to stand a watch with the black gang.

From the bridge it was observed that the strange dhow which had sailed away from the wreck was now hanging in the wind to see what might happen. This indicated that Captain Selim Majid's hapless crew would be taken off as soon as the *Toledo* should resume her voyage.

During the evening Mr. Stackpole was

summoned to the captain's room. He had to tear himself away from the other warrant officers who were listening to him as to a modern Ulysses. Clad in a fresh white uniform, shaved and fed, he was the impressive chief pay clerk and man of the world. A pharmacist's mate had adorned his head with the neatest of bandages. He leaned on his crutch. He was a picture to awaken sympathy in the sternest breast.

Into the captain's spacious room he stumped, after the orderly at the door had announced him. The slender, erect gentleman with the four gold stripes who ruled the *Toledo* as a fair-minded autocrat was in conversation with the executive officer. They sat at the dinner table over coffee and cigars. Mr. Stackpole waited in the background. Outwardly calm and stately, his heart was in his boots. The captain was a stickler for the regulations and. no friend of excuses however plausible. He happened to be saying to the executive:

"The stuff is so cleverly imitated that I have been afraid to buy it. I should have bought a string in Zanzibar. The only thing my wife asked me to bring her home from this cruise! But I'm completely lost when it comes to amber beads."

Mr. Stackpole smiled like a culprit who caught a glimpse of reprieve. Softly backing from the room he returned out of breath. Zuleida's gift was wrapped in a towel. The captain looked up to say, in cordial tones:

"God bless me, Stackpole, what happened to you? Glad to see you aboard."

"I was unavoidably detained, sir. And this applies to Donnelly and Sprague. But before I lose my mind, will you please tell me what happened to you? The ship had no business being where she was to-day."

"I stayed two days over my time at Zanzibar," answered the captain, with some irritation. "I was looking for you and your two accomplices. And I have had to hit it up to twenty-five knots to try to cut down the delay. Disregarded the instructions of the department—knocked my schedule into a cocked hat—and never found hide or hair of you on the whole island of Zanzibar."

"You held the ship to look for us?" gasped the chief pay clerk. "Such an idea never entered my head. I never knew it to be done. I supposed we were left on the beach."

"But I thought you had been murdered," exclaimed the captain. "What the devil else could I think? A man like you would never disappear unless something serious had happened to him. And Donnelly is as steady as a church. I had to make an investigation and ask the aid of the British resident."

"I get you, sir. We were an international outrage."

"Outrageous you were, Stackpole, for a man so respectable that I have actually bragged about you. I went to see the commanding officer of H. M. S. *Spitfire*. The heavyweight champion of the Grand Fleet was carried aboard on a stretcher As for the police force of Zanzibar, you absolutely disrupted it. Suppose you sit down and tell me what you have to say for yourself."

The chief pay clerk unrolled the towel and revealed the wondrous string of clouded amber beads. He let them glide through his fingers before displaying them on the table. The captain's eyes were gloating. His own fingers itched. Never had he dreamed of such a prize as this to carry home to his wife.

"I picked up a little souvenir, sir," ventured Mr. Stackpole. "It didn't cost me a cent. The only woman I am interested in has all kinds of amber beads. I have no use for this string. I heard you mention—er—that you were looking for something of the kind——"

Not bribery, but a token of esteem. The captain's rigid sense of rectitude was bent but not broken. Strongly he protested:

"But I can't take them, really. They are very valuable."

"You saved us from a sinking dhow, sir. If a Board of Trade gave you a gold watch for a rescue at sea, that would be all right, wouldn't it?"

The captain permitted the amber beads to remain on the table. He was not ready to shove them aside. He might be able to persuade Mr. Stackpole to accept some payment for them. The incident had tempered the wind to the shorn lamb. It could not help doing so. The captain was in a more receptive mood. This was all the chief pay clerk asked, that his story be heard with human tolerance, as man to man.

"Have a cigar, Stackpole. Steward, some more coffee. After all, there may be extenuating circumstances. I can't let you off scot-free. The regulations forbid. But I shall believe every word you tell me."

In the course of the following evening, when the *Toledo* was close to the harbor of Mozambique, William Sprague, seaman second class, sprawled on a blanket in a corner of the main deck. Forward he could see a group of young officers seated in chairs brought up from the wardroom. In their midst was the fickle Zuleida. They were serenading her with banjos, guitars, and the frivolous ukulele. The language of music was sufficient for the occasion. To have a charming girl on board as a passenger was a unique experience. They were making the most of it.

William Sprague rubbed the pudgy stomach of little Moses Mahomet Ali. The pup wore a canvas collar stitched by the sailmaker's mate. Suspended from it was a medal hammered from a silver rupee in the machine shop. Along the deck came the executive officer. The pup rushed out to bark at him. William hauled him back by a crooked hind leg, and exclaimed:

"Game as a pebble. I'll tell the world! Scaring lions and everything was some stunt. But a dog that dares to cuss out a hard-boiled guy like our executive is worth at least a million dollars. 'Join the Navy and See the World.' How about that, Moses Mahomet Ali?"

Mr. Paine starts a series of short stories about the further adventures of William Sprague and Martin Donnelly in the next issue.

TAKEN UNAWARES

EVERY session of Congress furnishes its instance of a lawmaker claiming to have been misquoted by a newspaper correspondent and rising on the floor of the House of Representatives to square himself with his "folks back home," not to mention denouncing the reporter. The thing happened in the last session, with a Southern representative and a Southern correspondent as the chief actors.

But it was after the denunciation from the floor that the real fireworks began. The two men met in a capitol corridor, and each promised the other a sound drubbing. As the sebaceous congressman weighed over two hundred pounds and the attenuated writer half of that, nobody expected the fight to materialize. The next day, however, the doughty and inflamed literary gentleman met the legislator outside the capitol and promptly and picturesquely beat him up. Explaining the ignominy of his defeat by an undersized man, the congressman dug up the alibi that he had been unfairly attacked because the reporter had hit him when he was not expecting it.

"That," said Giles Blake, another newspaper man, in discussing the affair, "reminds me of an epitaph I once saw in an Arizona cemetery. It read: 'Here lies the body of our respected fellow townsman, "Sure-shot" Jenkins, who was foully done to death while lying in wait to shoot an enemy.'"

THE ARISTOCRATIC TOUCH

WHEN Ralph Cameron first blew into the territory of Arizona, which was to become a State and send him to Washington as a senator, he was the typical tenderfoot. Every time the floor cracked he searched himself for a wound. A breeze on his neck suggested the idea to him that somebody was beginning the thin, cool knife thrust that would sever his throat. He was alert and watchful, not to say jumpy.

One morning soon after his arrival he went into a restaurant and called for breakfast, which he got with his coffee cup minus a saucer.

"What about a saucer?" he respectfully inquired of the iron-thewed, barrel-chested, Amazonian female who had served the food.

"See here!" she thundered. "Where you come from anyhow? We don't hand out no saucers here no more. When we did do it, some lowbrow would drift in and begin to guzzle his coffee out of the saucer, an' that ain't no good for trade. This here is a swell dump. Live up to it!"

The Faith Cure

By Frederick Niven

Author of "A Little Hitch on the Way," "The Electric Storm," Etc.

The difference between the Red Man and his White Brother is just a matter of veneer. Underneath our crust of civilization lie the human fundamentals which are the same for savage and sophisticate.

IF you want specially to find the date of it all—when it began—the thing would be to discover what year it was that the little mountain town of Nelson, lost away among the Kootenays, installed its street railway, one car droning uphill while one buzzed down. That was how Jim Yateman, storekeeper in the Kootenay Valley, dated it.

The Nelson town council had written to the agent at the Kootenay Reserve asking if some Indians might come along to give color to their fair that year, and bring their race ponies with them. It was a great occasion for boosting. "The only town in B. C. interior with a street-car system," and so forth. Jim Yateman did not go. He had seen fandangos, whoop-ups, stampedes, potlatches, frontier days, summer fairs and fall fairs in many parts of the West; so he stayed with the store and the aromatic odor of the sagebrush that wafted in at his door with every little breeze over the bench lands. He let Nelson have its whoop-ups, and celebrate its street cars, without adding his whoops; remained in his sequestered valley with the laugh of the loons and the still-blue days and the sudden sand storms, and smoked his pipe, sold flour and bacon to placer miners from Dutch Creek, and chewing tobacco, cigarette tobacco, and wheat papers to the last of the cowboys in his vicinity.

But he heard reports of the Nelson Fair and the two street cars. For up the road to the North Reservation there came the returned Indians, all very greatly elated over their outing. They had made quite a few dollars gambling on the races, backing their favorite; they had partaken of ice-cream cones; one of the papooses had somehow managed to bring home, unexploded, a blue balloon. Youth and the elderly had enjoyed themselves.

One of the homing party, a lean, gnarled old Indian in a battered slouch hat, with a band round it of blue-and-yellow beads, came into the store to buy a bottle of ginger ale. He carried a dilapidated suit case in which were his buckskin clothes, his feathers, his whole Indian make-up. He might not have passed for a medicine man in the slouch hat and store clothes to a cursory glance; but medicine man he was. It was really a remarkable old face under the shadow of that hat brim, if one bothered

to look at it. Jim Yateman often bothered to look at it—to look at the faces of all his red clients. He knew of the two lives of the Indians, the surface life of somewhat squalid loafing in the reserve, occasional work on the roads for the younger men, occasional work as guides to hunting parties for the elders; and the other life, the life of pagans with pagan beliefs, faiths, ceremonies, when the "black robe's" back was turned.

Konapee was the medicine man's name, to which, in concession to the whites, he had prefixed Pete.

"You have a good time in Nelson, Pete, eh?" inquired Jim Yateman.

"You bet your life," said the medicine man; and he told of a few things he had seen and done. He had seen some very fine bear pelts in the window of a furrier; he had seen a pole in a glass case on a sidewalk before a barber's shop, a pole colored in sloping stripes, always turning, but how it disappeared at the top had puzzled him a long time. He had thought at first it was "big medicine" till he discovered it only looked as if it was turning up into the void; though how it turned at all, to be sure, was "medicine." He had been given a drink of whisky behind the big tent by a man he did not know who had said he was a friend of Indians, but he had not, in return, told the man which horse he thought would win the Indian race. He had had a ride in the magical devil wagon too—Nelson street car.

"Him go without horse," he explained.

"You not scared of him?" asked Yateman.

Pete Konapee grinned and admitted the truth.

"Somebody told me I scared, so I go," said he.

He produced a little coin which he handed to Yateman in proof. It was of some light white metal, bearing on one side the legend "Nelson Street Railway," and on the other, "Good for one fare."

"How you catch this?" asked Yateman.

"No change. Only ten cent," Pete said. "Man on devil wagon give me that. He say: 'You have another ride for nothing. You get on again and give man this.' I not have another ride."

"Too bad," said Yateman. "You ought to have got your five cents back for this before you left town. You could have bought an ice-cream cone then," and he handed the tender back to the Indian.

"Oh, I keep him," said Pete. "I use him bym-by, some day, for something."

Just then several whites came into the store, and Pete became at once reserved. He drained his ginger-ale bottle, pocketed the metal token and, taking up his dusty old suit case that looked as if it had been salvaged from some hotel dump, though the straps round it were new, he solemnly departed. To the eyes of a casual tourist he might have been just "one of those dirty Indians," a nonentity; but to the eyes of a biologist he would have been mighty interesting, with that shrewd old-lined face, a face out of the stone age, under the shadow of his hat brim.

II.

"Have you heard the news?" inquired one of the newcomers.

"It depends on what it is," said Yateman.

"About Chief Naco shooting his brother."

"N-o!" ejaculated Jim. "Well, how did he do that? They were sure like David and Jonathan. What took him?"

"They claim it was an accident."

"Where did he do it? In Nelson? I bet you somebody at the fair, who ought to have known better, fed him some drinks and crazed him."

"No, he didn't go to the fair there. It happened up in the hills. He went out with that hunting party up Vermilion Pass. 'Big Michel' and Kahoona were with him when it happened. Big Michel says he saw; Kahoona says he did not see just how it happened because he was a bit behind, but he saw what happened a second after the shot. They were going along a heap poor trail together, all thick with a recent growth of red willow. Naco, it seems, slipped the safety catch of his rifle and up with it to shoot, having seen the flash of a mule deer through a gap in the brush just across a gulch they were cresting. Big Michel was a step or two behind, just so far, he says, as not to be whipped in the face with the branches that swung back after Naco passed. He says there was a twig of willow caught in the trigger guard of Naco's rifle and it just naturally went off. Naco's brother was a step or two uphill to one side, for some reason, and he just went down—*thud*. He

was killed instantly. Kahoona not seeing it all makes the story sound more likely. They'd have made it up together if they'd been lying to shield Naco from a charge of murder."

"Has Naco taken to the hills?" asked Yateman after a pause in which he only expressed his feelings with a grunt and a solemn stare.

"Not he. He's gone to Fort Steele to see the agent and give himself up for trial."

"Well, that sounds as if he wasn't guilty. If he'd done it deliberately he'd have gone off the handle altogether, shot Big Michel and Kahoona—and beat it!"

"The only thing——" began one, and stopped.

"What?"

"The only thing that makes me wonder is that Naco and his brother were both after that Kootenay belle, Sweet Singer. You know."

"Oh! Well, I didn't know that," said Yateman. "Well, that's too bad. Myself, I don't believe Naco would kill up any brother for any girl. He's none of your treacherous type; he's one of the old reliables."

"Well, you know him pretty well if any white man does."

Yateman did know Naco pretty well—as well as any white man in east Kootenay. Many and many a talk had he had with the chief. Naco inveigled him greatly; he had a brain, and a heart. To Yateman he never seemed to be a savage in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word. He belonged to a different epoch of the world—that was all; he had a wonderful mind, but not a mind in touch with this century of ours.

Time passed, and news of the inquiry came to Yateman. He was glad when he heard that Naco had got off unsmirched. There was no question even of manslaughter. For a month the storekeeper did not see him; then one day he rode up to the store, rode slowly past, lowering his head as he did so, to see that no customer was in, then wheeled his horse and, dismounting, tied the lines to the hitching ring. With a deliberate stride, an intoed swing ending each step, he entered.

He held his head high, and cast backward. It was a strong but troubled face. The cheek bones were slightly broad, but the eyes were not slanting. They were dark and puzzled. His mouth was not big and loose as in some of the Kootenays, but well modeled, albeit always close set; his nose was aquiline, as though he had Plains Indian blood in him; his face was framed in the "braids," one hanging down on each side of his head. His shirt, a gray, prospector's shirt, he wore outside his trousers as the Indians who were his fathers wore their buckskin tunics. No one could get him to tuck that shirt in, white-man fashion. Many of the old usages he adhered to. When he came to trade, he would sit down on the floor, fill his pipe, and smoke to the four corners before voicing his wants.

That day he followed the usual procedure, entered, nodded, emitted a "How!" to Yateman and then, sitting down, charged his pipe and silently and ceremonially smoked. When he spoke at last it transpired he had not come to trade but for advice. He talked in Kootenay, for his broken English would not stand the strain of all he had to deliver himself of on that visit.

"I want you to tell me, Jim, what to do. My brother's ghost keeps haunting me. All is well when I stay at home. All is well when I ride north on the road. But, when I ride south, always his ghost is there."

Jim took this announcement calmly, as though he believed entirely in ghosts.

"Why, do you think, does he not like you to ride south?" he asked.

"Sweet Singer lives there, on the South Reserve. He does not want me to marry her. When I go near there he keeps on calling me away all the time. He runs quick through the brush by the roadside and says: 'Don't go! Don't go! She was mine, not yours.'"

"But he can't have her now that he is dead," said Yateman. "It is not," he added easily, "as if you had killed him to get her. If you had killed him intentionally I could understand his ghost behaving that way."

"No. That is what I think," Naco seriously replied. "If he had lived he might have got her. I do not know if she wants me now, for I cannot go to see her because of his ghost. It goes quick beside me. No matter how quickly I ride, it keeps alongside and tells me to go back. Always I go back."

So saying, he felt in his breast and drew forth a little pad, or so it seemed, of buckskin.

"I went to see Konapee about it," he said, "and he gave me this to wear. There is powerful medicine in it, he says, if I will only believe. That is what he said. But it is no good. My brother's ghost runs as quickly as ever by my side. I try to ride to see her, but Konapee's medicine is not strong. I do not think a medicine man should go to the white man's races and make dances there for them to look on at. The black robe would not do that. Konapee's medicine is not strong any more."

He slipped over his head the slender thongs of buckskin to which the medicine bag was affixed and, with no violent gesture such as a white man may use when disgusted, but with an easy toss, flipped Pete Konapee's talisman into a corner among rubbish that Yateman had swept up there to await later destruction in his incinerator.

"You can help," said Naco. "You give me something."

Utterly at a loss, Yateman was deep in thought. The medicine man, it occurred to him, had put the onus on Naco when telling him that if he believed in the charm it would be efficacious. It entered his head to try another method, to make the crux of the matter not Naco's belief in the efficacy of a charm, but his own conscience. This talking of a ghost had made Yateman wonder if perhaps the killing had not been an accident.

"You tell your brother's ghost," said he, "that you did not kill him intentionally. He will know you speak truth and go away. A ghost must surely know truth."

Jim's view was that if it was a planned murder, then Naco deserved all the haunting. But the look in the chief's eyes was so much one of hope over that suggestion that the suspicion vanished. Naco rose, extended his hand, grasped Yateman's and, pressing it warmly, departed.

Through the window Yateman watched the erect figure in the saddle pass along the dusty road that wound among the benches. It was an exquisite day. Overhead was a cloudless sky; the distances were very clear; single trees on the mountain ranges miles away, beyond these sandy benches, stood each clear, individual, though diminished to the value of a little hair. A peaceful, contented world, it seemed, one in which surely no man need worry over anything. The very crackle of the grasshoppers in the sun at the door was a sound of rest.

When the horseman had dwindled away to the size of an ant, and been lost in a reddy-green band across the scene that was of a fir wood, Jim turned to the corner in which he had swept the rubbish from the store, brushed it up into a scoop, and carried it outside to make a fire of it in his little incinerator that was of a dozen bricks or so, and a couple of lengths of stovepipe atop to make a draft.

Then an idea took him and he picked out from the rubbish the little buckskin package. He held it in hand, considering it a moment. It was neatly stitched, and by hand instead of by machine. To his great disgust the Indians had begun to stitch up with sewing machines the gauntlets and moccasins he had from them in trade for the tourist market. Suddenly he began to laugh.

"Faith!" said he aloud. "Faith! That is what is needed."

Having ignited the rubbish, he went back to the store with the discarded talisman. On the counter lay some specimen strips of fine canvas that a ranchman with artistic notions had got him to procure with a view to finding something that would make a pleasing substitute for wall paper. From the finest of these samples he cut off sufficient to wrap up the buckskin lucky bag; then he took a packing needle and twine, and very carefully stitched up the buckskin packet inside the canvas.

"There!" he said. "If what I told him to do does not work we'll have to use the talisman again. 'The old order changeth, giveth place to new;' or, as the Scots say, 'The cauld kale can be het up again.' He has lost faith in Pete Konapee's medicine, but he believes in me. So Konapee's medicine in my wrappings should do the trick!"

He laughed to himself. He had cut off the slender thongs to be used for hanging the charm round the neck, and opened a drawer of odds and ends in quest of something to fill the same purpose. The very thing! There was a twist of gilt twine. A firm with which he dealt used it to wrap up Christmas parcels. Jim looped it to a drawer handle and plaited three strands into one, for the sake of durability, then sewed that tinselly twine to his canvas covering of the medicine bag.

"There, if he must have a talisman, I

can supply it!" said he, and put the thing into the back of his desk.

Then he forgot about the matter. The days followed the days, sliding along in their wonted way; and then Naco came back again, sat and smoked to the four corners and, that done, made his report.

"I told my brother's ghost that I had not killed him. I called it out loud as I rode down the road, and he kept pace among the bush and bull pines beside me. I told him again it was an accident, and so he kept away for a while, and I was able to go and see Sweet Singer. We talked about my brother. She is very sad about his being killed. That was all we talked. Then I went back to talk other talk, but his ghost was on the road again and I had to turn back. He kept along all the way, and he spoke very loud when we came near to where she lives. So I turned back. Can you do anything to get him not to trouble about her?"

Yateman went to his desk and produced the little packet, the discarded "medicine" of Konapee's, that he had rebound and hung to plaited Christmas twine.

"You take this," he said. "And listen: it is not wrong of you to go to Sweet Singer, seeing you did not kill him so as to get her. It is not a bad thing you do to your brother's ghost, seeing he is dead."

That, it occurred to Jim, was what was bothering Naco, a sense of the hard luck that had befallen his brother, for Sweet Singer had obviously liked the dead man too, their talk having been all of him.

Naco extended an eager hand, almost forgetting his slow dignity. As soon as he had the gilt strings over his head, and the little packet tucked away, he looked better. There was that expression of ease on his face that doctors see on the faces of patients who, believing in them, show relief even before the prescription has been filled, when the doctor has done no more than look at their tongues, feel their pulses.

Then away rode Chief Naco; and a month later he was married to Sweet Singer. The charm, it seemed, had worked. Jim Yateman was greatly pleased with himself as medicine man.

Ever and again he saw Naco. He saw Naco's squaw too, a great beauty; gave her —to her delight, and the delight of the chief—a wedding gift of a gorgeous silk bandanna of yellow, with blue spots, for her head. Not a word breathed Naco regarding the charm; to have done so might have been to annul its spell, for in the matter of a good talisman it is a case somewhat after the manner of, "Let sleeping dogs lie!" But though it was not mentioned, there was a markedly meaningful warmth in Naco's handclasp when Jim, the old malady of the itching foot coming to him, decided to leave the valley of the Kootenays, and began to introduce the man to whom he had sold the store to clients, red and white.

"You have been my friend," said Naco. "You write to somebody when you go away?"

"Oh, yes, I'll write to the boys. I'll send you messages. I'll write to the agent at the reserve. He'll tell me about you—how you go."

That was getting too near suggesting that the charm might fail, that there was doubt if all would go well. Naco, blank as an effigy, contented himself with a good white-man farewell.

"Well, so long, Jim."

"So long, Naco."

III.

"You'll come back again," one customer said to him.

"I give you five years," said another, he of the canvas-covered walls.

"Well, we'll see you again," said the stage driver who dropped him at the Cranbrook Hotel and noted a look on his face, a look of regret, a look of doubt, as though he wondered—carried so far from his sequestered valley, to the sound of locomotive bells, and the sight of rails again—if people would laugh should he call that a journey and go back on the stage when it returned.

Other scenes held him for a decade. Now and then he remembered it all with longing, but when the itching foot bothered him again he went elsewhere. But at length, sudden and urgent, the call came to him over a scent, or a taste, some filip to memory. Changes? Well, a railroad had been built from Golden to Fort Steele, and a train ran twice weekly; the old wagon road had been straightened here and there because the automobile had come; the old trail through Vermilion Pass, he heard at Cranbrook, had been turned into a road. It was not a train day when he came to Cranbrook, so he hired a car, wondering if the old medicine man—what was his

name? Yes, Konapee—had lived to see motors, and what he thought of them.

Passing the end of the road for the mission at St. Eugene he wondered what was afoot. Indians arrayed in their old treasured beaded buckskins and feathers were coming trooping along from north. On thence, to Fort Steele, the car was constantly meeting parties of them returning to the mission.

"I wonder what the occasion of all this is," said he. "They are dressed up, but they look mighty sad."

"I guess they've been to the funeral of Chief Naco," replied the driver. "He wasn't to be buried at the mission here, but up north on his own reserve."

Chief Naco! How that name brought back the old days! At Fort Steele Jim had lunch with his driver, paid him off, and then went over to the agent's house. From its veranda they watched the day die out in gliding tones, pink as of coral, pale blue, dark blue, on the great staring serene cliffs of distant Mount Fisher, saw the light change on the cropped lawn, strangely drift away over the rolling foothills tufted with the yellow sage.

"Yes, the old type is going," said the agent. "It was a wonderful funeral. Naco was really a pagan. Sad business that about shooting his brother. Of course there was no doubt about its being an accident. You know, he often spoke of you. He used to ask me if I knew where you were, or ever heard of you. It's queer that you should turn up to-day of all days. I have a packet here for you. Naco knew he was dying, and put all in order like some old stoic. I went to see him then, of course. 'You keep it,' he said to me; 'Jim may come back some day.' Come in and I'll get it for you."

They moved indoors from the lawn. The electric light was switched on and in that modern, that sophisticated illumination, the agent handed the packet to his guest. It was of brown paper and, being opened, revealed no more and no less than a little canvas bag suspended from a loop of string, frayed string with flakes of yellow tinselly stuff adhering to it here and there. Yateman stared at it. "Well, what—do—you know!" he ejaculated.

"I don't know anything," said the old agent in that jolly, genial way of his. So Jim told of how Naco, haunted by his brother's ghost, had first procured a talisman from the old medicine man, found it ineffectual, come to him for aid, and how he had responded.

"You rascal!" exclaimed the agent, hearing of how Jim had merely, as he said, "recrated" the medicine man's charm. "Faith! Faith! It evidently worked." He shook his head. "I wonder what the medicine was that old Konapee, dead these years—he must have died soon after you left—put in the buckskin."

"We'll see," said Jim, and opening his knife slit away the canvas wrapping, slit away the old stitches round the buckskin packet within, then unrolled it.

"Well!" he said. "It was a bluff. Nothing at all, nothing in it. Just a piece of deerskin."

But even as he spoke something fell to the floor, and they both, at the same moment, bobbed forward to pick it up, almost bumping heads.

"Pardon!" said the agent, drawing back.

"Oh, I'm sorry," muttered Jim, and culled the dropped "medicine" from the carpet.

He held it in his hand, looked at it, turned it over, and then speechlessly held it forth. The old agent took it in his palm, stared at it, stared at Jim, elevating his brows, turned it over, stared at it again. It was a little metal disk, of tin, or aluminum, on one side the legend: "Nelson Street Railway," on the other: "Good for One Fare." When he looked up again he did not meet Jim's eyes; for Jim, tapping his chin with the knuckle of a thumb, was gazing at nothing in the room, looking into the past, recalling the Indians homing from Nelson Fair, hearing Konapee say: "Oh, I keep him. I use him bym-by, some day, for something."

"The old fraud!" said Jim.

That delighted the agent. He sat back, chuckling.

"Ah, glass houses!" said he. "Glass houses! Fraud yourself, Jim Yateman! But you were both good judges of humanity, you and old Konapee," he added, elevating his brows in that way he had. "It worked, or he would not have kept it all his life, left it for you when the end came. Faith! A queer people, Jim—in many ways much like ourselves!"

The Voice of the Torrent

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Gates of Morning," "The Story of Dakea and the Charm," Etc.

A savage murder in the South Seas—and the retribution that followed.

YOU can smell Motuaro miles away across the sea.

At sea, before dawn for choice, and after the rains, the great island hails you with a perfume of cassi, of frangipane, dew-wet foliage, and earth, before which all the old shipboard smells go over the side or hide themselves, while the stars snuff out and the east parts as if at the pull of a ripping cord, disclosing Motuaro.

Motuaro, with the sun blaze on it or the sun behind it, according to how you lie, but always perfumed, lovely, mysterious and seeming new-stepped to the doors of the blue sea.

Coming up from southward you can see amid the greenery of the southern slope a vertical white line broken in the middle. The glass resolves it into a torrent; a waterfall, whose spray forms a mist and a rainbow, and whose voice haunts the woods like a spirit.

Before the traders came to Motuaro, and when Matei was a tiny child, the torrent that had been singing and making rainbows for a thousand years put its spell upon him. There was no magic in the business, or only the magic that the woods and mountains can exert on people born under their influences; and just as the hill folk and wood folk become interpenetrated by their environment, the falling water and its movement and sound became part of Matei's environment and after a while part of himself.

His father, Sipi, the basket maker, with whom he lived, was also part of his environment, but never became part of himself, for Sipi was always changing, owing maybe to a Melanesian taint, now drunk with kava, now morose, now gay; whereas the torrent was changeless: louder in the rains, yet the same in spirit.

When Matei was sixteen years of age, Sipi moved down to the beach, deserting his house on the little plateau where the great datura trumpets blew beside the waterfall, and building a shack amid the palms near the house of Penhill the trader.

Penhill had only just come to Motuaro. He was a hard-shelled Yankee, but to Sipi he was a god, for in the new-built storehouse amid the palms were stored bolts of cotton cloth, boxes of stick tobacco, cases of canned salmon, knives, old muskets that would never hit anything, but would, all the same, go off with a bang, percussion caps, fishing lines and hooks—things to dream of and to be obtained in exchange for coconuts, that is to say, copra.

There was no tribal chief to make bother; the nuts were free to all; it was only a question of labor, and Matei was young and strong.

"You will work for me till I am dead," said Sipi, boring two holes in a can of salmon and sucking the juice as one sucks a nut, "and then you will work for yourself, and my ghost will not trouble you; for yourself and for your wife if you choose to take one, and for your children should you beget them." He finished the salmon, giving Matei the tin to lick out, and then he fell asleep on his stomach, while the boy sat listening to the rainy patter of the palm leaves in the wind, the sound of the sea on the broken reefs, and the voice of the torrent like a thread through all.

As he sat like this he saw Penhill going along the beach edge toward the western cliffs. Penhill was a very big man, he had a scar across his right cheek and two fingers of his left hand were missing; he had a loud voice, a fiery eye, and he was inevitable with a revolver. Matei had seen him shoot a flying sea gull with the gun that could speak like a woman without ceasing, and he feared him and hated him.

Life upon the plateau where the datura trumpets blew had been easy-going and without effort. The coming of Penhill had altered all that.

Penhill required an incredible number of nuts for one tin of salmon, and Sipi required not only salmon, but tobacco—two-cent sticks of tobacco—clay pipes, tandstickor matches, and he had set his heart on a bead necklace.

Matei did not hate Sipi for requiring all these things, and for working him like a slave to get them; his hatred was directed entirely against Penhill the capitalist, the newcomer who had brought the disease of labor to Motuaro.

II.

One day, or, rather, one evening, the whole pattern of Matei's life changed as the pattern in a kaleidoscope changes when shaken.

It was toward sundown and he was out on the western reef armed with a fish spear and hunting for what he could find; the gulls were clanging on the wind, and the low-tide sea lay like moving frosted gold, and against the golden sea stood the figure of a girl.

It was Atuma, the daughter of Miti, a girl who had come recently from the eastern side of the island with her father, attracted by Penhill and his trade goods. She worked at the drying of the copra. Matei had spoken to her several times, but now as he approached her it seemed to him that he had never seen her before.

Atuma was carrying an empty haliotis shell which she had picked up; her eyes were like the reef pools in twilight, and her teeth showed like pearls as she smiled at his approach.

Matei was carrying a crab which had been trapped by the outgoing tide; he had bound seaweed round its claws, and as he drew close to her he held up the crab with his right hand, leaning on the spear with his left.

"It is for you," said Matei.

It was just as though some one else had spoken, using his voice; a moment before the idea of parting with his treasure had not occurred to him, but a moment before he had been a different person.

It had come like that all in a flash, quick as the stroke of fate that came to Timu when he tumbled out of the tree and broke his back. One moment a well and whole man, the next a different person altogether.

Atuma laughed, a little, sharp laugh like the thud of a stabbing spear; she looked at the crab with her head tilted to one side, then she looked at Matei full in the eyes, full and long with a gaze that twisted his soul about in him and took the power from his legs, and made the sweat start in beads on his breastbone. Then she gave him the shell to carry as well as the crab, and, turning, wandered along with him back toward where the reef joined the western shore.

They said nothing, pausing here and there, while Atuma gazed into a pool to see if anything might have been left by the tide; the sea spoke and the gulls cried on the wind, and gulls and wind and waves were to Matei like one voice crying, "Atuma, Atuma, Atuma!"

They reached the shore as the darkness was rising like a tide over the woods, and coming along by the groves bordering the sand, stopped before reaching the first houses of the beach village. They could hear the wind in the trees, and through the wind the voice of the torrent came to Matei, vague, insistent, ceaseless, old as the hills, yet singing something new.

"Atuma, Atuma, Atuma," sang the torrent, replying to the wind, the far surf on the reefs, and the voice in the soul of Matei.

Then all at once he found himself touching her. He cast the shell and the crab on the ground at her feet, and as she stooped to pick them up, and rose again, he seized her in his arms, and then—she was gone.

III.

He came along by the grove edge, past the trader's house, to the shack where Sipi was asleep, drunk with kava, and snoring.

Matei did not mind, did not even hear the old man as he tossed and snorted, turning from his right to his left side, and crying out "Ai te mutai!" "You have got it!"

Sipi was dreaming of war. He had been a great fighter in the days before a stray missionary, the predecessor of Penhill, had landed, bringing Bibles and smallpox to Motuaro. He had also helped to eat the missionary, and he had slain two of the mission-ship men with his own hand with the obsidian-headed spear that hung on the wall just above his sleeping mat.

Obsidian is a mineral just like black glass, as clear and as brittle; it can be sharpened to a razor edge, and as a spear-head it is unrivaled in wickedness, for, give the thing a twist, and the glasslike head snaps off and remains in the wound.

But Matei knew nothing of the dreams of Sipi, nor of their connection with the spear lying above him; he cast himself down on a mat, and lying on his chest with his chin on his arms, gazed into the darkness where the fireflies were pulsating, moving like drifting stars through the gloom beneath the wind-stirred foliage.

His soul was filled with distress. He had held Atuma in his arms, and yet had let her slip away from him.

He was a coward in love, and some instinct told him that the moment let slip would not come again. She was his for the having, yet he had let her go.

From the sea where Penhill's schooner, the *Araya,* was anchored by the reef, Matei, as he brooded, could hear the songs of the sailors who were carousing on deck. The *Araya* was due out at dawn, and Matei, as he listened, could hear now the shore boat putting off with the captain, and Penhill's voice shouting good-by from the beach; his doglike sense of hearing could separate one from the other—voices, sound of oars, waves, wind, and through all the sound of the torrent, minute from here, yet distinct and ceaseless.

Yes, he had been a fool. He had been a fool, but it was not too late to retrieve what he had lost.

He rose up and stood for a moment, as if undecided, listening to the snoring of Sipi, who had ceased fighting in his dreams, and whose body lay stiff and stirless as the obsidian-headed spear above it on the wall.

Then coming to a sudden decision he stepped into the dark.

Great leaves greeted him, clasping at his body like cold, clammy hands, lianas caught him, and orchids kissed him, while the first beams of the now risen moon showed in a pale-green glow above, spreading, stealing down the palm pillars, turning the tendril-hung orchids to birds and moths in flight through emerald air.

Matei had not gone a dozen yards when the woods, burning green around him, showed him his way, though instinct would have taken him in almost a direct line through the dark.

He passed the backs of Penhill's store-house and the houses of the village, till he reached the last house, which was the house of Miti.

The door was open to the night, and the interior was lit, not only by the open doorway, but by the interstices of the cane-built walls and the holes in the palmetto thatch.

On the floor on mats Miti was asleep with his wife beside him, but of Atuma there was no sign.

The heart of Matei stood still in him as he looked.

The mat which formed the girl's bed was there close to Miti; on a rail near by was hung a string of colored beads, on the mat lay a comb of celluloid from Penhill's store. Where, then, was Atuma?

He listened, and in the stillness he heard the sea and the wind and the torrent; no sound from the village where the people had gone to sleep, and no sound from the schooner where the hands had gone below.

Then, turning his back on the house of Miti, Matei made his way home, but not through the trees. He took the beach by the wood edge, scarcely knowing what he did or where he went, and reaching at last the house of Penhill, whose door was open to the warm night.

In the lamplit interior Matei saw Penhill and Atuma. Penhill was seated at the table, with a bottle and glass beside him,

and Atuma was seated on his knee, her arm about his neck, her head against his.

She was laughing, and Matei saw her right hand go under Penhill's chin and raise his face to hers. Then she kissed him, upside down, and Matei passed on.

Passed on as though it were no affair of his, passed on without turning his head again; making straight for home, where Sipi still lay snoring, though it seemed a thousand years since Matei had left him.

He lay down on his mat close to the old man, and turning on his stomach hid his face on his arms.

Atuma was Penhill's!

Matei, as he lay visualizing again the picture of the girl on the trader's knee, saw himself—Matei—rushing into the lamplit room, seizing the gun in the corner and killing Penhill and the girl. He saw that quite distinctly as the thing he ought to have done, but did not do.

It was the same stupidity over again. The stupidity that had made him let her slip away when he had her in his arms. Matei was not one of the people who can rise to a supreme occasion; he could see afterward what he ought to have done, just as a person can remember afterward what they ought to have said, and as he lay now brooding the visualized image of Penhill down on the floor with a gunshot wound in his chest tormented him.

"This is what you ought to have done," said the image.

"Yes," said a voice from nowhere, "and the noise of the speak stick, what about that? Would not the village have come running? The ship is still here, and the sailors. Would not they have come running, too?"

Matei, as he lay listening to this second voice, felt exactly as he had felt that day when lying on his chest he had looked over the five-hundred foot precipice on the north of Motuaro.

Had he yielded to the impulse to rush in and kill Penhill with the gun he would have assuredly been caught and hanged, just as Toti had been hanged by the white men for the killing of Mudross, the missionaries' black boy.

Matei had quite put Atuma out of his mind; he could only think of one thing at a time, and he was thinking of Penhill.

Then suddenly, craftily, as though some one were watching him, he raised his head and his eyes stole up to the obsidian-headed spear on the wall above Sipi.

IV.

The Melanesian in the soul of Matei had awakened, and passion balked had turned to the lust to kill. To kill Penhill, to kill Atuma, or even, failing these, to kill some one.

He lay watching the spear, whose glassy head, touched by a moonbeam, showed bright. Then rising and leaning across Sipi he seized it, loosed it from its attachments, and left the house holding it in his right hand.

The night had fallen silent. Not a breath of wind stirred, and the only sounds in all the vast moonlit world were the far voices of the reefs speaking to the sea and the distant pouring of the torrent as it fell, ringed with a moonbow, from cliff to cliff.

The house of the trader was in darkness, and out on the moonlit sea, anchored inside the reefs, lay the *Araya* ready to put out with the dawn wind and the ebb.

Matei glanced from the house to the schooner. When he had finished his business he would swim out and slip on board her and hide. The Kanakas in the fo'c's'le were his friends; they would give him shelter. He would sail away with her and see distant places and return no more to Motuaro. He was done forever with Motuaro as men are done with a place when they die.

As he stood resting on the spear and thinking this, the reefs spoke louder to a heavier lift of the swell and then fell silent, revealing, as through a lifted curtain of sound, the voice of the waterfall, far, insistent, vague, like a voice in a dream.

Yes, nevermore would he see Motuaro; nevermore work at the copra gathering; nevermore hear Sipi, drunk with kava, shouting old songs of the past.

He turned to the house. The door was open, and inside in the moon gloaming he could see Penhill stretched on a mat, alone, asleep and lying on his back.

A thrust of the spear through the heart and all would be over with Penhill; yet as Matei stood before the helpless victim he could neither raise his foot to cross the threshold nor raise his arm to stab with the spear.

Penhill was a white man, also he was Penhill; also, and revealed at the supreme psychological moment, he was not the per-

son to be killed. The demon directing Matei took him by the shoulders and turned him away from the door, leading him along by the trees toward the house of Miti.

And there she was. Atuma lying on her mat by the door asleep, her breast exposed to the moonlight, and with the kisses of Penhill on her lips; farther in, Miti and his wife lay sleeping the sleep of tired Kanakas, which is deeper than the sleep of dogs.

Then Matei, with the cold precision of an executioner, raised the spear till the butt nearly touched the roof, and with a movement swift as light drove the point through the heart of Atuma.

Her body heaved up, a little sharp cry broke the silence of the night, and she fell back like a sleeper who has been roused and who falls asleep again.

The glass head had broken off. He cast the spear shaft beside her, and turning, ran for the sea edge.

Swimming like an otter he reached the *Araya,* scrambled on board, and passing the sleeping anchor watch, made for the fo'c's'le.

Two hours later, with the dawn wind, the schooner put out.

V.

Now the life of Matei on board the *Araya* after he had shown himself as a stowaway may be divided into two parts. During the first his mind was exceedingly troubled, not by remorse, but by the fear that somehow the *Araya* might put back to Motuaro. Freed of the blood lust that had destroyed not only Atuma, but any feeling he ever had for her, his mind had become normal again—the mind of a child. A child who has done wrong and dreads punishment.

What he dreaded in reality was Penhill. Penhill, he knew, would kill him just as he, Matei, had killed Atuma, and Matei did not want to be killed. He was greatly afraid. The timorous part of his nature that had made him frail when he released Atuma, that had made him walk on without a word when he had seen her on Penhill's knee, that had helped to save Penhill's life when he lay asleep and defenseless, was alive now and trembling.

The Melanesian devil in his heart had withdrawn or hidden itself, and no lamb could be milder now than Matei as he helped to pull on the ropes or sat of an evening in the fo'c's'le listening to Timu playing on the mouth organ.

Then as days passed and strange islands showed themselves and faded away into the boundless blue, fear began to fade from his heart. All that seemed years and years ago, wiped out, done with forever. When they reached San Francisco he was a new man, moving in a new world, and leaving the *Araya* with a few dollars in his pocket, and a suit from the slop chest on his back, the streets and their wonder took him.

He could have gazed at the trolley cars forever, at the things behind the plate-glass windows of the shops, at the people.

He spent his money on rubbish and starved, listened to street orators proclaiming the rights of man, slept in the open, and fell at last into the hands of a society that found him work as a boot boy in a boarding house in Palk Street.

Here he grew fat on pork and beans; went to the pictures, then in their earliest infancy; learned how to play fan-tan from some Chinese boys, and attended a Sunday-school, whose bait was a tea picnic on the bay once a year.

For four months Matei was completely happy, or almost so. Then one night a voice came to him some time after midnight, and, waking in his attic, he heard the sound of water cascading and whispering, the voice of the torrent of Motuaro that he had heard first in earliest infancy.

It was in reality only the pouring of rain water due to a stopped drainpipe, but that fact altered nothing; the waterfall that had been his earliest companion had spoken, and around its voice as he listened Motuaro began to build itself, and the datura trumpets to bloom and blow.

He saw the rainbow, and he heard the sound of Sipi pounding kava, the voice of the reefs, the patter of the palm leaves in the wind. He desired none of these things individually, yet collectively, and like a team led by the torrent, they pulled his heart, yet could not move his body. Homesickness had seized him.

To the homesick schoolboy it is the old common things that appeal, things he cared almost nothing for when at home, and to Matei, as he lay wide-eyed in the dark, the voice of the torrent became not only the voices of all the common things he suddenly longed to see again, but a command.

A hypnotic influence desiring his return.

Next day in the midst of his duties he almost forgot his experience of the night, but the voice of the torrent was there, part of him as it always had been part of him, and insistent as Fate.

He did his work badly, and the day after, leaving the boots to clean themselves, he bolted, walked off down to the docks, and joined a schooner, the *Dancing Wave,* bound for Honolulu.

He did not know where he was going, and did not care, he was moving; moving on the sea where somewhere Motuaro was. His fear of Penhill had passed. Years seemed to have gone by since that night when he had swam to the schooner; Penhill would have gone by this time, or would certainly have forgotten.

Penhill was an almost indistinguishable figure behind a great curtain woven with trolley cars, crowded streets, strange faces, and extraordinary conditions; the whole of Matei's life at Motuaro seemed equally vague, but the place was not vague, nor the call of it expressed in the voice of the calling water.

From Honolulu the *Dancing Wave* took a cargo to Palmyra, and from Palmyra the winds of trade drove them to Samoa. At Samoa, Matei, urged by the instinct to move, left her and joined the *Howland,* a brig that had business in the Solomons.

And now began a journey, the most extraordinary ever undertaken by man. Doing his work on shipboard, taking his pleasure with the other Kanakas, yet always driven by an underlying purpose, Matei moved from ship to ship and place to place, zigzagging across the Pacific for five long years. From Guam to Yap, from Yap to Wole, down to Jaluit, across to Nukuhiva, south to Rapa, north to Wake Island, trade and chance took Matei like a lost dog who changes from train to train, from road to road, and somehow arrives home at last.

The voice of the falling water may not have led him, but it had kept him moving; as water keeps a flower alive it had kept the vision of Motuaro fresh in his mind, and the desire to reach it. For five years it had neither loudened nor lessened in its call, and then, one morning when he was on the lookout the vision turned to reality, and Matei beheld the great island far ahead, sunlit, with the torrent standing against the green, unstable as water; yet eternal as a pillar of marble.

VI.

The schooner, entering the western reef break, dropped anchor in the blue lagoon dividing the reef from the shore, and Matei, by the fo'c's'le, saw the beach, the trees, the houses—all just as he had left them so many years ago.

Atuma, Penhill, Sipi were nothing, figures in his primitive mind belonging to a past so remote that they seemed less than shadows.

Having fed full from the feast of rich things before him, from the breadfruit line on the hills to the sands of the beach, he began dreamily to recall the shadows. Sipi, Penhill, Atuma, Miti, all the people he had known, the girl he had killed in what seemed a dream, and the father he had worked for. Then, as he leaned on the rail, he knew that his journey was over, that having fed his eyes again on the place of his desire he must depart. He did not want to land.

Not only that, he knew that he must not land. Deep down in his heart something told him that he must not touch that beach again with his foot.

The killing of Atuma stirred vaguely in him; a ghost that had been laid to rest for years, and which was the fear of consequences, rose to being again and confronted him dimly.

He turned from the rail to the fo'c's'le, and was stepping down the ladder when the voice of the bos'n hailed him, ordering him into the shore boat which had been dropped.

Matei paused, dread suddenly possessed him, yet he could not move or resist. The something which was perhaps cowardice and that had already served him badly in a supreme crisis, paralyzed his initiative; then, at the second call of the bos'n, unresistingly and with apparent good will he dropped into the boat.

He was bow oar, and as they approached the beach, glancing over his shoulder he saw a crowd, natives come down to greet the ship, and among them, towering, a white man.

It was Penhill!

Penhill looking not a day older; Penhill with a cigar in his mouth; Penhill thinking of nothing but trade and with no eyes at all for anything but the captain of the schooner seated in the stern sheets of the oncoming boat. Then, as the big trader

shook hands with the captain and stood for a moment talking before turning toward the house he noticed one of the boat Kanakas who was staring at him. Staring with fixed eyes as though hypnotized. Penhill's brow suddenly became cleft with the frown of thought. Then the terrible white man's memory which forgets nothing, brought together the face of Matei, the face of Atuma, the spear of Sipi, which had been found by the body of the girl, and the flight of Matei.

"My God!" said Penhill. Then he stepped forward and clapped Matei on the shoulder.

They hanged him decently, and after due trial and on his own confession. He did not say that he had killed the girl, his words were as nearly as possible that he "remembered having speared her," as though he were speaking of something he had done involuntarily or in a dream or at the dictate of some spirit.

They hanged him on the great tree that stands where the waterfall dashes down from its fast leap over two hundred feet of basalt, and they buried him under the full voice of the torrent, the voice that like an elastic cord had held him wherever he went, always drawing him toward his fate and materializing at last into fifty feet of signal-halyard line.

Another story by Mr. Stacpoole in the next issue.

MOUNTAIN STUFF

THE old West Virginia mountaineer slipped into the seat in the day coach beside the traveling salesman, on his way to Huntington, and began a catechism which finally palled.

"Say, uncle," said the traveler, seeking escape, "suppose you tell me a little about your part of the country."

"Waal, suh," replied the ancient, "things are mighty sorry, my way. Yeh see, 't rained mos' all summer, so we couldn't plant much cawn; 'n' 'bout all they's raised is a few hawgs; 'n' yeh cain't git nothin' fur 'em; 'n'——"

"Mighty bad outlook," cut in the salesman. "Looks like you'd be hard put to get the necessities of life this winter."

"Yessuh, 'deed we will, suh," said the mountaineer earnestly, " 'n' when we do, it ain't fitten to drink."

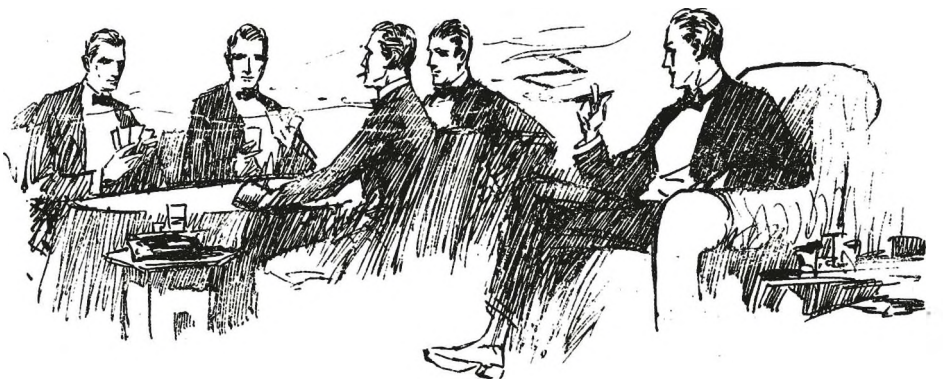
THE EFFECTS OF DRINK

GEORGE L. HURREFORD, the Cincinnati real-estate man, is a prohibitionist of the violently vocal kind. Strong drink makes him rage. Liquor of all sorts engenders within him a desire to preach or punch, save or shoot.

He was in New York on a business trip last spring and, being late for an appointment, rushed into the hotel barber shop for a shave. Hardly had he settled back in the chair when he saw that he had fallen into the shaky hands of a man who had hit the flowing bowl the night before. The way the fellow shaved him dissipated his last doubt. By the time the perilous operation was over, Hurreford's nicked and wounded face looked like a long-distance aërial photograph of the cañonlike streets of lower New York City.

"Look at what you've done to my face!" he exclaimed, all set for a prohibition lecture that would forever eliminate thirst from the barber's system. "See what comes from hard drinking!"

"Yes, sir," the barber agreed wearily; "it makes the skin tender."



The Adventure of the Fallen Angels

By Percival Wilde

Author of "The Pillar of Fire," "Tony Sits In," Etc

The story of a gigantic card-swindling project and its exposure—told with literary skill and dramatic wizardry of an exceptional order. Start it and see what a wrench it would be to lay it by before the end.—THE EDITOR.

THE atmosphere in the little room was electric. The explosion, one sensed rather than felt, would come soon.

From outside, far below in the street, came the occasional clatter of a belated taxicab. From above came the steady, unwinking glare of high-powered lights. The clock on the mantel—and the overflowing ash trays—indicated the hour of two in the morning. Yet the men seated about the bridge table in the Himalaya Club, cutting in and out at the end of each rubber, played with a concentration that was apparently regardless of everything else.

Straker, so he asserted afterward, had been on the verge of an apoplectic stroke since midnight. Billings clutched his cards in a nervous hand, and impatiently awaited the moment when the accusation would be made. Chisholm, who could watch the ticker spell out fluctuations which meant tens of thousands to him without turning a hair, bit the ends of his straggly mustache from time to time, and hoped that his exterior did not betray his excitement.

Like the others, Chisholm had absolute confidence in Anthony P. Claghorn—"Tony" Claghorn to his intimates—who, by his own admission, was an expert on everything having to do with games of chance; but as the minutes stretched into hours, and as Claghorn, with not a wrinkle in his lofty brow, confined himself to smoking the best cigars that the Himalaya Club—and his hosts—provided, and refrained from uttering a word, Chisholm's worries multiplied.

He could not assert that Tony had been an inattentive spectator. At nine, promptly, the game had begun. At nine, promptly, Tony had pulled up the most comfortable chair, and had anchored in it. At half-hourly intervals, or thereabouts, rubbers had ended, and the six players, cutting to determine the four to play next, had changed seats. At half-hourly intervals, or thereabouts, Tony, without moving, had called for a fresh cigar.

At ten Chisholm had glanced at Tony questioningly. Tony had replied with an innocent stare. At intervals from then on to midnight Straker, Billings, Hotchkiss,

and Bell had glanced questioningly at the silent young man. He had given them glance for glance—but no satisfaction. Yet during the preceding afternoon Tony had discoursed eloquently upon the ease with which he would solve the mystery.

To be sure, it had been a mystery of Tony's own creating. Roy Terriss, the suspect, had not been looked upon as such until Tony, by a few well-chosen words, had called the attention of his clubmates to the fact that Roy was a remarkably consistent winner. Before that time it had been admitted that Roy was generally successful at bridge; that he enjoyed playing in an expensive game; and that the game was rarely, if ever, expensive for him. It was Tony who pointed out that Roy's gains, during a winter's play, probably mounted well up into five figures; and it was Tony who, without making direct accusations, had raised his eyebrows significantly at moments when that simple act was not altogether beneficial to Roy's reputation.

Having created the mystery, he had been invited to solve it. With becoming modesty, he had accepted the task, and after sitting solemnly through one five-hour session, had expressed a desire to sit through another. This wish granted, he had declared his intention of being present on yet a third occasion. The results had been painful to his friends, who, expecting they hardly knew what, had thrown caution to the winds, and had been divested of large sums by Terriss, who, knowing nothing at all of what was afoot, had played calmly—coldly—and with deadly precision.

Chisholm, indeed, had explained his own mistakes to Tony that very afternoon. "I'm a conservative player," he had asserted earnestly. "I follow the book. I know the rules and I don't try to improve on them. I don't overbid, and if the other fellow overbids I'm a sharp at doubling. But when I'm expecting the whole game to blow up any minute I can't put my mind on it and I don't play like myself."

"Even at twenty-five cents a point?"

"What does twenty-five cents a point matter when I'm waiting for you to start the fireworks? Take that hand last night: it was good for three odd. I bid up to five. That wasn't like me, was it? Then Terriss doubled—that's what any sane, level-headed player would have done holding his cards—and instead of shutting up, and taking my medicine like a little man, what did I do but redouble! Claghorn, I put it to you: was that the act of a normal man? Was that the kind of play you'd look for from me? Then the finesses didn't hold, and I got set for eight hundred points."

Tony smiled reminiscently. "That was a most instructive hand," he commented. "Now, if you had doubled his four bid instead of going up yourself——"

Chisholm cut him short with a growl. "Look here," he pointed out succinctly, "we didn't get you into this to give us bridge lessons, you know. If we wanted lessons, we could get them for about a tenth of what this performance is costing us. You said there was something queer about the game. We're waiting to be shown—that's all."

At two o'clock, ten hours later, Chisholm was still waiting.

Billings, neat and dapper, a stickler for etiquette, had, upon this third evening, to his everlasting embarrassment, been detected in a revoke. He had paid the penalty promptly—graciously; had, indeed, insisted upon its being exacted. But the look which he had given Tony had explained more eloquently than could any number of words how he had come to be guilty. And Hotchkiss, fumbling his cards nervously, had failed to cover an honor with an honor—with results which bulked large when the score was added.

And at two o'clock, Billings and Hotchkiss, as well as Straker, Bell and Chisholm, were waiting—waiting.

II.

The great moment—the long-anticipated moment—came when it was least expected. At two fifteen the men had adjourned hopelessly. Chisholm was balancing the score; his confederates had already opened their check books; Terris, with folded arms, was waiting to learn the exact amount of his gains.

It was then that Tony flicked the ashes from the tip of his cigar, and spoke: "Mr. Terriss is again the only winner," he murmured, as if to himself. "I wonder what he would say if I mentioned that the cards with which he has been winning—are marked?"

In an instant Terriss was on his feet. "What did you say, Claghorn?" he thundered. "What did you say?"

Tony stood his ground stoutly. "I made the statement," he declared, "that you have been winning with marked cards." He took up the two decks that had been used in the bridge game, and balanced them in his hands. "I still make that statement."

"You——" shouted Terriss, and dashed at him.

Chisholm thrust his bulk between. "Take it easy, Terriss," he suggested, "we all know what's been going on. Mr. Claghorn has been looking into things for us."

Terriss gazed around the circle of faces. "What's this? A conspiracy?" he demanded.

Chisholm shook his head. "Terriss, you know us better than that. Bell—Hotchkiss—Straker—Billings—they've all got reputations to lose, not to mention me. We've asked Mr. Claghorn to investigate. That's all."

"And how is Mr. Claghorn qualified to pass upon such matters? What right has Mr. Claghorn to make accusations against me?"

A chorus answered him. Straker, it appeared, had been present upon a certain occasion when Tony had unmasked one Schwartz. Billings, who had been another witness of that feat, contributed details of the manner in which Tony had exposed a sharper at Palm Beach. Chisholm, a third witness, had half a dozen stories at his finger tips.

Tony Claghorn's career, it was evident from their testimony, had been one long succession of triumphs. His wake was dotted with discomfited cheats, prestidigitators, and impostors. Once put upon the scent, he had never failed to bring down his man.

With appropriate modesty Tony bowed his head while his friends detailed his triumphs. To be sure, the credit for each victory was wholly due to one Bill Parmelee, an unassuming countryman whose acquaintance Tony had made one summer; and Tony, not once but a dozen times, had explained how his own contribution to the various episodes which had since become famous was of the slightest. But Tony's explanations must have lacked the convincing note, for his friends did not hesitate to trumpet his praises to the four corners of the earth. That they should forget the quiet young man who had played the leading rôle was not unnatural: Parmelee, farmer and reformed gambler, cared nothing for advertising, and chose to remain out of sight. Almost mechanically, his laurels descended upon Claghorn, who, despite his protestations, found the eminence thus forced upon him far from unpleasant.

When Terriss' monotonous success at bridge had come to Tony's attention he had attempted to interest Parmelee in the matter. He had failed. Parmelee, Cincinnatus of gamblers, cared more for his blooded cattle than for fresh laurels. And he had not agreed entirely with Claghorn's conclusions.

"Tony, because a man's a winner, it doesn't follow that he's a cheat," he had pointed out.

"No, but in this case——"

"In any case," Parmelee had interrupted, "you must remember that for every dollar won by dishonest gambling a thousand are probably won by honest play."

"You don't really believe that!"

"I don't know whether I do or not. But that's what I like to think."

Tony's enthusiasm had been damped but not extinguished. After revolving the subject in his mind overnight he had decided that he himself was entirely competent and that Bill's confidence in human nature was, to say the very least, exaggerated. Wherefore Tony had gallantly launched himself into the breach.

He smiled at Terriss across the table. Success was his, and its taste was sweet. "Marked cards, Mr. Terriss," he repeated, "marked cards."

Terriss glanced at the set faces about him, and his assurance decreased visibly. "I suppose," he faltered, "that it will be quite useless for me to say that I didn't know the cards were marked."

"Quite useless," said Tony.

"I won fairly and squarely. I played the game according to the rules."

"What's the good of arguing?" inquired Straker icily.

Terriss gazed about helplessly. "No; there's no good in arguing if you're all against me," he assented. "What do you expect me to do?"

"Make good."

"How?"

"Give back what you won."

Terriss snorted. "I'll be damned if I do!" he declared.

"If you don't," said Chisholm, "you will forfeit your membership in this club."

"And if I do," challenged Terriss, "will I hold on to it? Am I the kind of man whom you want to remain? What's the difference whether I give back my winnings or not—except to me? I've been caught cheating, haven't I? That makes me an undesirable member by itself, doesn't it? Of course I say that I played honestly: that's what you'd expect me to say. But even if I give back my winnings, you won't believe me."

"It's the correct thing to do, Terriss," said Straker quietly.

"What does the correct thing matter to a man who has been caught cheating? No; if I'm to be hanged, I'd rather be hanged as a wolf than as a lamb." He took up the score, and surveyed the totals. "Gentlemen, you owe me money. Write your checks."

"What?" gasped Chisholm.

"You've lost. Pay me."

"What about the marked cards?"

"Well, what about them? If there are marked cards, you may have profited by them yourself. Try and prove you didn't."

"I lost!" sputtered Chisholm, nearly speechless.

"What of that? If the cards hadn't been marked, you might have lost still more. And that applies to all of us." With supreme self-confidence, he beamed upon the players. "Pay me," he invited, "pay me, or I'll bring suit against every man jack of you. You see, I no longer have a reputation to lose, and it won't hurt me to go to court. But if you fellows think you will enjoy the publicity, if you look forward to seeing your names decorating the front pages of the newspapers, just try getting out of your debts."

Helplessly the conspirators turned to Tony. "What do you advise?" they asked as one man.

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "This is out of my department," he said modestly.

Straker glanced about keenly. "You know," he said brightly, "Terriss may be bluffing."

Terriss grinned. "If that's what you think, why don't you play your hand and call his bluff?"

There was a pause. Then Billings seized his pen and dashed off a check. "Here you are," he said ungraciously. "I have a wife and two daughters. I can't afford to get mixed up in a scandal."

"Quite so," said Terriss. "I thought you'd see the point after I'd explained it to you. Line forms this side."

One by one the men wrote checks, and passed them to the lone winner. He pocketed them carefully, rose, surveyed the conspirators. "Gentlemen," he murmured, "I am about to leave you, to return to my poor but honest domicile. And I have one last request to make of you: don't tell anybody what happened in this room to-night; don't breathe a word of it to your closest friends."

Straker laughed aloud. "Won't we?" he cackled. "Oh, won't we? I'll make it my business to see that every man in this club knows just what took place in twenty-four hours!"

Terriss smiled ominously. "In that event, Straker," he warned, "don't pretend you're surprised when I bring suit for criminal libel."

"What?"

"Against each and every one of you." At the threshold he paused. "I can't stop you from blackening my reputation among yourselves; you seem to have done that pretty thoroughly anyhow. But let me hear that any one of you has dared to say a word against me outside of this room, and I'll hit back! By George, I will! I'll hit back, and I'll hit back hard! Marked cards! Who brought them into the game? Who profited by them? Who didn't profit by them?" A mocking smile hovered upon his lips as he opened the door. "Gentlemen, think it over! Before you do anything, think it over—and then don't do it!"

The latch clicked behind him, and he was gone.

It was Billings who first broke an agonized silence. "Another such victory," he soliloquized, "and we'll all be broke. What do we do next, Claghorn?"

But that worthy, pausing only to light a fresh cigar, had prudently retreated to the threshold.

"What do we do next, Claghorn?" Hotchkiss echoed.

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "This is out of my department," he said modestly.

Long, long after he had left, gently closing the door behind him, the conspirators sat around the table, comparing notes, exchanging advice, and sympathizing with each other's misfortunes. But that, how-

ever interesting in itself, has nothing to do with this story.

III.

There are always several ways of looking at a matter. A disinterested judge, for example, might hesitate to characterize the episode which we have recounted as a triumph for Mr. Anthony P. Claghorn. But Claghorn himself spoke of it as a triumph without question. He had set out to expose a sharper; he had succeeded. That the operation had been monstrously costly to his friends was not so important as the fact that it had attained its object. Tony, indeed, did not use stronger terms than "triumph" only because stronger terms did not occur to him.

To his pretty wife he related his exploit with gusto. She understood nothing of cards, but Tony wanted admiration, and her admiration was better than none. But the approbation which mattered most was that of Bill Parmelee, and to that Tony looked forward eagerly. Half a dozen times Tony had been a mystified spectator while Bill, moving along curious lines, had laid the foundations of one of his many victories. It had been Tony's part to observe, to wonder, and to applaud at the conclusion of each carefully planned campaign.

Now, Tony felt modestly, the rôles were reversed. Without help from his friend, acting entirely upon his own initiative, he, Tony, had brought his attack to a successful termination. It would be Bill's turn to wonder, Bill's turn to applaud, Bill's turn to listen while Tony condescended to explain. In the anticipation it was all very pleasant, and Tony lost no time in scurrying to the little Connecticut town in which Parmelee had immured himself.

"I was satisfied that something was wrong," Tony began magisterially, "oh, long ago—ever so long ago."

"In spite of what I said?" Bill inquired.

"What did you say?" asked Tony tolerantly.

"I tried to convince you that a man can be a winner without being a cheat."

"Oh, yes; I remember that."

"I said that for every dollar won by dishonest gambling, a thousand are probably won by honest play."

"I remember that also," Tony admitted, and lighted a cigar, "but your faith in human nature is—shall we say—exaggerated? In this case the suspect—I'd rather not tell you his name—broke down and admitted everything."

"Well! Well!" said Bill. "Go on with your story."

"I investigated the case carefully. I used a process of elimination. The game was bridge. Certain methods of cheating were therefore useless."

"Quite correct."

"A holdout, for example, would be of no value," said Tony, and went on to explain the nature of a holdout to the man who had initiated him into its mysteries. "By a holdout," he volunteered graciously, "I mean a device which can be used for the purpose of keeping one or more cards in concealment until the player wants them in his own hand."

Not a vestige of a smile was visible on Bill's placid countenance. "I have heard there were such devices," he murmured.

"Quite so. But as I have explained to you, the suspect—whom I prefer not to call by name—could not possibly have used one. It would have meant introducing a fifty-third card into a complete deck, and that would have been detected at once. You see, if Ter—the suspect—had introduced a fifth ace into his hand, it would inevitably have duplicated an ace in some other hand. Whenever all the cards are dealt out, a holdout becomes worthless."

Bill stared at the carpet intently. "Not altogether worthless," he qualified.

"Altogether worthless," Tony insisted.

"A holdout might be used on the deal itself," murmured Bill, as if to himself. "The—ahem—suspect—might put all four aces and all four kings as well into a holdout, offer the deck to be cut without them, and pass them into his own hand on the deal."

"What?" gasped Tony.

Bill continued unemotionally. "Of course, that would be pretty raw. Nobody but a beginner would try to get away with anything like that. A really sharp player—playing bridge—would pass the top cards into his partner's hand. His partner, you see, wouldn't have to be a confederate; give him more than his share of aces and kings, and he'd go a no-trumper, wouldn't he? In all innocence he'd make the correct bid. It would be quite enough for the sharper—sitting across the table—to give him the cards warranting it."

"By George!" ejaculated Tony, "I never thought of that!"

"There are still other ways in which a holdout might be used without duplicating any one of the fifty-two cards in the deck, but it's not necessary to discuss them. Go on, Tony."

It was with a sensation that the wind had been taken out of his sails that the young man continued. "Rightly or wrongly I decided that the suspect was not using a holdout. You don't think he was, Bill?" he interjected anxiously.

"No."

"I continued with my process of elimination. There are many cheating devices. In bridge most of them are useless. But one cheating device is useful in every card game." He paused, to aim a long forefinger at his friend. "I refer, of course, to marked cards."

"Ah, ha!"

"I examined the cards carefully. They were not marked. But I risked everything on a bold bluff," chortled Tony, "and it worked. I made one heap of all my winnings," he misquoted, "and I risked it all on one pitch—on one pitch—I forget how it goes on."

"Cut out the poetry and tell me what happened."

"I picked the psychological instant. I've always been good at that—picking the psychological instant; and I boldly accused Ter—the suspect—of using marked cards. I knew well enough he wasn't using them. Here"—and Tony produced the cards themselves from capacious pockets—"here they are—unmarked. But I understand human nature, and I felt sure that if I accused a cheat of cheating, he would—ahem—collapse. Whether or not I happened to mention the exact method he was using did not matter: the accusation would be enough."

"Did it work?"

"To perfection. Ter—the suspect—was silent—and silence is confession."

Bill smiled. "Is it?" he queried. "If so, a sleeping man is guilty of anything."

"The suspect knew the game was up."

"Perhaps he felt you were carrying too many guns for him. What was the use of pleading innocence when you—and your friends—were convinced he was guilty?"

"I made it a point to treat—ahem!—the suspect—with scrupulous fairness."

"Why not call him by his name? Roy Terriss?"

"How did you know?" gasped Tony.

"That's neither here nor there. Go on."

But Tony was too astonished to continue. "How did you know?" he demanded. "How on earth did you know?"

Bill shook his head. "We'll skip that for the time being. Finish your story."

Tony gazed at his friend with some bewilderment. He had looked forward to this moment of triumph. In the realization it was not so satisfactory as in prospect. He passed a shaky hand over his brow. "Perhaps you can finish the story yourself, Bill."

"Perhaps I can. Terriss admitted nothing. Terriss denied nothing. He refused to give back the money he had won. That took nerve, and I admire him for it. He knew he had no chance of vindicating himself. He decided to wait for a better opportunity."

Tony nodded reluctantly. "Most of that's quite correct," he admitted grudgingly.

"You accused Terris of playing with marked cards. He replied that if the cards were marked he hadn't benefited by it. And he added what was, after all, a logical conclusion: that the marks might have been of value to your friends."

"Absurd on the face of it," commented Tony. "The cards aren't marked."

"Not so absurd as you think," qualified Bill, and his face set in stern lines. "The cards *are* marked."

IV.

Sometimes the word "surprise" is too feeble fully to express a state of mind. Indeed, to picture Tony's reaction to his friend's simple announcement in reasonably accurate terms, it would be necessary to overhaul, refurnish, and expand the English dictionary.

Tony gazed at Bill with eyes that popped out of his head, opened his mouth two or three times, wet his lips, and sputtered, "Wh-what did you say?"

"I said," repeated Bill, "that these cards are marked."

"But they can't be!" exploded Tony. "Don't you see? That was the whole beauty of my bluff: that the cards were what they should be, and that I made him believe they were something else."

Bill smiled grimly. "Sometimes a bluff isn't a bluff. Sometimes a man shoots in the dark and hits the bull's-eye. Sometimes a well-meaning blunderer like you, Tony, tells the truth when he least suspects it."

"But it's impossible! I've examined those cards with a magnifying glass! I've gone over them not once but a dozen times! I haven't found a thing!"

"Tony, you didn't know what to look for." Bill spread half a dozen cards on a convenient table. "In the first place, the cards are of an uncommon pattern. You notice the two little angels in the center? They're what is known as 'Angel-Backs.'"

"They're the cards that the club supplies."

"I don't doubt that."

"For the last eight months no other cards have been used at the Himalaya."

"Then how about these?" Bill spread half a dozen cards from the second deck on the table.

Tony gave the cards, decorated with a conventional geometrical design, only a glance. "Oh, those? Those are poorer-grade cards which the club laid in when it began to run short of the better ones."

"The Angel-Backs being the better grade?"

"Of course. You can see that in a minute."

Bill half closed his eyes reminiscently. "When I made my living as a gambler—when I was just beginning to learn the ropes—Angel-Backs were fairly common. They were good cards. They were high priced, but they were worth it. They gradually dropped out of use; cheaper cards took their place. To-day people don't care about quality; it is price that matters. In fact, this deck of Angel-Backs is the first that I have seen in some years. I was under the impression that they were no longer being manufactured."

Tony could not restrain his impatience. "Come back to the subject, Bill," he begged. "You said the cards were marked. Which deck? And how are they marked?"

"The Angel-Backs, of course. Look at the angels closely."

"I see nothing."

Bill smiled. "This angel, for example, must have gone walking in the mud. His right foot is not as clean as it might be."

"What of that?"

"This other angel evidently put one hand into the mud. You'll notice it's dirty. This third angel knelt in it: there's some on one of his knees. And this fourth angel must have been doing somersaults: you'll notice his complexion has gotten darker."

"By George!" ejaculated Tony.

"Go through the deck," invited Bill, "and you'll find that there isn't an angel in it who wouldn't be the better for a bath. And you'll find—it's a pure coincidence, doubtless—that the kings have marks on their right shoulders, the queens marks on their left shoulders, the jacks marks at the waist line, and so on through the lot. The angels are small—and the marks are still smaller—but they're very evident when you're looking for them."

Without a word Tony whipped out a magnifying glass, and bent over the cards. "You're right!" he said excitedly, "you're right! And that proves my case beyond a doubt."

"What do you mean?"

"Terriss *was* using marked cards. My guess hit the nail on the head. Terriss marked the cards while the game was under way."

"Marked them as delicately as this? As accurately? Tony, don't you believe it."

"But cards can be marked during the progress of a game."

"Yes—with a prick—or with a spot of color. But to mark cards like this? To select a minute speck on the back of each, and dot it as neatly as these are dotted? That takes time, skill—and privacy. The man who marked those cards did it in his room."

"You mean Terriss brought the marked deck with him, and substituted it for one we were using?"

"Not likely."

"Why not? It could have been done."

"It's most improbable. You'll notice that every card in the deck is marked—not the high cards alone."

"What of that?"

"What would be the object—in bridge? Really fine players place the cards as far down as the sevens and eights. But whoever heard of taking a finesse against a three-spot? Or a four? Or a five? Why should any sane man take the trouble—and the risk—to mark them?"

Tony corrugated his brow. "Perhaps," he hazarded, "perhaps the man who marked the cards was keen on doing a thorough job.

Having begun, he didn't know when to stop."

Bill shook his head decisively. "It won't do, Tony. It won't do at all. An amateur might have done that—you might have done that, at a first attempt—but the man we are looking for is a professional, or I know nothing about gambling and gamblers. Look at the beauty of the work! See how perfectly his shading matches the color of the backs! And remember if he marked the twos and threes there was a good reason."

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "Reason or no reason, I can't see that it's of any particular importance."

But Bill was already studying a timetable. "The next train for New York leaves in forty minutes," he mentioned. "I'm going to pack my bag."

Tony gazed at him with surprise. "Going to New York because the twos and threes are marked? Really, I think you're exaggerating their importance."

"It would be difficult to do that," said Bill. He rose and glanced keenly at his friend. "In the first place, they prove that Roy Terriss is innocent."

"How so?"

"I have been given to understand that he plays no other game than bridge."

"Yes; that's so."

"Well, the man who marked these cards didn't expect to play bridge at all. That's my second place, Tony. The man who marked these cards didn't neglect the little ones for the soundest reason in the world."

"And what's that?" asked Tony scornfully.

Bill opened his valise, and began to jam articles of clothing into it. He glanced at his friend, and smiled; opened his mouth to speak; closed it and smiled again. "Tony, hasn't it struck you yet?" he demanded at length. "The man who marked these cards expected to play poker!"

V.

Upon every other occasion that Parmelee had accompanied him to New York, Tony had been filled with happy anticipation. It had meant, invariably, that the man hunt was on in earnest; that a pursuit which would end only with the exposure of the guilty individual was under way. In the past, Tony, a privileged spectator, knowing enough to whet his curiosity to the utmost, but never knowing quite as much as he wanted to, had enjoyed a long succession of happy thrills. Not once but half a dozen times had he observed Parmelee, picking up a scent like a well-trained bloodhound, disentangling it from others, follow it to a surprising conclusion. Tony had watched, wondered, admired: here was drama, hot off the griddle, served in the most appetizing fashion, and the clubman, whose chief entertainment, in earlier days, had been provided by the headlines of the sensational newspapers, had come to learn that a thrill, at firsthand, was worth a dozen relayed through print. It had all been most enjoyable—yet Tony, upon this particular occasion, was conscious of no pleasurable feelings.

He gazed gloomily out of the window, and gave himself up to unhappy reflections. The cards had been marked; Terriss was not the guilty man: both facts, Tony was compelled to admit, were crystal clear. It followed, as night follows day, that the criminal must be one of his own particular cronies: Chisholm, Billings, Hotchkiss, Bell or Straker. Tony reviewed the list to the accompaniment of the click of the wheels. Man hunting, he admitted, was a sport which eclipsed all other sports; but somehow it lost its zest when the prospective victim was one of his own friends.

After half an hour's gloomy meditation, he turned to the quiet countryman at his side. "Bill," he ventured tentatively, "I take it that when you reach New York you will want to go to the Himalaya Club."

"You take it correctly."

"It's not necessary, you know."

"Why not?"

"Well, really, I haven't asked you to investigate anything."

"That's all right, old fellow," Bill responded heartily, "I haven't waited to be asked."

Tony's voice carried a gentle tinge of reproof. "Don't you think," he inquired tactfully, "that you should wait until you are asked?"

Bill laughed. "Meaning, I suppose, that I'm butting in."

"I wouldn't say that."

"No; but it's what you're thinking." He glanced shrewdly at Claghorn. "Tony, old fellow, you shot in the dark, and you brought down the wrong man. You have branded Roy Terriss a crooked gambler—a

cheat—a thief—a man unfit to be received in decent society. Do you want him to rest under that cloud?"

"No; no, indeed," began Tony vociferously, "that's not what I mean at all."

"Of course not," Bill chimed in. "You're too fair and square to tolerate anything like that. You want Terriss cleared—cleared triumphantly—only," and Bill smiled shrewdly, "only—you're rather scared that I'm going to fix the blame on one of your very best friends. Isn't that so?"

Tony nodded.

Bill grinned. "That's what might happen, no doubt. I'm not denying it. If I merely wanted to bag a man, and didn't care how I did it, I think I could convict any one of your friends—or you yourself, for that matter."

"Convict me?" gasped Tony.

"It could be done. How did you come by those marked cards?"

"Why—why—I took them from the table."

"How did they get there? How do I know you didn't mark them yourself? How do I know that you and your friends weren't banded together to rob Terriss."

It was Tony's turn to grin. "Well, we lost."

"To Terriss, perhaps. But the night before the same crowd won pretty heavily from somebody else—what?"

"How did you know that?"

"It doesn't matter," said Bill. "I know it—that's enough. I'm simply trying to show you how easy it would be to find a victim if I were after no more than that. You and your friends have touched pitch, Tony, and you can't touch pitch without being defiled."

Tony's brain whirled. "You mean, then," he sputtered, "you mean that the guilty man is Chisholm—or Billings—or Straker—or Bell—or Hotchkiss—or—or me?"

Bill laughed. "If it will comfort you—and I think it will—I'll let you into a secret, and tell you that I don't suspect any of them—of you, I mean," he corrected gravely.

Tony felt a crushing weight rising buoyantly—easily—happily. "Do you mean that?" he cried.

"We're looking for a professional cheat," said Bill. "Remember that. Hold fast to that. It's the only thing, Tony, between you yourself and the deep sea. You've been worrying about your friends so much that you've completely overlooked what a suspicious character somebody else is."

"Who?" begged Tony.

"Tony Claghorn," said Bill. He smiled at his friend's consternation. "Tony Claghorn has been running around with me so much that he has acquired a firsthand knowledge of cheating devices. How do you know he hasn't used that knowledge? How do you know he hasn't tried to convert theory into practice? It would be profitable—very profitable—and he might get away with it. No, Tony," said Bill, "Roy Terriss is safe. It's Tony Claghorn we have to look after now. And if I'm going to New York it's because I think I see a chance to save his skin."

Tony was so completely dumfounded that he was silent for the rest of the trip.

VI.

It was between hours at the Himalaya Club when the two men walked in. The regulars, who ate their lunch in the raftered dining hall every day, had departed; and the even more regulars, who experimented with games of chance in its card rooms from late afternoon until early morning, had not yet arrived.

"We'd better go away, and come back later," said Tony.

"Why not wait here?" suggested Bill. He seated himself at a table. "Tony, how would you like to play some cold hands?"

Tony gazed at his friend with a suspicious eye. "What stake?" he inquired.

"Why any stake at all?" countered Bill. "We'll play for nothing—and the fun of it."

Tony assented doubtfully. Ordinarily filled with implicit trust in his friend, his adventure on the train had sadly shaken his equilibrium. He, Tony, was under suspicion. Any move of Bill's might therefore be dangerous to him. In some vague, incomprehensible manner, disaster threatened—with the most innocent exterior.

With noticeable lack of enthusiasm he seated himself at the table, and rang for cards.

Bill glanced at the box, and did not open it. "I don't care for these cards," he announced. "Can't we have some Angel-Backs?"

"I'll see, sir," said the man.

Tony's suspicions redoubled. "What's the matter with the cards?" he inquired.

"I like to play with cards of better quality," the countryman alleged. His eyes shone as the waiter returned with a deck of the required pattern.

He broke the seal, opened the box, and riffled the cards thoughtfully.

"Do you like these better?" Tony asked.

"Much better. Very much better." He dealt the cards, face down, with amazing speed. "King of hearts. Two of diamonds. Eight of hearts. Ace of spades. Three of clubs. Seven of spades. Ten of hearts. Seven of clubs Five of hearts. Seven of hearts."

"What's this?" demanded Tony. "Legerdemain?"

Bill shrugged his shoulders. "Call it what you like. But if you will look at your cards you will find that you have a four flush in hearts. You will fill on the draw. The card on top of the deck is another heart."

"And you?" gasped Tony.

"Triplets; nothing but triplets," smiled Bill. "Three sevens."

"And they'll be four of a kind on the draw?"

"That would be too raw, old fellow. No: a full house will be enough. That will beat your flush."

Tony broke into a roar of laughter. "I see it!" he cried. "Of course I see it!"

"What do you see?"

"You stacked the cards!"

"That's pretty evident."

"And they weren't hard to stack because you substituted the marked deck—the deck I brought up to the country—for the new deck the waiter handed you!"

"Is that so?" challenged Bill.

"These cards are marked!"

"Admitted."

"They must be the same deck—unless—unless——"

"Well, say it."

"Unless," faltered Tony, with cold sweat breaking out suddenly on his brow, "unless every deck of Angel-Backs in the club is marked!"

Bill smiled. "That's what I'm trying to find out," he granted. "They may all be—shall we say?—fallen angels."

Without a word Tony rang for the waiter. "We want another deck—two more decks—of Angel-Backs," he snapped.

The waiter shook his head. "Sorry, sir, I can't do it."

"Why not?"

"We're running very short of the Angel-Backs—and the members prefer them to the other cards. They're better quality. The steward instructed me not to give out more than one deck to a party."

Tony extracted a bank note from his pocket. "I want two decks of Angel-Backs," he repeated. "Do you understand?"

"I'll do what I can," said the waiter.

He was back in a few minutes with a single deck. "I couldn't get you two," he apologized, "there's not a gross left, sir. I'm breaking orders as it is, sir."

In silence Tony passed the unopened box to his friend. "Open it, Bill."

Parmelee put his hands behind his back. "Open it yourself. You might accuse me of substituting another deck."

Without a word Tony broke the seal, inverted the box, and allowed the cards to cascade upon the table.

"Well?" Bill inquired.

"Marked. Marked—every blame one of them!"

"Fallen angels!" murmured Parmelee. "Fallen angels! Tony, don't you think we might have a chat with the steward?"

Tony clenched his fists. "If he's the man who marked them I'll see that he's out of a job in ten minutes!"

"Why so excitable?" soothed Bill. "What would the steward have to gain by trickery? He isn't the man we want: you can depend upon that."

He listened quietly while his explosive friend summoned the steward, and explained the state of affairs to that worthy. The man examined the cards, paled, bit his lips. "Really, sir," he stammered, "this is most surprising—most surprising."

"I'll say so!" asseverated Tony.

"I wouldn't believe it if I didn't see it with my own eyes. It's monstrous—incredible."

"How do you explain it?"

"I—I don't."

"How do we know that you're not the guilty man?"

"Oh, sir, I've been in the employ of this club for twenty-eight years! It would be late in life for me to turn around and become a common cheat. Really, sir, you don't think that I could be capable of such a thing?"

Bill broke into the conversation. "How

many more decks of Angel-Backs have you?"

"Less than a gross."

"Why didn't you order more?"

"I did. The jobber couldn't fill my orders."

"Oh!" Bill half closed his eyes. "When did you first buy Angel-Backs?"

"About a year ago, sir. Shall I tell you about it?"

"I wish you would."

"A sample deck was sent us by a mail-order house. The International Supply Company, they called themselves."

"What was their address?"

"A post-office box at Times Square Station, New York City, sir."

"Go on."

"Samples are sent to us frequently, but this sample was unusually good."

"Angel-Backs—I should think so!"

"Not only that, but the cards were remarkably cheap; so cheap, in fact, that the club could sell them at the same price as inferior cards and still make money."

"Didn't that circumstance make you suspicious?"

"The International Supply Company explained that the pattern was about to be discontinued, and that they had a large quantity on hand. If we would take them all, they would make us a special price, sir. I didn't make the purchase on my own responsibility. I referred the matter to the house committee. They told me to go ahead."

"What else?"

"That's all, sir. The members liked the cards, as I expected they would. We used nothing else for many months. Then the Angel-Backs began to run short. I tried to buy more."

"Your letters to the International Supply Company were returned unclaimed."

"Yes, sir. They had gone out of business."

Bill smiled. "The scent becomes more interesting as we follow it." He turned to his friend. "Tony, what's the next move?"

"To examine the rest of the cards, of course."

Bill's eyes twinkled, but he nodded soberly. "Suppose you do that, Tony. There are over a hundred decks left, so it will take time. But be thorough about it: go through every deck, and tabulate your results in writing."

VII.

After his volcanic friend had departed Bill motioned the steward to a chair at his side. "I have a good many questions to ask you," he began, "but Mr. Claghorn is safely out of the way for at least an hour. He will examine every deck of Angel-Backs in the storeroom, and he will find every card marked." The steward waited for him to continue. "In the first place, the membership of this club changes rapidly, doesn't it?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"New members are elected—old members resign—or become inactive."

"More frequently than I like. Yes, sir."

"At a rough guess, how many members, very active a year ago, are inactive today?"

"Twenty, perhaps," said the steward.

"Write their names on a piece of paper."

The man did so.

"Play for high stakes is common here?" pursued Bill.

"It is the rule, sir."

"But not all of the twenty played poker."

"No, sir."

"Scratch out the names of those who played other games. That leaves how many?"

"An even dozen, sir."

"Now let us take another angle: there have been big winners in the club during the past year?"

"Yes, sir. At least eight or ten."

"How many of them did their winning at poker?"

"Five or six."

"Write down their names. Compare the two lists. How many of the big winners —at poker—do you find among the inactive members?"

"Only one, sir."

"That's easy to explain, isn't it? A big winner doesn't become inactive. A big winner sticks to the game just as long as he continues winning."

"Naturally, sir."

"Yet one man who was a big winner—at poker—didn't wait for his luck to change. He stopped coming to the club."

The steward nodded. "That always puzzled me, sir. He played poker, and he had the reputation of being the strongest player that ever sat down to a table in these rooms. He played nearly every night for six months and then——"

"And then?"

"I never could understand it, sir, but he simply stopped coming."

Bill looked keenly at the other. "Was this man—by some curious coincidence—elected to membership just about a year ago?"

The steward nodded with dawning comprehension. "He was, sir. Mr. Ashley Kendrick was proposed one week after I had purchased the Angel-Backs. The membership committee has always been notoriously lax: it's easy to get into the Himalaya. Mr. Kendrick was elected five days after his name had been posted."

"He played poker."

"Yes, sir."

"With the Angel-Backs."

"Yes, sir."

"And he won."

"Invariably, sir."

"Then, six months later, when the cards began to run short, he stopped coming."

"Oh, no, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"He stopped coming: that part's correct, sir. But at that time we hadn't begun to run short of Angel-Backs."

Bill whistled. "This gets more interesting as we go along!"

"We were using nothing but Angel-Backs at that time; the supply was very plentiful. Mr. Kendrick simply failed to show up one evening—that was all."

"You had his address?"

"Yes, sir, but it was an address which won't help. His address was right here—in care of the Himalaya Club."

"No forwarding address, I suppose?"

"None needed, sir. From the moment he joined until the last evening he spent here Mr. Kendrick never received a letter."

It was at this juncture that Tony Claghorn thrust his exuberant self into the picture. "Bill," he announced, "I've examined the Angel-Backs."

"All of them? So soon?"

"It wasn't necessary to look at more than a card or two from each deck. They're all marked."

He had expected his announcement to produce a sensation. He was disappointed.

"Yes; I expected to hear that," said Bill calmly. "In the meantime, I've been busy."

Tony swallowed his chagrin. "With what result?" he demanded.

"Tony, I've run up a blind alley. I've found out something, but it doesn't help—not a darn bit. I'm stumped. I found the trail getting hotter and hotter, and I followed it. I fetched up against a brick wall."

"If you had allowed me to help you," Tony declared, "that wouldn't have happened."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps not."

"It's not too late now," invited Tony.

Bill grinned ruefully. "All right, Tony. Show me how to lay my hands on a fellow named Ashley Kendrick."

"Ashley Kendrick? Ashley Kendrick? Why, he hasn't been here in months."

"I know that already."

"I can't tell you how to reach him, but I can put you in touch with his best friend."

"Also a member of this club?"

"He used to be," said Tony. "He's a chap by the name of Venner. A nice chap, but the unluckiest there ever was."

Bill glanced at the steward. "Is his name on your list of inactives?"

"Yes, sir."

"But not on the list of winners?"

"No, sir. As Mr. Claghorn says, Mr. Venner was—unfortunate."

Bill sucked in his breath sharply. "I wonder—I wonder—if by any chance his misfortunes began about the time that the Angel-Backs started to run short."

The steward started. "Come to think of it, they did, sir."

Bill leaped to his feet, and flung his arms above his head with excitement unusual for him. "What a fool I was! What a dunderhead! What a numskull! I should have seen it at once! I should have guessed it right off! Why, it's as plain as the nose on a man's face!"

Tony neither understood nor shared his enthusiasm. "I don't get what you're driving at."

"Don't you see? How Venner explains everything?"

Tony fixed a look of mild reproach upon him. "Bill," he cautioned, "don't let me hear you say a word against Venner! He's as fine a fellow as there ever was—even if his luck turned—and I don't see how he explains anything."

By a superhuman effort Bill composed his face, and seated himself again. "Sorry, Tony. Perhaps I was too enthusiastic. But tell me about Venner; tell me all about him."

Tony stood on his dignity. "I don't see what Venner has to do with this case."

"All right, you don't see," said Bill, controlling his impatience with difficulty, "but tell me what I want to know anyhow."

Tony had acknowledged his friend's authority too long to shake it off easily. "If you insist——"

"I do."

"Then I'll tell you; though I warn you in advance that it won't help you at all." He bent a searching look on the steward. "This must go no farther," he warned. "This is to remain a secret among the three of us."

"I shan't say a word, sir. But if you'd prefer to have me go away——"

Magnanimously Tony shook his head. "Inasmuch as I suspected you, you have a right to listen." He turned to Parmelee. "Bill," he began, "Venner joined the club something less than a year ago—a fine fellow—a gentleman, every inch of him."

"Go on."

"He played poker—I played with him myself any number of times. He rarely played for high stakes, that is, in the beginning. He played a fair game—broke a little better than even. Then—to his misfortune—he met Kendrick.

"Of course I needn't tell you about Kendrick, one of the best poker players I ever saw; a man who could almost read your mind; who always played in the biggest game, and kicked because it wasn't bigger. Venner met Kendrick, and was fascinated by him. He gave up playing himself to watch Kendrick play; he said he had never seen anything so wonderful. And Kendrick used to like it; Kendrick always saved a chair near him for Venner.

"The two came to be close friends. You'd never see one without the other. Kendrick seemed to like teaching Venner; and Venner's eyes never left Kendrick. And when the game broke up, they'd go away together. Kendrick used to live here in the club. For a time, I believe, Venner shared Kendrick's rooms.

"Then, one night Kendrick didn't show up, and Venner acted as if he had lost the best friend he had in the world. He hovered around the table at which Kendrick used to play; he kept his eyes on the door as if Kendrick might come through it any minute; he asked every man he met if he had seen Kendrick.

"For a week Venner watched. He told more than one of us that he suspected Kendrick had met with foul play. Then he gave him up for lost."

Parmelee's eyes were fixed on vacancy. "It was then that Venner took Kendrick's place in the game—the big game."

"Yes. It was an asinine thing to do, but Venner thought he had learned enough from Kendrick to fill his boots. He did—for a night or so. He won—won heavily—and then his luck turned. He'd win one evening. He'd lose twice as much the next. He'd win a thousand—and lose three. He'd win two thousand—and lose five.

"I urged him to stop. I urged him any number of times, but he always explained that out of ordinary courtesy, he couldn't. He had won from the other fellows. He had to do the fair thing by giving them a chance for revenge."

Tony paused, and nodded gravely. "That's what Venner did: a chivalrous, gentlemanly, insane performance. Don't you think so?"

Bill turned to the steward. "What do you think?" he inquired.

"After twenty-eight years in the employ of this club I have learned that there are times when it is wisest not to think."

Bill nodded. "I can understand how you lasted twenty-eight years." He turned to Tony. "Finish your story."

Tony lowered his voice. "I'm coming to the part I want kept secret. Venner lost. Venner lost every cent he had. Venner had to stop coming to the club: he was posted for nonpayment of dues."

"Where is he now? And what is he doing?"

"Never tell a soul, will you? Venner's down and out. He's had to take a job as a waiter in a cheap restaurant; and I have to ruin my digestion by having a meal there every once in so often."

Parmelee grinned, and cast a grateful glance at his friend. "Tony, you've helped! You have no idea how you've helped!" He rose, and deliberately winked at the steward. "I presume you are good at reading riddles?"

"What's the riddle, sir?"

"This is a hard one. See if you can guess it." Gravely he propounded: "If a farmer, twenty-five years old, lives in Connecticut, goes to New York on the midday train, spends the afternoon at the Himalaya Club, and then, because he has a cast-iron diges-

tion, has his dinner at a cheap restaurant, what—what is the waiter's name?"

"Venner, sir," said the steward promptly.

"Go to the head of the class," said Bill.

VIII.

While Parmelee and his much mystified friend proceed to a frowsy, second-class eating place on lower Eighth Avenue, there to be served by one Venner, there to corral the said Venner in an untidy private dining room, there to tempt the said Venner with promises of immunity and gradually increasing amounts of currency until his silent tongue becomes exceedingly loquacious, let us turn back the pages of time two years to the very beginning of an exceedingly strange story.

The day was unbearably hot and sultry. Layers of heated air, writhing and twisting like heavy oil in their ascent, floated lazily upward from the broiling streets. The asphalt itself was soft and gummy; choking dust, the accumulation of a rainless week, lay in ambush to take suffering humanity by the throat; and in innumerable windows sickly geraniums drooped and wilted under the merciless rays of the sun.

A thermometer, hung at street level, would have indicated a temperature well into the nineties. The same thermometer, carried up five flights of stairs in any one of the near-by tenements, would gradually have registered higher and higher figures until under the metallic roof, assailed from above by the burning glare of the sun, and from below by the up-pour of scorching air, it would actually have indicated a temperature in excess of one hundred. Yet the man who bent over a little table in the inferno known as a hall bedroom in the topmost story of one of the most dilapidated buildings in the section was too intent upon his labors to notice such minor matters as the weather.

His single window was closed, its inside covered with soap, so that no observer across the street might peer through it. His door was locked—not merely locked, but barricaded by pieces of furniture which had been moved against it. And despite the heat, for not a breath of air traveled through the room, a kettle, placed on a portable oil stove, boiled briskly at the man's elbow.

On the table before which he sat paper cartons—dozens and scores of them—were stacked in orderly fashion until they reached the ceiling. At his right hand was a saucer containing a reddish liquid with an alcoholic odor. At his left hand was a second saucer containing a bluish liquid. Half a dozen minute camel's-hair brushes were carefully ranged before him. And as if the weather and the stove and the tightly closed openings had not made the room hot enough, a high-powered electric light was suspended from a cord, casting a blinding glare upon the man's hands, and upon the objects which were engrossing his attention.

He rose, removed a carton from the huge pile, and holding it dexterously, allowed the steam from the boiling kettle to hiss upon the paper seal. The carton flew open. With delicate care he set it upon the floor, and emptied it of its contents, an even gross of individually sealed small paper boxes. Each seal in turn was held for an instant in the jet of escaping steam; each gave way almost instantly.

The man placed the open boxes at one side, seated himself again, and wiping his hands carefully so that no moisture from them might make a mark, shook one of the boxes, and removed from it a new deck of playing cards. He spread them out on the table, took up one of his brushes, dipped it in the colored liquid, and with the expertness gained by long practice, placed a microscopic, but none-the-less telltale, dot on the back of each card.

Had an observer been present he would have noted that the color applied matched the back of the card perfectly; stranger yet, he would have noted that after the minute spot of moisture had dried, the closest scrutiny would have been required to show that the card had been tampered with. While moist, the tiny speck of liquid was visible; when dry, it blended with the surrounding color so excellently that no person unacquainted with the secret would have been able to discover a mark.

During his manipulations the man had been careful not to disturb the order of the cards: factory-packed playing cards are always arranged in the same manner. He examined six or eight cards closely; satisfied himself that the marks which he had made were indistinguishable; leveled the deck, and returned it to its box. For a second time he held the seal in the jet of steam. Then he closed the flap, pressed the

seal so that it adhered again, and laid the box to one side.

A dozen cartons under the table represented the labor of several weeks. Working at the greatest speed which he would permit himself, his output did not exceed ten decks an hour—and each carton contained a gross, one hundred and forty-four decks—and the huge pile before him numbered at least several hundred cartons. Had he paused to calculate, he might well have been terrified at the result; ten decks an hour; eighty to a hundred a day; at the very best, not more than five gross a week. And nearly a year would elapse before he might reach the completion of his gigantic task!

Presumably the man had made his calculations before commencing; had estimated the expenditure of time, and had decided that it was worth his while, for he paused not an instant upon finishing one deck before beginning on another. He worked rapidly yet carefully, with a concentration which might have been explained only had a slave driver, with a whip, been standing behind him. Practice had brought him surprising skill. There was no waste motion; no misdirected energy. Little by little the pile of unfinished work diminished; little by little the pile of finished work grew.

At seven o'clock, or thereabouts, he extinguished the oil stove, drew a clean white sheet over the mountain of cartons, washed, and made himself presentable, and went out, padlocking the door of his room behind him. Other tenants of the building, gathered at the entrance for a breath of air, nodded to him as he strode by them.

"Good evening, Mr. Kendrick," they chorused.

"Good evening," said Kendrick, and went on his way—to a lunch room around the corner.

"What's he do for a living?" inquired one of the neighbors.

"He's a littery man," said one better informed.

"A which?"

"A littery man. He writes novels and books and stories. Locks himself in his room from morning till night, and writes—just writes. He told me so himself. Keeps regular hours, just like a workingman, too."

"That ain't work—just writing," commented a listener, and broke off to inquire, "Have you ever read anything he's written?"

"Not yet. He says there'll be nothing of his published for a year. But he's going to let me know when something comes out."

Let us dive headlong for the end of that year. The pile of unfinished work had shrunk—finally vanished. The little room was filled with neatly stacked cartons, which one might have examined and sworn had never been opened. And the International Supply Company—alias Kendrick—having offered samples of superior-quality playing cards at ruinous prices to three clubs, equally notorious for the size of the games played under their roofs, and for the ease with which a stranger might secure membership, had arranged to sell the entire quantity to the Himalaya.

The following day a horse-drawn truck, specially hired for the occasion, and personally driven by the International Supply Company—alias Kendrick—delivered several hundred gross of marked cards to the Himalaya Club.

Within a week Mr. Ashley Kendrick was proposed for membership in that notorious organization.

He was elected five days later.

Within less than a month he was voted the best poker player who had ever seated himself at one of the Himalaya's card tables. And his former neighbors, who had looked forward to reading his books, novels, and stories, waited a while—and then forgot him.

IX.

A gambler's paradise: a place where the play is continuous, where the stakes are high, where the players are liberal, and—where every card is marked! It was in such an unbelievably blissful spot that Kendrick now found himself. For a whole year he had worked and planned; for a whole year he had lived economically on his savings: if he was at length to be rewarded, he felt that he deserved it.

Yet he did not make the mistake of playing too well. An infallible player discourages his opponents; whereas an occasional loss is not expensive, and greatly heartens the victim. Kendrick, who knew every card in the deck, who could read his opponents' hands as readily as if they had been exposed, who could tell every time whether or not it was worth while to draw, could have won far more than he actually per-

mitted himself to. Hardly an evening went by without Kendrick sustaining at least one sensational loss; hardly a session without his going down to defeat on at least one well-advertised hand. But never did the gambler rise from his seat poorer than when he had settled himself into it; never did the end of a session make it necessary for Kendrick to produce his check book.

He limited himself strictly to a maximum winning, and his self-control was such that he never exceeded the fixed amount. Yet the maximum was a liberal maximum, for at the end of ten days he had recouped himself for the expenditures of the preceding year, and at the end of three months his bank account had begun to assume formidable proportions.

At the end of four months he increased his maximum liberally, and doubled his bank account, and at the end of five months he began to fling off all restraint. He began to play poker of a brand unheard of even at the Himalaya, where fine players abounded. He had put by a gigantic nest egg; the marked cards would not last forever; and it was his program to win as much as possible against the day when the Angel-Backs would begin to run short.

It was at this juncture that Venner, so he confessed to Parmelee, projected himself into the situation.

Venner, a shiftless ne'er-do-well of pleasing personality, had dissipated a modest inheritance, and was fast nearing the end of his slender resources. He played poker tolerably: upon occasion he had not hesitated to cheat, and in the hope of extending his dishonest operations enough to make a killing, he had purchased half a dozen decks of cards at the club, and had taken them home with him with the laudable intention of marking them. Once marked, he would find opportunities to substitute them for the club's cards.

He had marked two or three decks before he made the astounding discovery that the cards were already marked. He could not believe the evidence of his eyes. Feverishly he broke open the sealed boxes, to find that some pioneer in knavery had been before him. More cards, covertly examined at the Himalaya itself, confirmed the amazing truth.

Venner had intended to indulge in cheating on a small scale. His discovery of the existence of a swindle of such gigantic dimensions left him simply thunderstruck. For an instant he reflected that knowing the secret, he, too, could win as he pleased. But upon second thought it occurred to him that there would be quite as much gain, and far less risk, were he to make a cat's-paw out of the daring sharper who was doubtless at work this instant.

For months Kendrick had been a sensational winner. Within twenty-four hours after penetrating his secret Venner confronted him.

"You can't prove anything," Kendrick said.

"I know it," said Venner.

"I'm the most surprised man in the world to learn that the cards are marked," Kendrick alleged.

"Then you won't object if I pass the word on to the other members, and see that other cards are used?"

Kendrick's eyes narrowed. Venner was easy for him to see through. "What's the alternative?" he demanded.

"Divvy up with me," murmured Venner. "Pay me half of whatever you win, and I'll be as silent as the grave." He paused. "If you don't, I'll expose you. I'll say that you confessed everything——"

"Nobody will believe it."

"If that's what you think, turn down my offer."

Kendrick was in an unpleasant position, and was fully aware of it. The solution—the solution that flashed upon him at once was to pretend to accept Venner's terms, and to disappear forever from the scene. But the weak point was painfully obvious: Venner, out of spite, might set the authorities upon his trail. It would be better, Kendrick decided instantaneously, to wait until Venner too was thoroughly besmirched; to make Venner an accomplice who dared not open his mouth without imperiling his own freedom. And then, also, even if he had to divide his future winnings, a great deal of money might be amassed in a short time—say two or three weeks.

He shook Venner's hand heartily. "You're a man after my own heart," he said. "I accept your proposition."

Then began the short but interesting period during which Venner, according to Tony's description, sat at Kendrick's side and ostensibly studied his game, but during which Venner, according to his own confession, followed the play with an eagle eye to

make sure that his partner in crime did not win more than he would admit, and thus defraud him of his share.

After a few days Venner invited himself to live in Kendrick's rooms; he could keep a closer watch on him in that manner; and for two brief but happy weeks Venner's income was exceedingly large. He treated himself to a new outfit of clothing, and began to sport small but costly scarfpins. He even looked at automobiles; his improved circumstances would warrant him in purchasing one.

Then, upon the evening of the day that Venner after convening himself in executive session, had voted that Kendrick should henceforth pay him three quarters and not merely half of his winnings, the astute gambler disappeared. Venner was worried; believed that his partner had met with foul play. At the end of a week a letter mailed en route to Mexico City told Venner the truth. Kendrick had disappeared for good. He had won enough to support him in comfort the rest of his life. He did not propose to share his winnings, even with so likable a chap as Venner. Nevertheless he gave Venner his blessing, and mentioned that he admired Venner's collection of scarfpins—which he had taken to Mexico with him.

At once Venner found himself in straitened circumstances. His income had vanished: his expenditure continued. But the Angel-Backs promised relief.

He took Kendrick's place in the big game, and won heavily for two nights. On the third night, to his unutterable horror, cards of a strange pattern were used, and Venner, compelled to play honest poker against men who qualified as experts, lost more than he had won in the two preceding sessions.

On the fourth night the Angel-Backs returned, and Venner did well. But on the fifth and sixth nights other cards were supplied, and the results were harrowing.

What followed partook of the nature of a nightmare. Venner had run into debt; willing or unwilling was compelled to play. And he was suddenly confronted with a situation far more dangerous than any that had ever faced Kendrick; the Angel-Backs were running short; other cards were being substituted; and if Venner invariably won with the Angel-Backs and lost upon all other occasions, it would not be long before some astute observer called attention to the circumstance.

He used to lie awake at night, summoning up hideous pictures, visioning the possibilities. It occurred to him that he might purchase more Angel-Backs, mark them, and introduce them into the play. He found that cards of that pattern were not obtainable at any price. Even had they been obtainable, he could not bring them to the table without inviting suspicious comment. He thought of marking the cards which the club had substituted for the Angel-Backs; but he realized that the sleight of hand necessary to exchange them for the deck in use was far beyond him. In his petty cheating in the past he had occasionally indulged in the form of dishonesty known as ringing in a cold deck. That was possible, playing for moderate stakes, with no spectators. It was impossible, save for some sharper far more expert than he, in a big game closely watched by twenty or more men.

For a ghastly week Venner endured the tortures of the damned. Like Kendrick, he found it well to limit his winnings when the gods were good to him, and when chance brought a deck of marked cards to his table. But unlike Kendrick, he was compelled too often to play with strange cards—and he found it quite impossible to limit his losings.

For all of his sins in the past the cheat paid a thousand times over during that week. To put in an appearance each night, smiling and jovial, while his soul writhed in torment; to forgo pot after pot when the Angel-Backs offered it to him, because to win too much might have created suspicion; to lose upon other nights, and lose heavily —disastrously—because he dared not change his style of play; no wonder the man cracked under the strain.

He began to play wildly—recklessly. His opponents, shrewd students of psychology, sensed the change in the wind. In two consecutive sessions they stripped him.

Courtesy prohibits a man from taking another's last cigarette; but it does not prohibit a man from taking another's last dollar. His opponents showed him no mercy. When Venner left the Himalaya Club for the last time, he had borrowed as much as his friends would lend, he owned nothing, and his pockets were emptv.

This, coming by driblets in the begin-

ning, coming faster and faster as the man's emotions mastered him in the end, was the story that Parmelee and Claghorn heard from the lips of one Venner, a waiter in a frowsy, second-class eating place on lower Eighth Avenue.

X.

It was not until half an hour after they had left the restaurant, on their walk uptown, that Bill opened his mouth. Tony, completely floored, for once in his life, had marched at his side in silence.

"We started, didn't we," said Bill, "to find out whether or not Roy Terriss cheated at bridge? It's funny over what a long trail it has led us! Terriss—the Angel-Backs—the Himalaya—Kendrick—Venner——"

"Don't mention that man's name to me!" interrupted Tony.

"Why not?"

"When I think of what I've been doing to my digestion on his account: eating in that miserable restaurant at least once a week, because I sympathized with him! Ugh!"

"Venner is a whole lot worse off, isn't he? You have been a guest of the restaurant; he is a waiter in it."

"Serves him right!"

"Perhaps. Perhaps. Something—call it what you will—has a great way of getting even with the man who doesn't play fair. Venner is paying—Venner is paying heavily. If you're a real man, Tony, you might go on eating a meal in that restaurant once in a while."

"Why?"

"Some day you may be able to set Venner on the right path—and that would be your way of paying whatever you owe. How about it, Tony?"

"Er—I'll think about it."

Bill nodded his approval. "Pay! Pay! Pay! You can't get out of it!"

"No? How about Kendrick?"

"He'll be no exception. Think of the year's slavery he endured before he could bring off his coup! Think what he could have done—where he could have been today—had he applied the same energy to any honest pursuit!"

"He's living in luxury, in Mexico."

"Yes—for six months, perhaps."

"He won enough to support him the rest of his life."

"Lots of gamblers have done that, but somehow the money doesn't last. Money made that way never lasts. Like the angels—the fallen angels—it has wings! An honest man can call on the law to protect his property. Kendrick can't. The moment the others find that out—in Mexico—what chance will he have?" Bill shook his head vigorously. "No, of the two, I think Venner is the lucky one. He's alive, and I'll bet two to one this minute that Kendrick isn't. He worked too hard for his money to give it up living; and in Mexico life is cheap—very cheap."

"Maybe," said Tony, "maybe." He thought hard for a minute. Then he turned to his friend. "From the very beginning I've never understood why you've been so keenly interested in this affair. What was it? Love of adventure?"

"Not after six years of drifting about the country, old fellow."

"Then what was it?"

Bill permitted himself the luxury of a smile. "As I told you this morning—it seems so long ago, doesn't it?—it was nothing but a friendly desire to save your reputation."

"My reputation?" repeated Tony incredulously.

"That was all. You see, after you had exposed Terriss, it occurred to him that you were a pupil of mine, and he came straight to headquarters with his troubles."

"He went to you?" gasped Tony.

"That is the thought I am trying to convey," Bill assented. "Terriss was innocent. You know that now. He knew it then, and he convinced me like a shot. He wanted to be vindicated; but that wasn't all: he was dead sure that if the cards were marked, you had marked them yourself, and he wanted to see you—you and your friends—behind the bars! He is a clever man, a mighty quick-thinking man, and I'm pretty sure that if I hadn't taken the case, he'd have turned the tables on you before now!"

Tony's face became purple. "But I'm innocent! You know I'm innocent!"

"Sometimes it's very hard to prove, Tony. Terriss was innocent—but he couldn't make you see it."

Tony swallowed hard. "My friends and I owe Terriss a handsome apology."

"I'll say you do!"

"I shall see that it is forthcoming. And by the way, whatever fee you charge Terriss will be paid by me."

"Fair enough."

"Your expenses, too. Whatever they were, I will reimburse you."

Bill smiled. "Well, you heard me promise Venner a hundred dollars if he'd tell his story."

"I'll pay that."

"When you make out your check to Venner, make a mistake and slip in an extra nought before the decimal point."

"Why on earth should I do that?"

"No reason at all," said Bill, "except that I'm sentimental. For a hundred dollars—a contemptible hundred dollars—Venner turned his soul inside out. I'm going to improve his self-respect by convincing him that his soul is worth at least a thousand."

Tony nodded. "I get your point. The check will read a thousand. And now, your fee."

"That will come high."

"I expect that."

"Terriss expected it too, the quick-thinking devil! He insisted on your friends paying up because he wanted plenty of ready money on hand to satisfy me."

Tony smiled. His finances had taken a turn for the better since he had followed Parmelee's example, and had become merely a spectator, and not a participant in games of chance. His bank account had become plethoric, and the knowledge was pleasant. "Bill," he said, "you can't frighten me. Name what you want."

"It will come hard."

"If it does, it's worth it."

"All right, Tony, here goes." Bill stretched out his hand. "Pay me fifty-two Angel-Backs—fifty-two marked cards—fifty-two fallen angels. I'm going to nail them to the walls of my bedroom as a souvenir!"

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The central episode of this story, extraordinary as it is, is founded on facts related by the celebrated Robert Houdin. Bianco, a Spanish sharper, marked an immense number of playing-cards, resealed them in their original boxes, and sold them to clubs in Havana at bargain-counter prices. Following his cards to Cuba, he won immense sums of money.

Everything went well until a second sharper, Laforcade, a Frenchman, wishing to mark cards for his own uses, took home a quantity, and to his astonishment discovered that they were already marked. Knowing of Bianco's sensational successes, Laforcade quickly satisfied himself that the Spaniard was the guilty man, and, instead of exposing him, invited him to halve his winnings.

To this proposal Bianco reluctantly acceded, but, tiring of it after some months, disappeared. Laforcade, left to shift for himself, lacked Bianco's expertness, was detected cheating, and was arrested. It was proved that Laforcade had not marked the cards and that he had not imported them; and it was quite impossible to prove that he was aware that the cards were marked. The prosecution broke down, and Laforcade was acquitted.

In his turn, Laforcade vanished, and neither he nor Bianco was ever heard of again.

P. W.

More stories by Mr. Wilde in future issues.

LADY LUCK

MISS DOLORES DILLWORTH, three-year-old New York girl, deserves the nickname of "Lady Luck." While her mother wasn't looking she managed to fall out of a second-story window. She also managed to fall gracefully into her own baby carriage in the street below.

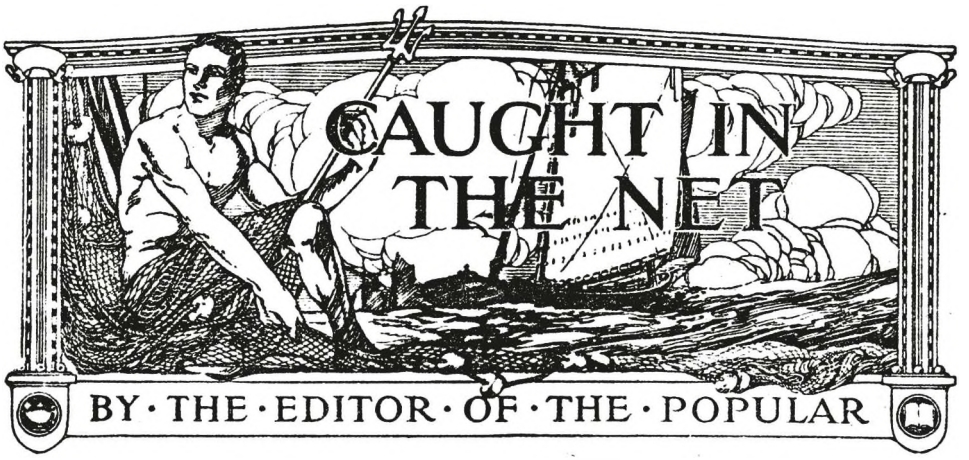
Horrified neighbors sent for an ambulance. When it arrived the doctor found that the child was not even bruised.

Miss Dolores Dillworth should walk very cautiously for the rest of her days. She used up about as much good fortune as falls to the share of the average human. "Don't crowd your luck," is a good motto.

THE CHAMPION PROFITEER

MR. WEEKS, the secretary of war, after a recent cabinet meeting was telling President Coolidge about the parsimony of a certain New Englander whom they had been discussing.

"He is my idea of the world's stingiest man," Mr. Weeks declared. "He reminds me of the old hotel keeper who, every time he heard of a guest having a nightmare, marked down opposite his name a ten-dollar livery charge."



ELECTION POSSIBILITIES

THE normal presidential election in the United States is fought out between the Democratic and Republican parties, the relative popular vote of the parties' candidates being approximated roughly by their proportional strength in the electoral college. The smaller parties gather a harvest of a million or so votes among them, but our election system, devised by men who had no faith in the satisfactory working of an out-and-out democracy, and who did not foresee our party system of politics, is not elastic enough to give these smaller parties their proportional strength in the voting body that formally elects the president.

When a strong third party enters the political arena the presidential election ceases to be normal, and our electoral-vote system begins to echo strangely the voice of the people. That is what happened in 1912 when Roosevelt led the revolt against the G. O. P. Taft polled almost three and one half million votes and Roosevelt more than four million; yet, with a popular vote in excess of seven and one half million between them, they secured only 96 electoral votes, while Wilson, with a popular vote of less than six and one half million, secured the votes of 435 presidential electors.

Senator La Follette's third party may cause a somewhat similar situation this year, with the added complication that the quite possible failure of any candidate to secure a majority of the 531 electoral votes may throw the election of the next president into the House of Representatives. This would not be without precedent in our history; in 1800 Thomas Jefferson was elected by the House, and in 1824 John Adams was elected president by the votes of thirteen States, although Andrew Jackson, who secured the votes of only seven States, had received a larger popular vote.

To win the election one of the candidates must secure 266 electoral votes. Should Mr. Davis carry New York, with its forty-five electoral votes, and do as well in the rest of the country as Cox did in 1920, he would have 172 electoral votes; and, in addition, should Senator La Follette run strongly in States normally Republican and secure 94 electoral votes, President Coolidge would lack by one electoral vote the majority necessary for his reëlection. Of course Mr. Davis may do much better than that; the electoral votes that La Follette receives will probably be taken from the normal Republican strength.

Should the election pass to the House of Representatives there is the added possibility that no candidate would be able to secure a majority of all the States—each State having one vote—necessary for election. In that case, no choice having been made by the House before March 4th, the Senate would elect a vice president, who automatically would become the president upon the expiration of President Coolidge's term of office. So there is a possibility—although an extremely unlikely one

—that General Dawes or Governor Bryan will be the next president of the United States.

THE GREATEST PLAGUE

DOCTOR CHARLES MAYO, probably the greatest surgeon in America, if not in all the world, says that civilization can be measured by the advance of medicine.

Here is one of those rash generalities of which the specialist is so often guilty. Chief Justice Taft might with equal truth estimate the degree of civilization at a given period by the state of legal organization then apparent. Or Colonel Goethals might declare the engineering talents of a race to be the criterion of its general culture.

We, whose specialty is literature, have a feeling that the best test of civilization is the written word. We are probably as far from the complete truth in that belief as Doctor Mayo is in his. But we are certain about this: The debt of medicine to literature exceeds and cancels any obligations of literature to medicine. The bard came before the medico—and comes before him still.

Medicine has wiped out or mitigated most of the physical plagues that used to beset the race. But it could not do this until literature, the written word, had made its inroads on the greatest plague of all, the plague of ignorance.

When Homer smote his lyre in ancient Athens and sang the glories of the Greek heroes before the walls of Troy he was laying the foundations of Doctor Mayo's famous clinic at Rochester, for he was stimulating the minds of his audiences to think, and to seek, and to thirst for knowledge. He was washing away with a silver stream of words some of the ignorance that stood, at the world's beginnings, between men and science.

If it is true that the man of words stood before the man of science, it is equally true that he will endure as long or longer, for science cannot grow in the soil of ignorance; and ignorance cannot be banished, wiped out, destroyed, as disease can be. It is born with the birth of every man, and only the doctor of words can wash it away with his books, his magazines, his newspapers. When all the germs are killed, when all the ills of the body have been overcome by knife and pill and common sense, ignorance will still remain potential, ignorance, the greatest plague of all, held at bay just beyond the portals of civilization by the pen, the linotype, and the printing press.

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF APPLAUSE?

SOME time ago, a psychologist, studying mass reactions, or similar phenomena, came to the conclusion that applause, by and large, was to a great extent governed by weather conditions. Immediately, he had actors—who should know a lot about the inside workings of applause—challenging his deduction. It was the collective mentality of the audience that decided the audible reception of a play, said one critic. Not at all, said another, for it depended entirely on the actor himself, whether he got "a hand" or "got laughs." But while the disputants, one and several, may have had little or no scientific ground to stand on, they were all agreed that the psychologist was wrong and that the weather could not be the basis of public applause.

What is? It is still a mystery, and is probably so complex a matter that there can be no definite solution while its factors are ever-changing personalities combining with always-uncertain emotional responses. Every actor will tell you that audiences are variable, so much so that it often appears to be sheer caprice. Monday's audience may applaud vociferously at one point of a play which, with Tuesday's crowd, won't get a ripple, while those of Wednesday may laugh only, and the whole week show similar varieties of response. Laughter is in the same class with applause. It may be uproarious one performance, a titter the next.

Whatever part the weather may or may not play in applause, many are quite certain that difference in locale plays an important part. Stanislavsky, the director

of the Moscow Art Players, makes note of this fact in his "My Life and Art," where he says:

"It is a pity that the law of mass reaction to scenic impressions is not yet learned. Its importance to the actor cannot be exaggerated. It remains unknown why certain places in a play are laughed at by everybody at all performances in one city, while altogether different places in the same play produce the same results in other cities."

THE CRITICAL TEST

SOME men have remarkable staying power. Fate may bludgeon them repeatedly —to borrow a figure from Henley—but they hold their heads high no matter how bloody. Such men usually attain whatever in life they set out for. But occasionally there occurs such a man who, in spite of his capacity for taking punishment, his ability to keep up the pace over the long route, never quite reaches his goal. To all outward appearances he has the qualifications of a first-rater. Yet he never actually breaks into the front rank.

There is a reason. And we are reminded, at this point, of America's peerless golfer, Walter Hagen. An effective way to point the flaw in one kind of man is to instance the flawlessness of another kind. And so we think of Walter Hagen, and how he won the 1924 British Open Championship. To win it he first had to undergo a grueling, nerve-wracking, prolonged struggle against the best the world afforded in his specialty. Well, nothing remarkable in that. Every open champion has done that. All golf champions are good stayers. They have to be. The impressive thing about Hagen's win in this particular match was not the tireless, flawless perfection of his performance over the long route. The impressive thing was his final stroke—when the championship was already trembling on the edge of his pocket, ready to slip in. To clinch the championship Hagen, on the last green, faced a seven-and-a-half-foot putt. Many a dub has made a putt like that successfully. But any golfer will tell you that seven and a half feet of grass between you and a championship—or even an ordinary friendly match—is apt to look like seven and a half miles. Those who saw Hagen play his final stroke for the British Open say he made it with the same unconcerned confidence that had characterized his playing from beginning to end of the tournament. With the biggest professional issue of his life trembling in the balance, Hagen played the deciding stroke exactly as though it were a mere practice shot.

The ability to do that is what makes a first-rater first rate. A man may have everything else, skill, experience, stamina, but if he cannot sink his last putt with no thought for anything but the putt itself—no tremulous anticipation of the victory at hand, no fearful contemplation of the price a misstroke will exact—he can never hope to be anything but a runner-up for those who stand in the front rank.

The critical test of greatness and courage seldom comes in the thick of the fight. It is reserved for the last stark skirmish when only one shot remains.

POPULAR TOPICS

SOMETIMES things turn out as well in real life as they do in stories. Virtue is rewarded and the good sport gets all the good things that were coming to him.

Sometimes!

It has happened that way with Mayor Jim Johnston of Shelby, Montana, the town that at the time of the Dempsey-Gibbons fight last year made readers of the sporting pages think that they had wandered onto the financial page by mistake.

Most boxing encounters are described in terms of hooks and jabs. The Shelby affair was described in terms of dollars and cents. The people of the little Montana town had to pay, and pay, and pay for the advertising that the fight brought them. Mayor Jim Johnston had to pay so much to put the battle through that the evening of the fight found him flat broke.

During those worrisome days the mayor of Shelby used to point to the low hills surrounding the town and remark to the newspaper men who had invaded the great open spaces to report the fight: "Boys, there's oil in them hills."

He was right. The financial-pugilistic combination of Kearns and Dempsey left him a little land as a reminder of his fortune. Now, according to reports, Fate, having decided to be as good natured as a writer of fiction, steps in and presents Jim Johnston with a lively gusher on his land.

Perhaps you read Elmer Davis' fine story of the fight, "They See In the Dark," published in THE POPULAR a few months after the event. It was full of jolts for pessimists. Jim Johnston's good luck is another wallop that lands in the same spot.

FOR a long time people who weren't sick but who thought that they were have been objects of ridicule and fair game for the jokesmiths. Now Doctor Henri Jean, dean of the faculty of medicine at Liége, has discovered that, after all, imaginary sickness is real—that it is a disorder of the nervous system caused by too much potassium or too much calcium in the blood.

THE world is becoming overpopulated, according to Doctor Henry Pratt Fairchild of New York University. He says that in a mere ten thousand years the world will have to follow the example of theater managers and hang out the STANDING ROOM ONLY sign, for by that time there will be two hundred and twenty-two billions of billions of billions of billions of passengers aboard the jolly old globe as it spins through space, and that each member of the human race will have only one and one half square feet of the earth's surface at his disposal—instead of an average of thirty square miles as at present. Doctor Fairchild also predicts that at the end of this century the United States will have a population of five hundred and fifty million.

ANOTHER member of the New York University faculty, Professor Charles Gray Shaw, says that about the time that each individual of the two hundred and twenty-two billions of billions of billions of billions of members of the justly famed human race is balancing on his one and one half feet of the earth's surface, there will not be a laugh left in the entire world. He says that by that time the inhabitants of the world will be so highly educated and so intelligent that they will know too much to laugh at anything.

We don't agree with the professor. While there is education there will be professors, and while there are professors they will provide the rest of the population with plenty of giggles, snickers and loud haw-haws.

OUR tobacco exports for the last fiscal year were valued at over 200 million dollars. Leaf tobacco exported was valued at 166 million dollars. Great Britain was our best customer, taking 85 million dollars' worth of the weed. China took 16 million dollars' worth, and Australia 10 million dollars' worth. Of the 22 million dollars' worth of cigarettes exported, 16 million dollars' worth went to China and most of the remainder to other Oriental countries.

The United States is the world's largest single producer of tobacco, our contribution being one and one half billion pounds out of a total of four billion pounds. India comes next with one billion pounds.

ANOTHER radical innovation in the field of politics comes from Australia, where a law has just been passed which hangs a ten-dollar fine on the citizen who neglects to vote.

In a ward that we used to live in this law would have meant a twelve-dollar loss to the negligent voter—the ten-dollar fine that he would have to pay, and the two dollars that the ward leader would have slipped him if he had done his duty for the community.

"Slim" Learns Something

By Thomson Burtis

An airman tells the whole truth. The story of a high adventure and a near-tragedy on the Mexican border.

THE United States, as some sapient surmiser has observed, is a large country, and full of people. Around a hundred and twenty million, more or less. Inasmuch as all but a hundred or so of these inhabitants are unacquainted with me, you may be one of the majority. Therefore, I hope you'll pardon me if I introduce myself before diving into this yarn of battle, murder and sudden death, mixed with charming damsels, dashing heroes, and deeds of derring do.

I want to tell it, because I got most of the public credit, and didn't deserve it. That was principally because I have the onerous job of upholding two shiny silver bars, one on each shoulder, whereas my illustrious colleague in the uproar, Albert Harburg, is a sergeant. I am fully aware of the fact that telling the truth is often a mistake—it holds one down too much. But in this case, it seems as though I can't dodge it.

My name is Evans—John Evans—usually called "Slim." My present method of making a living consists in flying De Haviland airplanes for the army air service up and down the Rio Grande, on the border patrol. I've always been called Slim, and I suspect that the reason for it is that I'm six feet four inches tall, and constructed in a peculiar manner. The only bulge which spoils the straight-line effect from head to toe is my Adam's apple, an acrobatic appendage which climbs up and down my neck like a monkey on a stick.

I didn't plan to go too far with this truthtelling, but I might as well make it an orgy, now that I've started. I am not a candidate for screen honors, nor easy on the eyes, which disqualifies me as a hero right away. I think automobile manufacturers got the idea for balloon tires from my oversize feet, and my nose—there, gentlemen, is an awesome appendage which makes me unique among my fellows. It is truly a prodigious proboscis, worthy a place beside the famous feature of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. My father, just before he died, let me in on the fact that I was not the answer to a maiden's prayer. I was sixteen, and he caught me in front of a mir-

ror preparing to call on the charmer with whom I was in love. She was a forty-year-old waitress in the railroad restaurant, built on opulent lines. Dad observed me greasing my hair, and told me to lay off.

"Don't make any bets on your looks, Johnny," he told me cruelly. "There's no sense in trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. If you had your nose full of nickels, you could retire—so cultivate your inward virtues."

With this fatherly advice ringing in my ears, I have never been under any illusions regarding my fatal beauty. After he died I drifted around—cooked for a cow outfit in Utah, hoboed, got in the Mexican-border trouble as a private, blackjacked my way into the air service during the war by the aid of an uncle of mine who was a senator, et cetera. I had some fun in France—got credit for one plane I didn't get and got one Hun I didn't get credit for, leaving me a net of one boche. I wasn't up there long—I fought the war in Paris mainly. After getting back to this country I drifted from field to field, and ended up at McMullen, Texas, the eastern terminal of the border patrol. The border patrol flies two trips a day, covering the Mexican border from Brownsville to San Diego, and has considerable fun with the smugglers, outlaws, rustlers and other gents who infest that country.

On this particular balmy afternoon in April I felt like the change of a nickel. As was the daily custom of the McMullen flight, all the loose flyers and observers were gathered on the porch of the recreation building, in various attitudes of ease and laziness, talking about nothing of importance. I had a hangover—and a patrol to make. The night before I had escorted Major Searles, our dried-up little flight surgeon, over to Matamoras, Mexico, for an evening of wassail and debauch. Sheriff Bill Trowbridge was along, likewise. We fed the little medico a bit too much of that dynamite they sell, and he went hog wild. He once played the tuba in a high-school band, and still cherishes the thought that he has the makings of the world's champion tuba tooter. He insisted on joining the band in one joint, and ended up by mistaking the reflection of Trowbridge's Ford in a store window for the real car and breaking said window trying to climb into the boat. It was a great night but, to use one of my favorite expressions, I felt that afternoon as though I was sliding rapidly down the balustrade of life into the ash can of eternity.

The porch faced the small, sandy airdrome, which was flanked to east and west by corrugated iron hangars. My De Haviland was being warmed up on the line in front of the eastern hangars under the careful hand of Sergeant Albert Harburg, chief mechanic. I was to make my two-hundred-mile trip west alone that afternoon on account of a temporary shortage of observers while "Pop" Cravath recovered from a recent wreck and George Hickman kept asking for extensions of leave.

Four or five mechanics passed along the side of the recreation building, sweating profusely in the flooding sunlight. It was hot! The McMullen section of the border makes hell sound like a summer resort.

"If that Belgian bozo don't quit runnin' me ragged I'll kick 'im back where he come from!" came a loud and raucous voice from around the corner.

It was young Frank Harlow, a private who had recently joined the outfit.

"The trusty sarge doesn't stand in so well with his minions, does he?" I remarked.

Captain Kennard, our stocky, bow-legged little C. O., chuckled.

"He makes 'em toe the line, and some of 'em hate it. I'll swear he makes *me* ashamed of myself sometimes—and as for you useless specimens, I don't see how you can hold your heads up in the presence of a man who really works!"

"Sleepy" Spears, who never wakes up until nightfall unless the sun passes behind a cloud, yawned.

"I think he's crazy," he remarked. "Any man who really works——"

"I know what you're going to say," Kennard interrupted. "I guess Harburg's getting along all right, though. Of course I raised him pretty fast, from buck private to line sergeant, but the old-timers respect him and the others'll come to time. You can't keep a good man down."

"He's a whiz of a mechanic, all right," "Tex" MacDowell admitted. "But he's a bit balmy, I believe. I was talking to him the other day, and gave vent to a few disgusted remarks about the foolishness of any man risking his neck flying over this mesquite-ridden, flyspecked, sun-baked pimple on the face of the earth, or words to

that effect, and he got hurt! He thinks the border patrol is the greatest outfit in the world, and he talked about the romance of it and all that——"

"He must have been reading those magazine stories," I told Tex.

"He reads everything," nodded Pop Cravath, his crippled leg resting on a chair.

"Maybe Belgians are funny that way," I said as I got up and picked up my helmet. The Liberty was roaring away wide open on the final warm-up. "I've got a notion to take Harburg along, just for company. How about it, cap'n?"

"Go ahead. He's always willing to fly, even if he is scared to death. The men know it—he doesn't try to hide it—and if we can fly his fear out of him, he may pull stronger with 'em."

I broached the subject to Harburg, and he grabbed at the chance. He was a stocky, powerfully built chap of about thirty-five, I should say, with blond hair and a broad, clean-cut, square-jawed face which was tanned to a golden brown. I liked the man, what little I knew of him. As a mechanic he was one of these birds that can take a cracker box, some old iron and a wrench and build a ship out of it. Harburg would listen a moment to a laboring motor and then announce that the fourth wrist pin was pitted or the bushing on the third main bearing was worn out. He was an intelligent cuss—read everything. And what a hound for duty! I'd had a few talks with him, in a casual way, and I knew. When the United States, its army, navy, insular possessions or inhabitants were mentioned, you could see those blue eyes of his commence to glow. He was one man who was crazy about where he lived, all right.

While he was getting his helmet I ran up the motor to fourteen hundred revolutions a minute. The four-hundred-and-fifty-horse-power Liberty sang along as sweet as a thrush. Oil pressure, air pressure, temperature, and the million-and-one other things which have dials to tell their story were all correct. The dust rose in a cloud behind the ton-and-a-half bomber, and the mechanic on the tail leaned against the propeller blast. After Harburg got set in the back seat the wingmen pulled the blocks and helped me turn the ship around. I gave it the gun, pushed forward on the stick, and we started galloping across the sand. The air was thin, but I rocked her off the ground in time, cleared the hangars and started west.

It was a monotonous trip to Laredo, even though the air was cool at five thousand feet. The Rio Grande was a few miles south of us, and northward there was a limitless sea of gray-green mesquite which extended to the horizon. I hunched down behind the wind shield and left it to Harburg to watch for any suspicious caravans, herds of cattle, or other matters needing investigation. Anything he missed my bleary optics wouldn't catch—I was well aware of that. Occasionally I looked around at him. He was under a tremendous nervous strain and, as always, he held himself tense in his seat. He admitted that he had never gotten over his fear of being high in the air in a frail linen-and-wood ship, but nevertheless he flew at every opportunity in an effort to overcome his nausea while cantering through the ozone. He conceived it to be his duty, I presume.

I picked up the Laredo ship, which took the next three hundred miles west, and turned around. Obeying a sudden impulse, born of the monotony of the flight, I nosed down and sent the De Haviland hurtling earthward at something like a hundred and forty miles an hour. When I got close to the ground I made for the river, and started flying all the turns, keeping the ship about ten feet off the water. It kept me awake anyhow.

I know I shouldn't have done it. There was little more danger than there was in flying high, because in that country it's rarely there are any fields which are possible landing places, anyway. But a patrolman can't peer at as big a stretch of country from ten feet as he can from five thousand, and peering is our business, so to speak. However, I did it, and that's that.

I left the river very shortly, and started hedgehopping over the ground, just clearing the mesquite, dropping close to the ground over the small open fields, and zooming over the occasional isolated cabins which scared spigs occupied.

I was about two miles north of the river, and possibly a hundred miles from McMullen, when I spied a girl on a horse, galloping along a trail through scraggly mesquite. I waved at her, and she pulled up her steed and waved back. The ship, running wide open and leveled off, was making a hundred and twenty miles an hour, and the

motor was bellowing away like a chorus of devils in full cry. A ship is a poor thing to flirt from.

I am not a ladies' man, but had I been a combination of Henry the Eighth, King Solomon and all the other suckers for women since Adam fell for Eve, the damsel on the ground would have speedily left my mind. The Liberty commenced to spit and miss. With that mesquite ten feet beneath me, I saw the devil waving an inviting pitchfork at me.

One bank was out completely in another minute. On the brink of the river there was a big field—and the only house in sight. I jazzed the throttle desperately, but the Liberty high-toned me. It popped and spit and snorted uselessly.

Fifty yards ahead was a long rough narrow clearing with a few odd stumps in it. I tried my best to keep the ship in the air until it got to that clearing. It was wabbling already, through lack of flying speed, but for a moment I thought I was going to make it. The edge of the chaparral was only a few feet ahead when the D. H. gave up the ghost. I nosed down in one last effort to tear through the barrier of scrubby mesquite, but I hit a snag. I could feel the drag of the limbs against the undercarriage. The tail swung around over my head, and for an instant I looked upward at the earth. The next second, as the earth and I collided, I looked at a beautiful galaxy of shooting stars. Then I checked out.

I came to, in a heap on the ground, and my first reaction was that I had sneaked into heaven by the back door and was interviewing one of the sopranos in the choir. What I facetiously refer to as my mind was only turning over at idling speed but I finally decided that angels didn't wear riding breeches. Nightgowns and angels have always been vaguely bracketed in my mind, with haloes instead of hats and harps for vanity cases.

She didn't say anything, but helped haul me out of the wreck. Evidently she had unstrapped my belt, for I was free. Struggling up with some difficulty, I saw Harburg in a heap at one side, which brought me partially to myself.

"Is he—badly hurt?" I asked her, swaying dizzily on my feet.

"Just stunned, I think, like you were," she replied, and there was a laugh in her gray eyes. "Do you always come down that way?"

"It's not done in the best circles, but it seems to be my favorite method," I told her.

My head was thumping from its recent attempt to knock the whole world for a mess of Mesopotamian mud turtles but nevertheless I was fully able to appreciate the young woman before me. It was the second time in my flying career, which includes wrecks from France to California and most places in between, that I had been stranded in the same county with a good-looking girl. And the first one didn't turn out so well.

As she looked at Harburg I sized her up with growing admiration. She was dressed in khaki riding breeches and flannel shirt, with a huge sombrero pulled low over wavy-brown hair. She was not beautiful exactly but she had a pair of laughing gray eyes and a wide mouth that could broadcast a slow smile. She had a small gun in a holster at her belt, and she was a competent-seeming woman. Most Texas girls are, out in the sticks. There was a lot of strength in her rather slender body, too, for she helped carry Harburg into the shade without turning a hair.

He came to immediately and looked up at her in utter surprise.

"I am sorry to have troubled you," he said with that quaint, slightly accented Old World speech which was a characteristic of his.

"I thought that perhaps after you waved at me you staged this for my benefit," she laughed, fanning herself with her sombrero. "I didn't see it, but the crash scared my pony half to death. How do you feel?"

I liked her calm acceptance of the situation. Hysterics or gurgles of horror and sympathy were what I would have expected, but she was as matter-of-fact as flyers at a field would have been.

"I'm close to normal again," I told her. "That's a fine wreck, isn't it? There isn't a piece of linen left undamaged big enough to make a handkerchief."

"How did it happen?" she asked, still fanning herself; and suddenly it seemed to me as though those wide clear eyes were looking right through me. "Were you planning to land anyway?"

"No indeed," I told her. "I was flying low to entertain myself. It happened be-

cause I was up ten feet and tried to dive twenty, I presume."

"You must have landed fast," she said, shifting her eyes to Harburg. He had been looking at her steadily. "Ordinarily it would have simply gone on its nose—am I right?"

"You seem to know quite a lot about airplanes," I remarked.

That was a strictly technical expression she had used.

"I've seen them around in various places, and I know some aviators," she said quickly, and her face flushed a trifle.

"May I ask whether that is the ancestral mansion, over by the river?"

"At present," she laughed. "Why?"

"I fear that inasmuch as we're some distance from a town we'll have to beg your hospitality until the wrecking truck arrives. Have you a telephone?"

"Ye-es."

It was said slowly, and her eyes were resting on the ground. She was not exactly cordial. Finally she looked up at me.

"Are you sure you can both walk over there?" she asked. "It's nearly two miles."

We assured her that we could.

"I'll ride ahead then, and let dad know you're on your way. How long will it take for the truck to get here?"

"By morning," I replied. "And we'll all be gone by noon."

That slow sunny smile spread over her face and she swung up on her horse.

"Adios!" she called. "Take your time!"

We watched her ride breakneck through the mesquite, swaying in the saddle to avoid the low branches. She was a picture of grace and effortless skill as she disappeared through the trees.

"Well, we're in luck, even if she didn't seem pleased to death," I told Harburg as we tramped over the sand. "I don't believe it would have killed her if we hadn't suggested visiting the house."

"She is more beautiful even than most American girls," Harburg said slowly. "And not so bold as some."

"Don't fall in love, sarge," I grinned at him. As a matter of fact, she had made a profound impression on me, as well. There was something wholesome and sweet and frank about her which I liked. "Well, we butted into her life with a bang, as it were. I don't suppose this dumb wreck will be a good thing for you, Harburg, and I'm sorry. I know you aren't keen for flying anyway——"

"It will make no difference," he said, brushing his damp blond hair from his forehead. "Wrecks I do not mind. It is the height. Why can't I overcome that?"

The last question was asked with a sudden vicious passion which surprised me.

"Many a man is in your condition, or close to it," I told him. "It'll leave all of a sudden."

As we crossed that single big field which surrounded the house on three sides we got a better view of the ménage we were visiting. There was a small house, one tremendous shed, one barn, and a corral. The house was on the bank of the Rio Grande; and there were two men and the girl waiting on the small porch.

I sized them up quickly as we came closer. The older man, who was standing with one arm about her waist, was tall and thin, with a white goatee and flowing white mustache. His hawklike face was deeply tanned and his eyes were puckered below prominent white eyelashes. His face was rather fierce and forbidding, I thought, and he watched us approach with suspicion in his half-closed eyes.

The other man was a young chap of about my age—thirty—and a very arresting figure. He was tall, well built, powerful-looking. His hair was black and curly and he had a rather narrow, olive-skinned face which on first glance was about as good-looking a frontpiece as I have seen recently. His features were almost too regular, and at closer view the attractiveness of the ensemble was spoiled a bit by a rather sneering expression about the mouth.

Harburg and I strolled up to the veranda without haste. I felt a bit uncomfortable under their steady scrutiny, and was suddenly conscious of how dirty and oil grimed I was. Somehow there seemed to me to be a queer tension in the air, as though those people were waiting for something they dreaded.

I opened the ball.

"I'm sorry to impose on you, sir," I said to the old man. "I'm afraid I'll have to ask the use of your phone, and perhaps a shakedown for the night, until the wrecking crew arrive."

He unbent a trifle and smiled a smile which did not seem to extend to his piercing eyes.

"Certainly, suh," he drawled. "You are border patrolmen?"

"Yes, sir."

"You—uh—did not intend to land, my daughter tells me."

Once again that camouflaged eagerness, I thought. There was anxiety in that question, even if he did try to make it casual. I noticed the younger man's coal-black eyes fixed on me, and there was a flame in the backs of them.

"No, sir. Forced landing."

"Did she cut out?" asked the young fellow.

"One whole bank," I nodded.

"That's tough sledding," he nodded, and I did not give verbal indication of my surprise at his apparent knowledge of airplane motors. "D. H., I suppose, with a Liberty motor?" he went on.

"Yes."

The girl was still standing close to her father, her eyes flitting from him to me. There seemed to me to be a shadow in them, as though they were dark with worry.

Right then I commenced to wonder and a tiny germlet of suspicion began crawling in the back of my mind. Now please don't get me mixed up with these fiction sleuths who look at a man's vest with a magnifying glass, spot a dab of oil, learn that he enjoys tea in the afternoon and connect him with the Teapot Dome affair. I am nearly as dumb as the bird who thought the Mann Act was a male quartet, and I cannot lick five husky men while suffering from paralysis and dandruff. But I was a border patrolman, the patrol had made an enviable record against the lawbreakers on the border, these people were worried because I was in their midst, and they were living in a perfect place for some low-and-lofty, catch-as-catch-can machinations of an illegal nature. It took no intellectual prodigy to decide that there was just a dim hint that I should keep my eyes open.

I got the field on the phone and soon had the wrecking truck and crew started on its way. The old man was with me all the time and seemed to be listening closely. Likewise, he was considerably relieved when I had finished talking and he found out that the crew would arrive about dawn and be on their way home by noon. He unbent amazingly and brought out some excellent liquor while his daughter was cooking dinner. He introduced himself as Witmark, the young fellow as Deems—and his daughter's name was Margaret. He called her Peggy.

She presided at dinner in a fresh white frock, cut low in front, and her hair piled high on her head. She was an eye-filling sight, and furthermore she had cooked a stomach-filling meal. I was ashamed of my suspicions, because both Witmark and Margaret were very friendly. Possibly it was the liquor, but the old man, particularly, expanded in fine fashion. Margaret inserted a word here and there, laughed frequently, and seemed to be enjoying herself. She made us feel, then, as though it were a treat to have us there. Which was in marked contrast to her attitude at the start.

Deems said little, but ate methodically. He alone seemed still to resent our presence. Harburg, who had refused to drink, was very quiet at first. He was rather an impressive guest, in a way, and he handled himself as though to the manner born. Witmark's conversation ran largely to Mexico, where he had spent the last several years. He gave us to understand that he had gotten out of the country under duress when the revolution against Obregon started. They were living there on the border for a short time, he said, waiting for things to settle down. Harburg eventually got started, and to my surprise revealed an extensive knowledge of Mexico. Although he talked with the curious preciseness of the educated European he was an interesting conversationalist. He and Witmark, with occasional laughing interjections from Margaret, fanned along at a great rate. Here and there Harburg indicated a very wide range of reading and an accurate knowledge of all that was going on in the world. His summary of the part oil had played in the game of foreign nations in Mexico was a treat in itself. Margaret listened to him with absorbed interest, and Witmark seemed to enjoy it as well.

Finally we got started on the border patrol, and the old man had a lot to say in his flowery manner about it. "You're twentieth-century rangers, suh!" he told me. "Direct spiritual descendants of the old-time sheriffs and rangers who fought the battles of the border. It's amazin', suh, to an old man to see you boys ridin' airplanes along the Rio Grande—and doin' your job as you do!"

We talked of some of the achievements of the patrol, like Tex MacDowell's victory over Dave Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick had run the smuggling along the border for years and was strongly intrenched until Tex got him. I was truly amazed at Witmark's blistering denunciation of Fitzpatrick.

"He ruined many a man's life with his slimy underground methods of gettin' a man he could use in his clutches," he told me, "and hangin'd be too good for him!"

When he finished his chin was quivering a bit. He had worked himself into a passion, and he subsided weakly. Margaret put her hand over his silently, as though to soothe him without using words. They seemed to understand each other perfectly.

After dinner I helped Margaret with the dishes, my job being to wipe them. Harburg and Witmark were talking on the porch, and Deems had disappeared. We kidded back and forth and she seemed to get a lot of laughs from my conversation anent some of the funny things that happen in the air service. We got real friendly, and I admit that it was mighty pleasant to be around her. She didn't flirt or try to put on any dog or cheap stuff of that kind. She was just natural and taught me what real sport swabbing plates with a towel can be.

I strolled into the small shabbily furnished sitting room, while she cleaned the sink or did some other necessary duty connected with making a kitchen prophylactic, and idly picked up an old copy of the Bible which lay on a table. On the flyleaf there was written the name, "Judson Stanton." And on a page set aside for the notation of births, marriages and deaths, was the entry, "Margaret Stanton, born October 22, 1899."

As I laid it down I was busy wondering whether my host had deliberately given me an assumed name. As though some ironic member of the high gods was lazily pulling strings to give himself a laugh, I heard the noise of a horse's thudding hoofs outside, and then Deems' rather harsh voice.

"He's a little lame, Mr. St—Witmark—but nothing serious. I'd better use the black to-morrow, though."

He had started to call the old man by some name which sounded as though it might be Stanton.

Margaret came into the room, and stood in the doorway leading to the porch.

"What a glorious night!" she said, and stretched her arms out luxuriously.

It was, with a full moon to garnish it. I suggested a walk, she countered, like a Texas girl, with a ride, and so we compromised by mounting two wiry cow ponies and making off. We were gone two hours, and I'll swear I don't know what we talked about. I guess I did most of the talking—I must have, or the time wouldn't have flown by so fast, nor would I have forgotten so completely everything but the girl beside me. Almost any girl understands that if she lets a man talk about himself continuously, interspersing his discourse with short exclamations such as, "You've had *such* an interesting life!" or, "Isn't that wonderful?" he'll have a good time. But it was something more than that, honestly. She was utterly natural, without the slightest tincture of posing. I liked her love for her father, her obvious whole-souled devotion to him; and in intervals, when he was the topic of conversation, there was a subtle note of sadness in her which I could not fathom, but which helped to interest me, I think.

Anyhow, as we pulled in our horses at the door of the barn I said impulsively:

"I hope that I may see you often, Margaret."

She did not seem to notice my unconscious use of her name, but for an instant she hesitated. Then she looked at me frankly, and smiled—a smile with more than a hint of melancholy in it.

"I—I hope so, too," she said, a bit breathlessly. "But——"

She didn't finish the sentence, and I wondered.

Next day, while supervising the wrecking crew, I thought things out. Perhaps you'll despise me for the two differing facets in my decision, but I'll be frank about it. I wanted to see Margaret again—and I wanted to solve the annoying riddle which I sensed in that household. Call it abuse of hospitality, or anything you like, that I should hide behind the girl's skirt with the vague idea of butting into what probably was none of my business, but the unadorned facts of the case are that when I was shaking hands with Mr. Witmark I said frankly:

"I appreciate your hospitality, sir, and I hope you'll allow me to come to see you—and your daughter—again."

He seemed taken aback, and Deems, although his expression did not change, seemed to be waiting tensely. Finally the old man cleared his throat sonorously.

"Call us up before you come, sir, and we shall be honored! And bring Mr. Harburg. I enjoy talking with him. He's a man of parts, suh!"

Which I speedily found out to be true. In the course of the next week, during which we flew down for an afternoon with the Witmarks, Harburg and I became good friends. He read magazines devoted to literature and current events that I had barely heard of, and was intimately informed about what was going on in the world. He made me ashamed of myself. My knowledge of politics and international affairs was restricted to what I could learn from a running perusal of newspaper headlines on my way to the sporting page. Occasionally, during our talks, the stocky serene Harburg, with his high forehead and dreamer's eyes, would bubble over. One of his favorite subjects for scathing comment was the manner in which we Americans rail at the shortcomings in our government, local and national, when millions of us do not take the trouble to vote and additional millions of voters are about as intelligently informed on public questions as so many sheep.

It was a tonic to me to talk to him, and I shamefacedly commenced to gumshoe through divers papers, magazines and tomes. I didn't like the idea that I was so ignorant. Gradually I got into the habit of having long talks with the rather serious-minded, precise Belgian, and enjoyed them. Finally I got so that there were one or two things of national interest about which I really could give birth to an intelligent sentence.

Just before our fifth trip to the Witmark homestead—a week-end affair it was to be—I took occasion to notify Harburg of the junket, and to say:

"Listen, sarge. On the reservation I'm a lieutenant and you're a noncom. Consequently salutes and "sirs" are in order. Down there we're just two guests, and that stuff is out. Get me?"

"Yes, sir," he said formally. He was an impeccable soldier.

We were standing on the line, and he stood stiffly at attention. For a moment he seemed absorbed in thought. I watched him curiously. He raised his eyes to mine, finally, and all of a sudden pain was reflected in their depths.

"I do not think it is wise for me to go with you, sir," he said with an effort.

"Pshaw! Why not? Don't you enjoy getting away?"

"Yes, sir, very much. But, sir—I am in love with Miss Witmark. Under the conditions——"

He stopped there, and instinctively I knew the reason. During our other trips down there, Margaret and I had been inseparable, and in a flash I understood that Harburg figured I was in love. There was something stunning in the idea—and in his stammering confession, which must have been so hard to make to me. He felt, probably, that it would be unseemly for the two of us to strive for her favor—perhaps that he had no right to aspire to her—a thousand things.

I pulled myself together, although I was in a mental tail spin.

"Harburg, forget it! I'm not saying anything except—a fair field and no favor. Understand me?"

"Yes, sir. And thank you. I did not intend to say what I did, nor to presume. But I am glad."

All that day there were various things stewing in the back of my mind, and late that night I went for a long walk. At the end of it I was no better off. I couldn't decide. All that I knew was that somehow Margaret Witmark—or Stanton—was a girl who stood apart in my experience; that I had rather be with her than any living being I knew; and that it was strangely pleasant—and disturbing—to think about her.

I was in a badly scrambled state of mind, for several reasons. One was that the thought of her was inextricably entwined with my instinctive feeling that there was something wrong with the Witmark ménage—and that was not pleasant. The other thing was that I was scared to death at the idea of being in love, I think. My roustabout life had been totally unaffected by serious mix-ups with women—and somehow I was like a wild horse shying at the noose.

I had not mentioned my suspicions regarding the Witmarks to Harburg, and after his amazing confession I was glad of it. Saturday morning, before we left McMullen, I held converse with Sheriff Bill Trow-

bridge. Gargantuan old-timer who knew the entire border as you know the way around your bedroom. I asked him if he knew a native Texan named Witmark, and he had never heard of the man. When I asked him about Judson Stanton, he started mental convolutions which resulted in my learning that a Judson Stanton had been a member of the Texas legislature years before, had become involved in some trouble and been accused of accepting a bribe, but that the matter had been hushed up and Stanton had disappeared into Mexico.

You can imagine the state of mind I was in during that week-end—there to see Margaret, afraid that I loved her, and yet perversely trying to uncover something which would give me the key to the household's fear of the border patrol. At the time, I was not afflicted by any highfaluting ideas regarding my duty. It was my lifelong habit of searching for excitement, poking into outré and bizarre things that promised action, which was responsible for my curiosity, I think.

I had come across nothing, since my discovery of that Bible, which I could put a finger on. This I knew—that the sneering, unemotional Deems resented our presence there, without equivocation, where the Witmarks seemed to want us, and yet be afraid of us. Particularly me. I don't think they considered Harburg at that time.

Saturday night, after a long evening during which Harburg and I had talked of many things with Margaret on the moonflooded porch of the house, I went for a stroll before going to bed. At the back of the house I heard voices. Hating myself for a sneaking eavesdropper, and yet impelled irresistibly to follow any clew, I crept up to the back porch and strove to catch what Witmark was booming forth inside. I heard Deems' rasping voice briefly; and then Witmark, apparently closing the discussion, laid down the law as follows:

"All her life, on my account, she has been debarred from the associations and opportunities which were rightly hers, suh! And by God, until I see better reasons than I see now, she shall not be deprived of possible prospects for future happiness!"

He stamped out of the kitchen, where they had been talking. My idea was that Deems had been objecting strenuously to our frequent visits and that Witmark, considering me, and perhaps Harburg as well, as eligible suitors for his daughter's hand, was defending our coming.

Partly happy, and some of the time as unhappy as I have ever been, because I despised myself for the thoughts in my mind, I continued to spend all the time I possibly could with Margaret. And I could learn nothing. Even the taut moments of suspicion seemed to have disappeared, and all my Machiavellian plans to find out something went for naught. I could not understand Deems' position in the establishment, and was unable to find out anything more than Witmark's explanation that he had been his right-hand man in Mexico and would be when they returned. I thought possibly they were doing some gun running to the Huerta rebels, but could find nothing to bear this out.

Harburg and I fought a fair battle for Margaret—sometimes he won a skirmish, sometimes I did, and oftener we were with her together. He seemed warmer and more human, now, although he was frequently tongue-tied and reserved in her presence. His eyes gave away his secret, always. There was utter adoration in them when he looked at her. As for me—I decided that I was in love. No, I won't say that. I did not go so far as to admit it, even to myself. Often, when that touch of sadness, which seemed to be a part of her so frequently, was discernible, avowal was on the tip of my tongue. But I resisted it, and deep down in my heart I knew that I would hold myself under wraps until I could shake off the problem which was ruining my self-respect and peace of mind.

Twice, when I telephoned to ask permission to call, I was told that they would be away for the day, and in both cases there was considerable agitation in the old man's voice. Which kept the fires burning dimly within me. Finally, along about our tenth visit, things started to break.

I had always wondered a bit about that tremendous shed, which was always padlocked securely. Deems had explained indifferently that they had never tried to get in it even—it had been on the place, they had no key, and that was all. On this particular Saturday afternoon Harburg and Peggy were riding. It was terribly hot, and I had deliberately checked out on the trip. I had been monopolizing her time, more or less, and I felt sorry for Harburg,

in a way. There had been a beaten look in his eyes, of late, and I decided to give him a chance with her alone. I was not enthusiastic about a canter through the sand and mesquite under that Texas afternoon sun, anyway. Witmark was taking a siesta, and Deems had ridden to Grangville, fifteen miles away, that morning.

I took a turn around the shed, as I had done before in a casual way, and made my 'steenth effort to find a peephole through which I might look. I did not really expect to find one, or to see anything if I did. I had about decided that the old man was still afraid his past might come back to roost—and I wasn't interested in his early career. However, there were just enough other facets in the situation—Deems' obvious desire to get rid of us, for one—to keep me on the qui vive.

Finally I found a tiny crack in the back of the shed. I stooped down, and looked through. For a while the dim shadow of the shed hid anything which might be in it. Gradually, as my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I could see a formless outline within it. Then my astonished eyes took in some of the blurred details. There was a tremendous airplane inside that shed. I could not accurately judge its type, but it looked to me like a "Transport"—a single-motored ship, rather slow, which with one Liberty can carry eight passengers besides a pilot in its closed fuselage.

That explained the familiarity of Deems and Margaret with the technical terminology of the air—and their fear of the border patrolmen. I glued my eye to that tiny crack and tried to find out more about the contents of that shed.

I was so intent on the thing that I did not hear a cantering horse until it was close to me. As I straightened up Deems came riding around the corner toward the corral. In a second his expressionless black eyes took in the tableau, and he swung down. He was very cool and collected, but his mouth was drawn in tightly and that handsome face of his was like a mask.

"What're you doing out here?" he inquired.

"Saw a crack and was taking an idle peek inside," I answered casually. "Couldn't see anything, though—too dark."

He looked at me for a long five seconds, and I stood the scrutiny fairly well. Then he said abruptly:

"Evans, I'm going to come clean with you. I don't want you down here any more. Because Margaret is marooned, for the present, I haven't said a thing. Her father wanted her to have all the company she could—and so did I. But she and I are engaged to be married now, and by God if either you or Harburg continue hanging around there'll be trouble! This is your last visit. Get that? I'm going to see Mister Witmark right now and warn him that a bullet'll greet you next time you're around."

He left his still saddled horse grazing and strode into the house. I was in a daze. I sat on the porch, and watched Harburg and Margaret approach. His face was glowing warmly, and there was a sparkle in his eyes and a smile on his lips that made him seem ten years younger than usual. Margaret's face was flushed from the ride, and she looked like a supple goddess with the sunlight in her hair. Inside the house I could hear Witmark and Deems talking in low tones. I went up to my room to think things out. I was in no mood for talking with Margaret or any one else at the moment.

For the moment the numbing thought of her engagement to another man was secondary to the absolute surprise, amounting to disbelief, which I felt at the idea of her being in love with Deems. There had seemed to be a total lack of personal interest between them. Deems was apparently a stoical silent jeering chap who did not mix particularly with either of the Witmarks.

I heard Margaret come in, and the noise connected with Harburg's unsaddling the horses. I was in a sort of stupor, and couldn't get my massive brain functioning in a fluent and consecutive manner. I don't know how many moments passed before I heard my name called in Witmark's reverberating tones.

"I should like to see you, suh!" he called, and there was a quaver in his voice.

I found him, Harburg, and Margaret in the living room. For an instant my eyes rested on him, and I was amazed at the mixture of ferocity and—was it fear?—in his bloodshot eyes. His chin, with its white goatee, was quivering a bit, as though he could not control himself.

It was Margaret, however, who held me longest. There was stark tragedy in her

eyes, and all of her buoyancy and joyous delight in life seemed to have left her. Her face was drawn with pain, and she held herself rigidly, as though she was under a tremendous strain. Harburg seemed puzzled, but there was a glow of happiness discernible in his face. Deems was not present.

"I am sorry, gentlemen, but I must ask you to leave," Witmark said steadily. He pulled at his goatee with a quivering hand. "I personally have been glad to call you friends, and to entertain you. So has my daughter. It is lonesome for her here. However, she has consented to become the wife of Mister Deems. Under the circumstances it seems that he is right in objecting to your presence. I do not know what trouble has arisen between you, but he believes that one, at least, and probably both of you are interested in his fiancée. That has been obvious, I think. I regret his insistence that you do not visit us any more —but lovers must be excused, I reckon!"

That last attempt at deprecating humor was pathetic, almost repellent under the circumstances. I shall never forget Harburg's face. Utter unbelief first, then almost madness. His face purpled and he started to speak. I could swear that a message, as plain to me as though it had been spoken, flashed from Margaret's eyes to his, and he dammed the torrent of words which I am sure was about to pour from his lips.

"I understand, sir," I said quietly. "If you do not object, we will leave now. It would not be pleasant to remain, under the circumstances. I hope that at some later time we may see you all."

There were half-hearted remonstrances on his part, but we left for Laredo that afternoon. The last thing I remember, as I sat in the front cockpit, was Harburg shaking hands with Margaret, Deems and Witmark standing back on the porch. She was biting her lip as she came over and shook my hand. The motor was idling softly, so she put her lips close to my ear as I bent down.

"I'm so sorry—but some day you'll understand!" she told me, and turned away.

Harburg and I got drunk over in Nueva Laredo that night. I was surprised to see him drink—he had always refused liquor theretofore. Then I happened to think that he had refused them on American soil. Which would make a difference to Harburg. I felt curiously ashamed of myself as I saw him imbibe with every symptom of enjoying it to the hilt. He was an experienced two-fisted alcohol inhaler, by his actions.

It was in a little private room in a hotel on the outskirts of that squalid Mexican town that I decided to open up and tell him all I knew. He listened in amazement, but his broad, high-cheek-boned face did not change.

"They have an airplane; they're afraid of the border patrol; I believe that yarn about Deems and Margaret is a lie to get rid of us because I was snooping around—and I'm afraid they're smugglers of some kind, Harburg!" I ended up.

He got up wearily, and paced the floor with slow strides. He seemed much older, somehow.

"I know they lied," he said slowly, in that formal, precise, careful way. "Miss Witmark, or Stanton, as you say, promised to marry me this afternoon, and just as we left she told me to trust her—that everything would happen for the best!"

For some time I remained silent. During the trip down to Laredo I had figured things out on the basis that Deems really was engaged to her. Call it sour grapes if you will, but I had honestly decided that the hurt in my heart at the thought of Margaret's belonging to another was partially pride. It was not easy to think of losing her—and yet there was a tiny feeling of relief because the die had been cast, too. I thought of her as some one infinitely wonderful and desirable—but now I know that there would have been no hesitancy on my part had I really been head over heels in love. I'd have known it, I guess. But nevertheless, it was not easy to adjust myself.

And the thought of what was ahead was no less repulsive. I'll admit frankly that, as Harburg and I talked, I was playing with the idea of warning the Witmarks and letting it go at that. I was just a big country boy, all snarled up in a tangled skein. It was Harburg who said simply, knowing in his heart that he was putting behind him his hope for happiness:

"They must be watched, and when the time comes—caught!"

Looking into his haggard face as he said that, suddenly many things became clear to me, and I was aware of a vast contempt

for myself. I honestly think I would have eventually carried on, anyway, but there came a moment of complete mental clarity. I had drifted through my army career, and the section of it I had spent on the border patrol, with no particular consciousness of my position. I enjoyed flying and the kicks it gave me, and had been a pretty fair officer, I think. But Harburg had been teaching me, unconsciously, and now was finishing the job. For the first time I thought of duty as such, and for the first time conscious pride in the patrol surged through me. It meant something to be a member of the picked band who were charged with overseeing the most tempestuous section of the country, watching it and helping to protect the vast empire which stretched northward. I had woven the net around the Witmarks and Deems without definitely realizing what I was doing—simply driven by the love of excitement within me which has been responsible for the useless hobo's life I have led. For the first time since I had known Margaret and her father I saw my course clearly ahead.

The end came next day. It would have come later, anyway, and been easier to accomplish, for the Witmarks would have been watched, and pounced on in force when the time came. Fate arranged that it should happen by accident.

It rained pitchforks and hammer handles all day Sunday, and continued until within an hour of the swift Texas twilight on Monday. Then it stopped, although the clouds were very low. Harburg and I decided to attempt to make McMullen.

We had to fly very low, on account of the clouds. We were about halfway home, and within a mile of the Witmark ranch, when the twelve-cylinder Liberty started cutting out. I knew the motor was pumping a lot of oil, and it was almost a cinch that the spark plugs had been fouled. I found a field, and we landed. It was after dusk when Harburg finished cleaning the plugs. I tried out the motor then. It ran perfectly on both switches, or the right-hand switch alone, but there were three plugs still cutting out on the left-hand switch.

"Clean the rest to-morrow, when it's light," I told him. "I guess we're due for a night out here in this God-forsaken——"

"Listen! A ship!" he warned me.

Sure enough, it was. Finally, coming up from Mexico, we picked up the flame from exhaust pipes. A minute later a big ship, simply a black mass against the breaking clouds, landed just west of us.

"At Witmark's!" I told Harburg, and he nodded.

"It must be that Deems flies whatever cargo they have northward," I said, thinking aloud. "We'd better have a look!"

He agreed, and we set off through the mesquite at a lope, our pistols in our hands instead of their holsters, to make running easier.

We did not get far, however. The noise of motors came to our ears, and we stopped. The clouds, which break fast in that country, had now frazzled off until there were patches of stars. We saw two airplanes rise into the air, and one went south and the other north.

Instantly there leaped into my mind the only possible procedure. All border ships have machine guns on them, and a De Haviland can make two miles a minute where those Transports' limit is ninety an hour at best with a load.

A minute later, without bothering to warm up the motor, I was giving the D. H. the gun and it was rocking across the hummocks of our water-soaked clearing. For a second I thought we were going to smash into the mesquite, but I rocked the wheels out of the clinging sand, risked a desperate zoom that barely cleared the treetops, and we were off. I fought the ship away from the branches and picked up speed enough to climb. Then I looked around at Harburg. Below his huge goggles his face was as grim as death, and his eyes were shining like a cat's. I wasn't comfortable myself—but I knew that my suffering was as nothing to his.

We caught the fugitive ship within five minutes. I had figured it out that because we had been flying so low before we landed, Deems had had no idea that a patrol ship was in the vicinity. I was curious about the cargo the Transport was carrying through the night. If it was drugs—they are worth sixty dollars a pound in Mexico and seven hundred in San Antone—there was a huge fortune in that ship.

I do not believe any one saw us until I slid the De Haviland in close to the Transport. To my astonishment I saw it was filled with men. The next second there were flashes of fire through the windows of its fuselage.

In a trice I had the solution. Since the passing of the three-per-cent immigration law there had been a sporadic traffic in smuggling aliens into this country. The patrol nabbed two gangs—one bunch of chinks and one of Italians—some time before my arrival on the border. A thousand dollars apiece, delivered into some city in central or northern Texas, was the price—and I had stumbled upon an organized traffic.

I thought of this while I was diving and zooming around to make the marksmanship harder. A ship is a poor target from the ground, but two ships in the air going at the same speed can do a lot of damage to each other with bullets. I cavorted over the shadowy earth as though I was a crazy man driving a drunken ship, and they fired steadily. Finally I shot three bursts from my machine guns, to warn them back. I meant to let them in on the secret that I could shoot them to hell if they didn't turn.

I was just easing away, to see whether they would turn, when another hail of bullets zipped through the ship. The next second my D. H. was missing like mad. I looked at my instrument board—the tachometer read only a thousand revolutions! We would have to land in that black mass of mesquite below, I thought hopelessly, even as I gave vent to a string of vituperatives that would have done credit to Captain Kidd in his most fluent days.

Some bullet must have damaged the motor!

I turned my head, and could scarcely believe my eyes as I saw a pair of hands on the side of my cockpit. A thousand feet in the air, Harburg had climbed out of the rear cockpit, and was inching himself along the side of the ship by his hands, suspended over nothingness. And he was afraid of the air!

I never went through such awful moments as those, waiting for him to drop. His face was terrible as he went through the ordeal, but he never faltered. He got to the wing, and pulled himself forward by the center-section struts. The motor picked up and I pulled out of the glide into which I had been forced to keep flying speed. Harburg had surmised that the right distributor head had been shot off, or at least loosened, and had come forward on the chance that it had not been entirely ruined.

By the time I was getting close to the Transport again, which was still thundering northward, he was on his way back. Evidently a bullet had simply loosened the mechanism from the clamps which held it tight against the block.

One more burst from the guns put the fear of God into that ship, and it turned around. I kept at a safe distance from it, throttled way down, to escort it. Then another thought hit me. I had just over an hour's gas left, and the only way to keep that mob on this side of the river so they could be captured was to stay in the air and ride herd on 'em with my guns. I had to radio for help, some way, and the radio outfit, as was customary, was in the back cockpit where the observer could use it. And wireless was one of the few things in the world Harburg knew nothing about.

The only thing to do was change seats. It was a desperate expedient, but I figured that we had gone so deep into desperation already that a little more or less would make no difference. We were up against it any way you looked at it, what with the moonless night and the gun-toting air pirate we had taken on for a finish fight. To land was out of the question. I considered that possibility an instant, weighing the chances of overtaking our quarry if we abandoned it for the five minutes necessary to reach the ground, switch positions, take off and gain altitude again. I no sooner considered this course than I rejected it. On a moonlit night a ship without lights is scarcely visible at five hundred yards. In five minutes, were we to abandon her, the Transport would be able to put more than five miles between us—and in any direction she chose. Short of a miracle, we should never see her again if we left her to her own devices for three minutes—let alone five or ten.

No, I decided. It couldn't be done. We had to stick by her or lose her certainly. And the seat changing must be done while we held the air, dogging her tail.

I motioned Harburg to lean forward and shouted my proposal in his ear. He answered, "Right, sir."

"Think you can hold a flying line while I go back?" I questioned.

"Yes, sir. Think so," he shouted.

"All right," I said. "Come ahead." And, unbuckling my belt I contrived to rise, throw my legs outboard across the coaming,

and hang there, clinging to the rail with one hand and making a long arm to hold the stick. That left the rudder bar free, of course, and the D. H. began to swing and skid crazily. Too much of that, I knew, and we'd skid into a stall and a spin. I gritted my teeth and hung on, watching Harburg's mad antics as he scrambled forward, fell into the seat and got hands and feet on the controls. I don't suppose the whole process took twenty seconds, but it seemed to me like twenty hours.

For a man who had never done any flying on his own, Harburg handled his end very well. He caught the stick, nosed down a bit—which was just the thing to do—checked the skidding with the rudder bar, and, by the time I was tugging at the controls in the back seat, had us on a straight-away run, with the Transport urging the pace just off our left wing and maybe a hundred yards ahead.

So far so good. Now the problem was to hold our prisoner. It worked out far more easily than I had anticipated. I throttled down long enough to yell instructions to Harburg. In an instant the staccato blatting of the machine guns began and I could see the intermittent tracers shooting ahead through the dark to bracket our fleeing target. Harburg released the burst while I did the aiming, swinging the D. H. right and left between bursts and being careful not to make any direct hits—not quite. It was a nice job of coördination to do the aiming while another man pulled the trigger coil and I take no credit to myself for the fact that we made our capture with all hands alive and wriggling. Luck was certainly with me pretty nearly every way that night.

Besides, the shooting didn't last long. A dozen bursts convinced those bozos, and they made for the Witmark ranch and landed. Then while we zoomed around them in the air, spiking their attempts to scatter by bursts of fire that plowed the ground up all around their ship, I unreeled the antenna and tapped off a call for supporting ships from the fields at Laredo and McMullen.

Then I flattered myself that everything was set for the party and all we'd have to do would be to ride around through the night until the reserves came up. I figured it would take them about an hour for the get-away and the flight to Witmark's place. But there I was wrong. It took them about an hour and a few dramatic minutes more.

So that when our gas ran out we were in a pretty pickle. There was nothing for it but to land on the Witmark field and let the pirates have their way with us. I figured that the worst they'd do would be to hog tie us until they made their get-away. They might have murder in their hearts, but I doubted if they would take such a chance. Smuggling is one thing, but murder—— I didn't think Deems was a murderer. And so I decided that as against risking a crash in the mesquite and risking the vengeance of Deems and his crowd, the latter was the lesser of two evil choices.

I did take the precaution of landing as far away from the Transport as possible, aiming to make a break for it, if opportunity offered, and take cover in the mesquite before they sized up the situation and came at us. There was a good fifty-yard space between my ship and Deems' when I eased in and by a stroke of fool's luck contrived a very passable three-point contact, using the light in a window of the Witmark house as landing mark. We hit a smooth stretch and I must have nosed in pretty fast—much faster than I suspected—for we rolled and guttered along at a terrific rate, and when the ship came to a halt we were almost up against the house, with the lighted window shining full in our faces, making us blink.

Apparently our coming in had startled Deems and his men into uncertainty. They could not be sure that our landing had been forced, and so they half suspected some sort of trick. Consequently they were hanging back. Out of the corner of my eye, as I snapped off my belt and straddled the cockpit, I could see a blur of figures gathered round the Transport. But I didn't have long to contemplate them, for as I let myself down to the ground and turned toward Harburg, who was coming overside from the front seat, the door of the Witmark house was flung open and Witmark hurried toward us, something glinting ominously in his right hand.

I yelled a warning to Harburg and pulled my gun to cover him. Suddenly another form showed in the lighted doorway. It was Margaret. And in the brief instant while her figure was illuminated I saw that she was carrying an ax. Then she had dashed out, slipped past her father—who

came on deliberately, like a man in a daze, or a sleepwalker—and was rushing at us. I knew at once what her purpose was. Not knowing our plight, she was taking no chances. She was going to smash our wings with the ax—if she could.

A moment I stood paralyzed. What could I do? My gun was useless against her. And it never occurred to me to meet her in physical combat. It was Harburg who did the quick thinking. He had seen and registered all that had come to me. With a grunt that was more like a moan of despair, he came down the fuselage, ducked and rolled under the wing, and, as Margaret came up, confronted her. She was on him, the ax poised for the first savage cut at the wing. He leaped and reached for it. But he must have missed his spring, for the ax came down in a swift arc, gashed our leading wing spar, and then bounced on across the wing to fall at my feet.

As for Margaret, she pitched headlong toward the plane as the ax left her hand, and crumpled to the ground where she lay without sound or struggle—a pathetic little figure in the gloom. What had happened to her we never quite knew, but it is pretty certain that she tripped against Harburg as he sprang at her, and in falling struck her head against the propeller of the D. H.

Anyway—there was the tableau; Witmark and I standing stupidly, one on either side of the ship, clutching our guns, Margaret lying unconscious on the ground, and Harburg kneeling over her, oblivious of everything, and muttering agonized plaints in a strange language. How great must have been his grief you may judge when I tell you that never before or since have I heard him revert to his mother tongue.

I registered this picture in a sort of daze. Then I came awake to the reality of our situation. It was the sound of thudding footsteps that brought me to my senses. The Transport gang had sized up the situation at last; and turning I saw them heading in an irregular V across the field in our direction. Somebody—Deems, I suppose—was shouting, "Hold 'em! Hold 'em!"

Suddenly I grinned to myself in the darkness. For above Deems' shouting and the thudding of running feet I heard a familiar singsong roaring, near at hand. A ship swept overhead, and I fired three shots, to let them know by the blaze of the gun that something was doing down on the Witmark ranch. In another five minutes De Havilands in bewildering profusion—three of them on their backs—were parked all over the Witmark field and the business of rounding up the gang was proceeding merrily athwart the chaparral and mesquite.

But Harburg and I were not exactly merry. You see, we liked old Witmark and we liked his daughter. She had been glorious, charging to the rescue, for her father's sake. She had recovered from that little knock on the head quickly enough. But would she ever recover from the sequel to our actions that night? Thinking about that aspect of the business, I know I was in purgatory. As for Harburg—I could not bear to rest my eyes on him. His face looked as though he were wracked with physical agony.

It came out fairly well in the end, at that. I had a heart-to-heart talk with Sheriff Bill Trowbridge and Captain Kennard, and it was hushed up quite a bit. Deems came to bat in a confession absolving Witmark—or Stanton, rather—from all complicity in the smuggling, but the old man would not have it so. His direct story to Trowbridge was enough, however. He had been framed back in Austin years before and the unmerited disgrace had followed him everywhere he went. Finally, penniless and hopeless, he had fallen for an offer to mix into a vast immigrant-smuggling scheme. He was valuable in Mexico, and likewise through certain political affiliations at the State capital. He was just a broken old man, and he went free with few people in on the true story.

Margaret had not known much about the details until that night, when her unswerving devotion to her father had caused her to do what she did. She told her husband, the illustrious Sergeant Harburg, all about it. He's making a hundred a week in an automobile factory in Detroit now, and is on his way toward becoming a big man in that flourishing village, I have no doubt. He writes me that they are very happy, and that he's going to see to it that Deems gets a good job, like delivering mail to the Statue of Liberty or something, as soon as he gets out of jail. Margaret had acquiesced in the yarn that she was engaged to him, simply out of loyalty to her father, who repre-

sented that it was the only way to get rid of us and avoid possible detection. It was pretty white of that jeering outlaw, Deems, to take all the blame, at that. He was just one of the pilots, but he knew a lot about the whole scheme and his evidence was largely instrumental in cleaning up an aërial highway for smugglers which extended from Vera Cruz and Mexico City to Dallas and San Antone. I remember him with considerable pleasure—I don't believe he'd turn a hair if he saw Queen Victoria ride into his cell on a high bicycle.

As for me, I'm still cavorting around as per usual—a border patrolman. Margaret still has, and will continue to occupy, a niche all her own in my memory. Same goes for Harburg. Once in a while I get sort of fed up and envious, but what of it? I'm better off the way I am, I guess.

Oh, one thing more. I finally decided that I was a fine specimen to climb virtuously up on my first lieutenant's bars and chase smugglers—so I haven't had a drink of bootleg booze since our soirée on the river. Now laugh, dog-gone you!

FAULTY DEDUCTION

GEORGE ARLISS, the actor, began his career in London and climbed to stardom over mighty and multiplied obstacles. He started at the bottom, worked hard and knew what it meant to keep the flame of genius burning on an empty stomach. He fanned it with brave laughter.

One day during that period when his engagements were inconstant and his salary invisible, a fellow actor met him on the street with a cigar box under his arm.

"I say, Arliss!" exclaimed his friend. "Every time I see you, you're carting home a box of cigars. You must be smoking yourself to death!"

"It isn't that," Arliss said. "I'm moving again."

NO SURVIVAL OF THIS FIT

JOHN L. NICODEMUS of Atlanta, Georgia, helps out a community in the Tennessee mountains every fall by sending it a shipment of worn clothes, which he collects from some of his friends and neighbors.

Last winter, a month after he had dispatched his usual contribution, he received a letter from one of the mountaineers. It said:

"I got a garmint whut wuz called a pare of pants. My wife laffed herself into connipshun fits when I brung them home. She sed the man that wore them pants wuz sholy a temtashun to hongry dawgs. I couldent git them on to my youngist baby, so I used them for gun cases. Ef that feller has one more pare to spare, my wife can use them to hang up byside the fire to keep the tongs in."

THE ANGEL AND THE ASS

JAMES HAMILTON LEWIS, former United States senator from Illinois and "the politest man who ever went to Congress," was taking a lady downstairs to dinner in one of the Washington embassies. The man next behind the couple stepped on the lady's gown as it trailed the steps and murmured to his partner in what he thought was an undertone:

"There's a type of woman that's always in the way, like Balaam's ass!"

Lewis, hearing the remark, turned and, with the bow that adorns his practiced form, corrected him:

"I beg your pardon, my dear sir, but it was the angel who stood in the way and the ass which spoke."

The Law West of the Pecos

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "The Riders from Texas," "The Scalp Lock," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

In those days, as Captain Ross of the rangers told Sergeant Jess Roundtree, there was only one law in Texas west of the Pecos—the rangers made it and enforced it as best they could. "This country," expounded Ross, "is dominated and controlled by criminals. Judges and juries won't convict, honest citizens are afraid to testify; and when a man does make a complaint the criminal is turned loose to go back and kill the informer." That was the situation. And the frontier town of Dragoon, where Ross and Roundtree and their men had established headquarters, was a very storm center of recurrent trouble. Certainly there was no law in Dragoon. And so far as the rangers knew, the only honest citizen there was the blusterous saloon keeper, "King" Wootan, who lived in terror of his shrewish wife and feared no man, white, red, or Mexican. It was to Dragoon that Ross, and Roundtree, and Private "Quick" Talley rode in, after the latest holdup of the overland stage, with two prisoners, one a nondescript Mexican, the other a notorious gambler known as "Mysterious Dave." This, to their knowledge, would be Dave's third incarceration under criminal charges. Twice already he had bribed his way out of prison, and they knew he would try it again. Furthermore they were certain some connection existed between Dave and the organized band that preyed on stages and caravans north and south of the Rio Grande. They shut him up in the cellar under their headquarters—the "Snake Hole" it was called. Roundtree and Talley mounted guard. But the processes of justice in the Big Bend country were slow. The term of Dave's imprisonment drew on and his jailers grew incautious. One day there appeared in Dragoon a Mexican girl. She was obviously of gentle birth and breeding. She had ridden up from the south followed by Trinidad, an old serving man. She frankly announced herself as Alicia de Montana, the betrothed of Mysterious Dave, whom she knew by the name of Raymondo Cantara. She pleaded her faith in his innocence and begged leave to speak with him from time to time and to bring him delicacies to eke out his prison fare. Also she made love to Roundtree. And in the end she engineered Dave's escape, providing him with a file with which he sawed his prison bars. Roundtree, tardily warned of the escape, discovered the prisoner riding away through the night with a companion. He opened fire. Dave rode on. But his companion toppled to the ground and lay still. It was Alicia, disguised as a man. Roundtree's bullet had found her.

(A Four-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER VII.

A TRAIL OF BLOOD.

"IT'S the gal," burst out Talley, dropping his match with an oath.

"Yes, and she's dead," answered Jess, after a silence. "That dirty whelp, Dave, got away!"

"We'll ketch him, by grab, if we have to follow him to hell! Come on!"

"Wait a minute!" spoke up Roundtree, eagerly striking another match; and when he held it to her face Alicia opened her eyes, though the blood was still running from her lips. "She's alive, Quick," he cried. "Thank God!"

Jess opened the man's shirt which Alicia had put on to disguise herself for the flight; and for a minute in the darkness his hands sought out the wounds, where the big pistol bullet had passed through her.

"She's shot through the right lung," he said. "It's the blood from her wound that's choking her!"

He raised her up, closing the holes with his hands; and as the intake of air was checked Alicia began to breathe while the blood ceased to froth from her lips. More than once before Jess had seen a man choking from a bullet wound through the lung; and with his hands pressed tight he raised her head and pillowed it against his breast.

"Catch that horse!" he said to Talley, "and help me step up on him." And with Alicia in his arms he swung up into the saddle and took the reins in his teeth.

"I'm going to the hospital," he announced and started off toward the fort.

"I'm going after Dave!" Quick Talley yelled after him and his voice was thick with rage. Their prisoner had escaped, he had been drunk at his post, and all because of Alicia. "You hurry back!" he shouted and ran back to the jail where the Mexican was still cursing Dave.

The hospital at the fort was hidden away in a dark cañon behind the officers' quarters and, directed by challenging sentries, Roundtree rode on at a gentle trot until he came to a lighted door. The doctor's orderly took Alicia from his arms and laid her on the operating table and after a hasty look the contract doctor cleaned the wound and bandaged her right side tight. Then as Alicia opened her eyes and stared about Roundtree beckoned the doctor outside.

"I'm a ranger," he said hurriedly. "She got shot by mistake and the man I was after escaped. How about it—is she going to get well?"

"I hope so," responded the doctor noncommittally and Jess swung up on his horse.

"Do your best for her!" he said and galloped off.

Back at the jail Quick Talley was pacing the courtyard, explaining the shooting to King Wootan; but at sight of Jess returning he brought out their horses and mounted like a flash.

"Come on!" he barked, "he's heading for the river. Let's take the Presidio trail and ride it blind."

"All right," agreed Roundtree. "Take care of that prisoner, Wootan." And with a clatter of hoofs they spurred out the gateway and took the long trail south. Riding hard they could see by the intermittent lightning the fresh tracks of Dave's horse in the mud, but as morning came on and they approached the Rim the trail disappeared completely.

"I know where he's heading for," insisted Talley doggedly; but ride as they would they never caught sight of the fugitive, though they found where he had come back into the trail. Taking a short cut that was unknown even to the rangers themselves he had beaten them over the Rim; and when late the next day with their horses worn and spent, they came within sight of Presidio, the rangers gave up their chase and camped. Mysterious Dave had outwitted them and outridden them to boot, and in Presidio he was sure to have friends. Even at that moment while they lay down supperless, and breakfastless too, he was safely concealed in some Mexican jacal, perhaps basking in some señorita's smiles. And he would be a hard man to catch.

As he stood guard while Quick slept, Roundtree looked down from their hiding place over the broad valley of the Rio Grande. Jagged ridges lay all around them, capped with rock like the Rim itself, which now lay far behind. They had ridden eighty miles over the rolling prairie before they had even come to the rim rock; and from there, down deep cañons, the trail had become a boulder patch that extended clear to the river. Flaunting soap weeds and yucca palms lined the washes on both sides, throwing up huge candelabra of white flowers; and on the ridges the wolf's candle and spiny *lechuguillas* thrust gaunt arms against the sky. The ground was barren and dry and unbelievably rocky and every bush and cactus was armed to the tip with long-spiked, poisonous thorns. But far down the trail, where the Rio Grande swept by, there was a band of vivid green.

Somewhere among those cottonwoods and willows and arrow weeds the border town of Presidio lay hid; and there, safely housed, Mysterious Dave took his ease after his treacherous escape and flight. Behind him as he fled he had left his Mexican companion, from whose shoulders he had sawn through the bars; and in the hospital and near to death lay the girl who had loved him, shot down by a ranger bullet.

The fierce anger and chagrin which had sent Roundtree spurring after him had given place to a deadly apathy; and stronger than his shame was the pang of disillusionment and a sense of irreparable loss. Alicia had proved false, she had played on his love to gain freedom for Mysterious Dave; and, like a blow from the hand of God to punish her for her faithlessness, his own pistol had shot her down. She had sung songs to the rangers and plied them with wine, but as she mounted her horse to ride off with her lover a bullet had checked her flight. Now she lay in the hospital, gasping and choking in her own blood, while Jess and Quick Talley were disgraced—and the reputation of the rangers was jeopardized.

Without their prisoner, alive or dead, there was no return for them, for the honor of the rangers was at stake. Three times Mysterious Dave had escaped from their hands to resume his desperate leadership of the outlaws; and, no matter what the cost, he must be taken or killed—even though they lost their own lives. As dusk came on they saddled their weary steeds and plodded down the trail at a walk and that night they took shelter at a goat ranch among the hills where they could spy on the town below. The chase was over now and in the battle of wits to come the first thing was to throw Dave off his guard. All the next day they lazed and slept, working the soreness out of their limbs, rubbing their horses down time and again; and at evening they set forth, after a warning to the goatherd, and rode in on Presidio unannounced.

It was a town of one street, along the bank of the river, a street where saloons and dance halls predominated and the men went muffled to the eyes. At the end of that street a wide trail descended the bank and followed a rocky ford across the stream; and across the wide river bottom the Mexican town, Presidio del Norte, stood out ghostly white on its hill. Many horsemen came splashing across, engaged in business of their own which prospered best under the stars; and for a long time Talley and Jess lay hidden in the willows, watching and listening for Mysterious Dave. As the Mexicans crossed, now and then a man spoke, or a carefree roisterer burst into song, clacking his spur chains against his stirrups; but mostly they were silent, and beneath their broad hats their faces were lost in black shadow.

"Sure looks snaky to-night," muttered Talley at last. "They's something big coming off. I know a cantina down at the end of the street where the barkeep's a friend of mine. Let's go down and find out what's doing."

"All right," agreed Jess. "You're boss—you know the town. Any chance of running into Dave?"

"Not a chance!" returned Talley. "He hangs out at El Crepúsculo, that big cantina up on the corner. We'll find out if he's up there, first."

"And if he is——" began Roundtree.

"You bet ye!" said Talley. "We'll git 'im."

They walked on in silence through the heavy silt, which a recent flood had deposited in the street, and at the door of La Flor de Mayo they paused for a moment, loosening the pistols in the holsters as they listened. All was quiet within except a low hum of conversation and a woman's sudden laugh, and with a grunt of scorn Talley thrust open the door and stepped down into the room. Jess followed close behind him, squinting his eyes against the glare which for a second nearly blinded him; and as he did so he saw Talley jump. He landed crouching against the wall, his hand reaching for his gun and, following his ranger training, Roundtree jumped the other way, whipping out his own pistol as he ducked. Across the room he saw a man, Mysterious Dave, with his pistol leveled straight at him. Then as the gun went off he dropped to the floor, while his own pistol was knocked from his hand. Talley's six-shooter answered the shot and at the belch of the guns the coal-oil lamps dipped and went out. A woman screamed for help and in an instant there was a duel—a battle in the darkness, shot for shot.

Jess fired at a flash and rolled quickly over as a bullet smashed into the wall; then, answering this second shot, he fired again, while at his left Talley was shooting lightning fast. In the brief instant before the darkness Roundtree had seen only one man—Mysterious Dave, at a table with a woman—but now three or four pistols were shooting at once and the bullets were striking everywhere. At every flash he shot out his gun in the single swift movement the rangers had learned and, drawing back

the hammer, fired. There was no trigger to pull on their altered guns but, shooting by point, he replied on the very instant—and as he fired he rolled over out of line. It was work he had done before and when their guns were empty there was only a groaning from across the room. He reloaded swiftly from the long row of cartridges which he kept at the top of his belt and in the silence that followed Talley called to the barkeeper, rolling swiftly to one side as he spoke. But no bullet sought him out and, calling again, he received a muffled response.

"Quién es?" inquired a quavering voice.

"It's the rangers!" responded Talley, changing his position again. "Strike a light. Is that you, Juan?"

There was a shuffling behind the bar and then a match was held up, revealing the frightened face of the barkeeper. He was a short, wrinkled Mexican and his hand trembled so violently that he could hardly light the lamp. Jess and Talley lay waiting, a pistol in each hand, their eyes on the corner, now filled with wreckage; but when the barkeeper came out and held his lamp over the scene he let out a terrified shriek.

"Que lástima!" he wailed, "here are three men dead and a fourth about to die. What was the matter? Why did you shoot?"

"Three men!" repeated Talley, hurrying over and looking down at them. "Who the hell are they?" he asked.

"Quién sabe," shrugged Juan. "They are some customers of mine who were playing cards in that little room. Then you began to shoot, and this other man he shoot too; and now look at these men—all dead!"

"Kind of interferes with business, eh, Juan?" jested Talley; and then he burst out with an oath.

"Where's Dave?" he cried. "W'y, damn the luck, he ain't around here nowhere! By grab, I swear I hit him, the first shot I fired. And say, what's become of that woman?"

"Quién sabe," replied the Mexican with a sullen glare. "Perhaps you killed her, too."

"Well, nobody got killed that wasn't shooting," snapped back Talley. "We was only firing at the flashes. And judging by the looks of these hombres that we downed we didn't make no mistake. What's the matter, Jess—hurt your arm?"

"I'm shot," answered Roundtree, shaking the blood from his hand, and hastily rolling up his sleeve; and as Quick hurried over Jess remembered dropping his gun just as he ducked before Dave's first shot. In the excitement and confusion he had paid no attention to it except to reach out and pick it up, but now he knew that Dave's bullet had struck his arm, which had been bleeding unnoticed all the time.

Talley bolted the two doors to keep out unwelcome visitors and, working fast and hard, he bound up the wound, cursing angrily all the time.

"We're dished," he complained. "Got to get you back to Dragoon before this arm develops blood poison or something. But dang it, Jess, if I had half an hour I could pick up Mysterious Dave."

"Go get him!" answered Jess. "I can ride."

"Think you can make it, clear back to Dragoon?" asked Talley anxiously. "I hate to leave you, but——"

"Go after him!" urged Roundtree. "I'm all right."

"I've just *got* to git him!" ended Talley, "or the captain——"

"You sure have!" agreed Roundtree grimly and Talley was off on the run.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REPRIMAND.

IT was nearly midnight of the second day when Sergeant Roundtree, with his arm in a sling, rode up to the military hospital. There was a flush on his bronzed cheeks and a fever in his eye and the contract doctor, after examining the swollen wound, shook his head and snorted angrily.

"Why didn't you get that treated before?" he demanded. "You're lucky to be alive." And then, still grumbling, he opened up the wound and cleaned it again and again. He was a tall, lantern-jawed Texan with deep-set hazel eyes and a rough way of expressing his views; but his touch was tender and when he had finished he sat back and lighted a cigar.

"Well, did you get him?" he inquired casually.

"No," answered the ranger shortly.

"Not that I give a damn, myself," the doctor explained. "Generally figure on

minding my own business. But there's a young lady in the other ward that's certainly anxious about this Dave and——"

"You can tell her," broke in Jess, "that Dave got away clean. And if it will make her any happier, tell her he shot me in the arm. Don't need to mention those Mexicans we killed."

"Hadn't heard of it," replied the doctor, "but it's just as well not to. And talking about luck, you've got all there is—that bullet passed between the two bones. If it had hit either one you wouldn't have any arm, and your fighting days would be over."

"Well, fix it up so I can shoot and I'll go back and kill that hombre—but you don't need to mention that, either."

"Just as you say," nodded the doctor. "Better get a little sleep." And he stalked out and closed the door.

But in the morning he was back, a quizzical smile in his eyes and a smuggled cigar between his teeth.

"My name is Doc Moore," he began cheerfully. "Glad to meet you, Sergeant Roundtree. Now as I was saying, this young lady—and you brought her here yourself—takes an awful interest in Dave. In fact she's been half delirious ever since you went away, for fear you'd catch him and kill him. Mighty bad for her fever, and all that—serious question whether she'll ever recover. One lung put out of business and if she don't quit fretting around she's liable to start a hemorrhage.

"Now you seem like a nice fellow, when you ain't nursing a grouch, and since you brought her here yourself and seemed to take a personal interest I'm going to ask you a favor. Come in and talk it over with her—will you? Fact is, she thinks I'm lying."

"Don't suppose she asked about me?" inquired Roundtree grimly and the doctor shook his head.

"Nope, Dave's the high card," he admitted.

"The dad-burned whelp," muttered Jess. "I'm going to make it my business to git him. But—well, seeing it's you, doc, and all the rest of it——"

"That's the talk," grinned the doctor. "Come on."

He led the way to an adjoining house where, looking very pale and thin, Alicia was lying on a cot; and at sight of her a sudden wave of compassion swept over Jess, for he could see that she had been near to death. All the color had left her face, there were blue circles beneath her eyes; and her smile, when she looked up at him, was so wan and anxious that it left him heartsick with fear. Even now her life hung by a thread.

"Did you see Raymondo?" she asked, almost instantly, and Roundtree nodded gravely.

"But you did not kill him? Oh, you did not do that? Is my Raymondo safe and well?"

"Guess so," replied Jess. "Was the last I saw of him. He was trying to kill me, at the time."

"And you did not find his body? You are not deceiving me? Oh, tell me so, and then I shall die happy."

"No. We found him in a saloon at Presidio, and he shot me through the arm. But as far as I know he got off without a scratch, though I can't say as much for his friends."

"You had a fight?" she asked eagerly. "I hope you are not injured?"

"Not at all," bowed Jess. "Please don't mention it."

"You are joking me," she accused, a sudden radiance in her smile. "I can see that your arm is in a sling. But when you came in, and I heard your voice, I thought—I thought maybe you had brought Raymondo."

"My intentions were good," admitted Roundtree, "but Raymondo seems to have all the luck. Is it about time to go, Doctor Moore?"

"No, sit down; sit down," ordered the doctor with a frown. "What's your hurry? You've got nothing to do."

"I shall be so glad to have you, if you will," pleaded Alicia. "Please tell me all about the fight."

"Well—nothing to tell," said Roundtree. "Lights went out the first shot; after that it was all in the dark. But Dave got away and that's all you care about—don't suppose you ever remember he got you shot?"

"Oh, yes, I do!" she cried. "And it makes me so happy, to think it was Raymondo that escaped. If I die I shall have no regrets."

Jess shook his head and glanced pityingly at the doctor and after a few more words he went away, having made no men-

tion of the woman. For when the fight began Dave had been sitting with a woman and though Jess had not seen her face, so intent had he been on Dave, something told him that this Mexican woman, this habitué of cantinas, had taken the place of Alicia. Dave had forgotten her love already. Thinking it over alone, he wondered by what magic Dave had won such matchless devotion. By what charm, hidden to men, did he win women one by one? For to masculine eyes he had a weak, dissipated look; though it was coupled with a dare-devil smile. Undoubtedly he was daring in his own elusive way, but he always evaded a fight; and when he was caught he depended upon his cunning to open his prison doors. Upon cunning and the wiles of women like Alicia—and then he cast them aside.

Roundtree was ruminating bitterly upon his part in the tragedy which had resulted in the escape of Mysterious Dave when he heard a sound of voices and an old hack passed by, drawing up by the women's ward. Then the door was jerked open and Quick Talley came in grinning, closely followed by Captain Ross.

"We winged him!" announced Quick, "but he got away, across the river. Them Mexicans were Chico Cano's men. We hit the woman, too, and I nabbed her, down at the crossing. That's her we just brought in."

"What, did you put her over there, in the same ward with Alicia?" exclaimed Roundtree, starting up. "Hell's bells, don't you know this Mexican was Dave's woman? They might get to quarreling—they're bound to!"

"That will be all right," spoke up Ross, as Quick glanced at him questioningly. "In fact, I brought her up here for that sole purpose—we've got to get these women to talk."

He shut the door behind him and strode over to Jess' cot, beckoning the sheepish Talley to a chair.

"Now I want the facts," he began, "about Mysterious Dave's escape. Was this woman responsible for it, Sergeant Roundtree?"

"Yes, sir," answered Roundtree quietly.

"And did she bring you boys wine, and sing songs all the evening, while Dave was sawing the bars? Well, I'd like to ask you, Sergeant Roundtree, if that's your idea of a ranger's duty—drinking champagne while your prisoner escapes?"

"No, sir," replied Jess. "I'll resign."

"No you won't," flared back Ross, "not until you bring back Dave. Dead or alive, it's immaterial to me, but Mysterious Dave must be taken. You boys have disgraced the service and I want the whole story. Go ahead now, and tell me the truth."

He listened in somber silence, rubbing the end of his long nose as his frown grew blacker and blacker; then as Roundtree finished he turned to Talley.

"Have you anything to add?" he asked.

"No, *sir!*" responded Quick, "Jess done told too much, already!" And at his reckless laugh the captain smothered a smile and rubbed his nose reflectively.

"That wouldn't sound very good in an official report," he said, "so we'll wait till we can write the last chapter—where the rangers get Mysterious Dave. You did well down at Presidio, and it turns out those four men were lieutenants of Chico Cano. Seems he had some deal on with Mysterious Dave and they've met there to talk matters over. That's why they came out shooting when Dave started the ball—but after all, you failed to get Dave. I can't understand, with a good crack at him that way, how——"

"He shot my gun out of my hand," defended Jess.

"I hit him, I know it!" declared Talley hotly, "but seems like I never can kill 'em. If you'd took my advice, when we caught him that last time——"

"For God's sake," burst out Ross, "can't the rangers do their work without shooting down helpless prisoners? Private Talley, you were drunk and negligent of your duty on the night Dave made his escape; and Sergeant Roundtree, you were in charge, and duly warned of the danger, when you let that woman make a fool of you. If this comes to the adjutant's ears there'll be a reprimand for all of us—we've got to get Mysterious Dave."

"I'll get him," promised Jess, "as soon as I can travel. Just give me a chance—that's all."

"I could get him myself, if I knew where he was," the captain responded cuttingly. "Any ranger could get him, but he's gone. We can't locate him, anywhere, and I worked two days with Quick before we left Presidio. He's got those Mexicans intimi-

dated, and the rangers can't get any one to talk. Chico Cano is behind this and he's got them all terrorized—but that woman of Dave's, she knows."

He paused and smiled significantly.

"That's why we brought her up," he added.

"How do you mean?" inquired Jess, after a pause.

"She's a friend of Mysterious Dave," replied Ross. "This other girl is madly in love with him—and they both know how to find him. So I've put them there together, and when they find each other out——"

"But Alicia can't stand it!" protested Jess. "If she get's excited she's liable to have a hemorrhage and——"

"Let her have it," cut in the captain severely. "She's an accessory to this crime, and deserves all she suffers—I consider her a dangerous woman. And while we're on the subject I want to warn you boys never to let this happen again. The ranger service has gone to hell if my men are going to fall in love with every pretty Mexican woman they see—Sergeant Roundtree, I'm doing the talking."

He paused and at the anger in his stern, unblinking eyes Jess dropped back sullenly on his couch.

"We are not here," went on Ross, "to pull off any love affairs no matter by what names you call them. We are here to clean up the worst gang of cutthroats that ever infested Texas, and I want every ranger to remember his oath and his duty to the State of Texas. I will overlook this jail break and the losing of Dave, but this foolishness must stop. So far, this woman has been making use of you—now I want you to make use of her. The doctor has just told me that she's asking to see you."

"Well, what do you want me to do?" asked Jess and Captain Ross rose up.

"Go in and see her," he said, "and get her to talk. But remember—this foolishness must stop."

"Very well, sir," answered Roundtree briefly.

CHAPTER IX.

"MY TALL RANGER."

CAPTAIN ROSS went out, accompanied by Ranger Talley, who looked back and grinned encouragingly; but as he lay there in the silence and awaited his summons Jess Roundtree scowled sullenly into space. It was true that Alicia had used him, and made a fool of him to boot, but she was sick now and near to death; and what angered him most was the captain's rough-shod way of exposing her to the abuse of this other woman. They had brought the woman up there and put them together in the same room, and inevitably a quarrel would ensue. Was it a matter of no consequence if Alicia de Montana suffered? Perhaps in the encounter another hemorrhage would be brought on—she might die horribly, choking in blood; but there was grim work before them and one woman, more or less, meant nothing to the stern-eyed Ross.

But for Ross' own nice scruples about killing a wounded prisoner Mysterious Dave would not now be at large; and now, balked at every turn, the captain had turned to iron and his orders must be obeyed. Alicia had freed her lover and now she must pay the penalty—and Roundtree must do his part. It was through his own negligence that Dave had escaped and it was his duty to help retake him—to use Alicia as she had used him—yet when he was summoned he sighed.

"We've changed our plans," announced Ross as he closed the door behind him. "We're going to take Lola, the Mexican woman, away. But before we do it I want you to confront her and maybe that will start them off. Then I want you to stay and make love to this Montana woman and find out what she knows. Didn't she do the same thing to you?"

"That's right," agreed Roundtree, and rising ponderously from his cot he followed Ross into the room.

The Mexican woman, who had been shot through the neck, was lying with her head swathed in bandages; and when Jess came in she did not even open her eyes, but Alicia smiled up at him eagerly.

"Sit down here," said Ross, suddenly changing his mind; and as Jess sat down the captain hurried out, leaving the ranger alone with the women. Jess shrugged and glanced at Alicia; then they both looked at Lola, who seemed to be asleep.

"Who is she?" demanded Alicia, drawing his head down closer and whispering into his ear, and Roundtree shook his head.

"Some woman who got shot, down on the river," he answered and Alicia gazed up at him curiously.

"What has happened? Why are you so angry?" she asked.

"What gave you that idea?" he inquired.

"Your captain—he is angry, too," she went on. "But Queek, he only laughs. Is it because of what I have done? Then I am sorry," she ended contritely.

"You must forgive me!" she pleaded as he sat in gloomy silence. "But no—perhaps it is too much. I have no right to ask. But I sent for you again to tell you, my ranger, that I do not blame you at all. I mean, for this bullet, which you sent through my breast, to punish me for my sins. It was dark and you saw only the man's clothes I wore—and you were doing your duty as a ranger. You thought I was Raymondo—no?"

Jess nodded, gazing soberly away, and at the name he saw the Mexican woman stir.

"So I sent for you," sighed Alicia, "to tell you I am sorry and to ask you to forgive me, if you can. But your captain—what did he say?"

"He said," responded Jess, "that I had disgraced the ranger service by letting my prisoner escape. But if you will tell me what you know about this Mysterious Dave, or Raymondo——"

He paused, for the Mexican woman, who had not understood their English, had suddenly opened her eyes. Raymondo was a name that she knew.

"Carái!" she cried, suddenly heaving herself up and glaring at him malignantly. "You are that he-goat of a reenger that shot me in the neck, when I was sitting in the cantina at Presidio!"

"Seguro!" answered Jess. *"Como no*—why not?"

"Como no!" she shrilled angrily. "Do the reengers shoot women? But it gives me great pleasure to see that Raymondo has placed a bullet in you! You are carrying your arm in a sling!"

" 'Raymondo!' " repeated Alicia after a startled pause! "Did you see him, down in Presidio?"

"Seguramente!" exclaimed the woman. "We were sitting together in the Flor de Mayo when this big reenger came in and shot me!"

"Yes, but Raymondo—did they shoot him, too?"

"What is that to you?" demanded the woman insolently and Alicia smiled at her ignorance.

"He is my sweetheart," she said. "We are soon to be married. It was I who saved him from prison!"

"*Your* sweetheart!" cried Lola. "He is my man, you fool!"

"You lie!" screamed Alicia in a fury.

"Well, ask this reenger, this big goat of a woman killer who shot me in the neck. He was there, and saw us together. You cannot steal my man!"

"Was this woman with Raymondo?" demanded Alicia incredulously; and when, reluctantly, Jess nodded his head, the woman burst into a laugh.

"Why did you not tell me?" scolded Alicia resentfully; but before he could answer the woman broke in with a torrent of vituperation and abuse. Forgetting her wound Alicia tried to answer back and as they faced each other, screaming, the doctor came rushing in and jerked the woman away.

"You must be quiet!" he ordered, pushing Alicia back on her pillow and holding her firmly down. "Don't scream—you will bring on a hemorrhage and die!"

"I do not care!" cried Alicia. "I will scream, then, and that will end it. Ah, a curse on Raymondo! After all I have suffered for him—to make love to this woman of the people."

"You shall not call me names!" spat back Lola, and she sprang from her cot to attack her. But at this point Captain Ross and Talley intervened and bore the screeching woman away.

"Keep still!" commanded the doctor, as Alicia struggled and wept hysterically. "Don't scream—do you want to die?"

"Yes! Yes!" she wailed, and with a muttered oath the doctor rose up from his chair.

"Here, Roundtree," he said, "take my place and keep her quiet—the captain wants me outside. But if she doesn't stop that screaming——"

"Doctor Moore!" called Ross, beckoning peremptorily from the door; and Jess sat down by her bed.

"Don't scream that way," he said, pushing her back on her pillow; and at the touch of his hand Alicia ceased her wailing, though her eyes were still big and wild.

"I will have my revenge," she declared with a tragic smile. "After that I do not care. Ah, what will my father say when he hears of this affair? He will disown

me—I have disgraced our family. But this Mysterious Dave who dared to trifle with a De Montana shall learn I am not a child."

"Keep still!" urged Jess, "or you will open up your wound. Don't speak so loud—I can hear you."

"I do not care," she repeated, but as he talked to her quietly she closed her eyes and was silent.

"Put your head down closer," she said at last, "and let me whisper in your ear." But when he bowed his head she twined one arm about his neck and kissed him on his lips. "Do you love me?" she demanded. "Do you want to marry me? Then kill this low creature, this Dave Misterioso, and I will be your wife. Ah, that shameless man," she sobbed, suddenly bursting into tears again. "He left me for a creature like her! But I will have my revenge—will you kill him?"

"I do not know where I can find him," replied Jess.

"You do not love me," she reproached. "You are angry at what I have done, and at what your captain has said. You think Raymondo's kisses are still on my lips, but they have been washed away with my blood. Do you not remember the kiss I gave you, through the bars of the prison gate? You were very dear, my tall ranger, but I had pledged myself to him and so I only kissed you through the gate. If I had kissed you within, my resolution would have failed—*Madre de Dios*, if I had followed my heart!"

She drew his head closer and when he gave over resisting she kissed him again and again.

"Will you kill him?" she whispered in his ear.

"Sure as hell—if I can find him," he said with a rugged smile, and Alicia sank back with a sigh.

"I know where to look," she answered, and Roundtree sat waiting. His brain was in a whirl, he had done nothing by design; but now, at the end, he remembered his orders and once more he became the ranger.

"Where's that?" he asked, and smiled.

"Do you remember," she began, "the big house, like a fort, on the river below Presidio? It was built long ago by the American soldiers when they came there to fight the Apaches. He comes and goes from there, over the old Smugglers' Trail that winds up over the cliffs and into Mexico. The Mexicans who live there make a business of handling cattle and he buys great herds from them."

"Buys!" laughed Jess. "I'll bet you they're stolen!"

"No, no!" she cried. "He sold a herd to my father; and they were all good cattle, with one brand."

"And what brand was that?" he asked.

"It was a Texan brand—WO."

"I know it," nodded Jess. "It belongs to Livernash, that big cattleman below the Rim."

"What? That man?" she demanded a sudden hate in her eyes. "That tall man I saw first with you? He is bad—he is capable of anything!"

"I bet ye!" assented Jess. "He's been stealing these cows and turning them over to Dave."

"No, I do not mean that. He is a bad, cruel man—a man who is not respectful to women. And when I stayed with Mrs. Wootan he tried always to scrape acquaintance. So I never went to walk—I was afraid."

"I see," said Jess. "Well, he's certainly got a bad eye. And so your father bought cattle from Mysterious Dave that had this WO brand?"

"Yes, he bought a big herd and it was when he delivered it that I first met Raymondo—Mysterious Dave! We thought him a rich man—and how could it be otherwise when my father paid him ten thousand pesos? And so, being lonely and not knowing that he was a thief, I listened when he came to make love. We were to run away together and be married later, when we had escaped to the United States; but on the very last night my brother got word of it and lay in wait to kill him. But Raymondo must have heard, for he never came back, and my father shut me up in my room; but when it was reported that he was wounded and in prison I ran away, and came here. Now I see that my dear father and Valentino, my brother, knew better than I what was best; but before I die I will send them his ears, to show that our name is avenged."

Her voice, which had become low, trailed away into a murmur and she sank back and closed her eyes.

"I am tired," she sighed at last.

"Then do not talk," he said and while he watched over her Alicia fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

A MISTAKE.

ROUNDTREE was sitting by Alicia's bedside lost in gloomy meditations when the door opened quietly and Captain Ross peered in, beckoning him outside with a peremptory gesture.

"Well, what did she say?" he asked, and when Jess had reported he smiled.

"Now, you see?" he said. "That's what we get from these women—they'll tell all they know, every time. We shook down the Mexican woman while you were inside and she told all *she* knew about Dave—maybe some things she didn't know. But what she said all dovetails in with your story, only she claims that Dave is an agent for Chico Cano, selling Mexican cattle on this side. Do you see how it's worked? Well, I'll tell you. Livernash and his men steal the Texan stuff and pass it across the river to Dave, and Chico Cano steals Mexican cattle and passes them into Texas. Dave handles the money but I'll bet you my horse this Livernash is the leader of the gang. He's too intelligent a man to be running a ranch in this country without some big reason behind it; and that reason is rustling cattle and passing them back and forth, using Dave as a sort of blind.

"Now what that girl said about the big house below Presidio is no great news to me, because I've known all along they were smuggling; but if Dave makes it his hold-out that's a different story and the place will have to be watched. The way things are now we can't stop to fool with smugglers, and that of course makes them bold, but I'd ride a thousand miles to get my hands on Mysterious Dave—and by the way, you overlooked a bet. This Mexican woman, Lola, says there was a big sum of money in the back room of the Flor de Mayo Saloon. That's the reason those Mexicans were so quick to join the fight—they thought you were trying to rob them. It was Chico Cano money, too."

"Well, we didn't have time to stop and search the whole place!" defended Jess as the captain smiled. "We went there to get one man—Dave."

"Yes, and you didn't get him," taunted Ross.

"Well, we damn sure tried—and I'm game to try again, just as soon as I can catch up my horse."

"What? You going to go off with your arm in a sling—and without kissing your girl good-by? Better wait till that bullet hole heals up."

The captain laughed sarcastically and Roundtree looked at him straight, then without a word he turned on his heel and in another half hour he was gone. Talley rode beside him, driving the pack mule before them, and two days later they came in sight of Presidio and hid in the willows until dark.

"Now," said Jess, as the night came on, "we'll go out and get Mysterious Dave."

"*If* we can," put in Talley with his high, hectoring laugh and Roundtree muttered a curse. He had not been good company since they rode out of Dragoon and baiting only made him worse.

"No 'if' about it," he flared back. "And when I bring him in, I resign. The captain can't rawhide me!"

"Aw, you're sore," mocked Talley, "because he joked you about your gal. I looked in through the winder and saw her smoothing your hair——"

"Say, will you shut up?" demanded Jess.

"Anything to oblige," responded Talley pertly and they rode out into the night.

Eight miles down the river on a point of the mesa where it jutted out into the river bottom, stood the Casa Grande, a huge square of mud houses stuck one against the other like a wasp's nest. Not a hundred yards below, amid a rank growth of cottonwoods, the muddy Rio Grande glided by deep and strong, impassable except by boat; and up through the willows there wound many devious trails, known only to the smugglers themselves. It was a dark and fearsome place even for the stout-hearted, but for three long evenings Jess and Talley prowled the thickets, watching the trails and listening for Dave. But he did not come and at last, impatiently, they gave up and tried a new tack. They rode boldly into town and, despite many black looks from the Mexicans, settled down in the Twilight Saloon.

El Crepúsculo, it was called in the ornate blue lettering that curlicued over its white front; and being on a corner it gave a view of the crossing as well as the long, rambling street. Whoever came and went would be under the rangers' eyes and, remembering the four men who had been killed at the Flor de Mayo, the Mexicans did not

dare to object. The faro and monte games went on as usual, a string band played till late into the night; but certain important customers who had once made it their headquarters retired to quieter haunts. Business languished, while day by day the rangers came back, Jess loitering in the cool barroom while Talley worked the street, intently seeking some clew. In the evening they watched the trails, listening to wayfarers as they passed, but Dave Misterioso was not mentioned. The entire community was in a silent conspiracy to prevent them from finding their man and when one morning a young Spaniard scraped acquaintance with him Jess regarded him with frank suspicion. There were rumors of a reward on the ranger's head.

"Good morning, amigo," he returned in Spanish. "I believe I have seen you before."

"No, señor," replied the Spaniard with a bow and a smile, "I have just come in from the interior. But if you too are at leisure and have nothing better to do let us have a game of cards, for I am waiting to meet a friend."

"Very well," agreed the ranger and after ordering the drinks he scrutinized the stranger again. He was young and of slender build, with the high nose and olive complexion that is a sign of pure Spanish blood; and his manner, though agreeable, failed to conceal a suppressed excitement which gave a feverish gleam to his eyes. From time to time, when he thought Roundtree was not looking, he regarded him with fanatical hate; but with his back to the wall Jess dealt hand after hand, his pistol loose in its holster and every sense alert for treachery, but apparently unconcerned. And at last he saw the signs he was looking for, though not a muscle moved in his impassive face.

"You play well," sneered the Spaniard, his eyes suddenly aflame as Jess swept in the stakes. "Perhaps you can read the cards?"

"What do you mean?" asked Roundtree, after a silence.

"I say," accused the Spaniard, "you play like a professional—like a man who knows every card."

"You mean that I cheat?" inquired Jess, and he saw the Spaniard's eyes become set. But, looking beyond, he saw also Quick Talley, gliding silently across the room.

"Yes!" cried the Spaniard, suddenly drawing his knife and lunging across the table to stab him; but at the same instant Roundtree kicked the table against him and whipped out his pistol to strike.

"I've got 'im!" yelled Talley, swinging his pistol from behind; and with a vicious chop he smashed the Spaniard over the head, kicking his knife out of his hand as he fell. The high-peaked sombrero had broken the force of the blow, yet the Spaniard lay stunned on the floor; and while Jess kept back the crowd Talley caught him up and snaked his sagging body into a card room.

"They's another one," he panted and, leaving Jess to guard the prisoner, he bolted out into the street. A few minutes later he came trotting back with a Mexican at the muzzle of his gun; an old, white-bearded man, his eyes big with terror—it was Trinidad, Alicia's *mozo*.

"I spotted the old paisano pointing you out to this young feller," explained Talley as he thrust him into the card room. "He was waiting outside with the horses. There's a horse out there, too, with a little mustache on his nose, like the one on Sister Alicia's pinto—it's a breed they have down in Coahuila. So you've got one guess who this knife slinger is—he's her brother, sure as hell!"

"Well, what in the devil did he want to kill me for?" burst out Jess as he turned to confront his prisoner. "Shut that door—we'll shake this boy down."

He put his foot into the Spaniard's ribs and jerked him roughly to his feet and while old Trinidad began to beg and cross himself Roundtree looked his prisoner in the eye.

"What is your name?" he demanded. "Who are you?"

"I am Valentino de Montana," announced the young man defiantly. "I only regret that I did not kill you."

"Yes, but why," inquired Jess, "do you want to kill me? Was it for the reward on my head?"

"Reward!" cried Valentino. "Do you think I would kill for pay? You Americano dog, you killed my poor sister, and so I came to kill you!"

"Your sister is still alive, in the hospital at Dragoon!" retorted Roundtree, glaring back at him angrily. "Who told you she was killed?"

"Her *mozo,* old Trinidad," responded the Spaniard. "And I swore an oath to kill you."

"Come here!" ordered Jess, reaching out for Trinidad and taking him by the throat. "Now what black-hearted lie is this you have told?"

"It was no lie!" protested Trinidad. "I saw you shoot her from the wall. And I saw you standing over her body. I swear by the Holy Virgin and all the saints—I was there, in the shadow of the wall!"

"You are an old fool!" cried Roundtree angrily. "She is not dead at all. I shot her, that is true, but it was in the dark and by mistake. And afterward I took her to the hospital."

"Ay! Dispensa me!" wailed the *mozo.* "You would not kill me for that? I saw her, and I thought she was dead."

"She was shot through the right lung," explained Roundtree to Valentino. "But it was dark and she was dressed like a man. And perhaps he did not tell you that she was with Dave Misterioso, and had helped him escape from prison?"

"A thousand curses, no!" cried Valentino in a fury and struck the old man to the floor.

"Ah, do not kill me!" begged Trinidad, rising up on his knees again. "I would not speak ill of the dead. And since my mistress was killed why should I tell of Dave Misterioso? That was something to be buried in the grave."

"Fool and son of a fool!" exclaimed the Spaniard in great vexation. "Can you never get anything right? But first you come running and say Alicia is dead; and then, white-bearded goat, you point out this ranger and say it was he who killed her!"

"No le hace," interceded Jess. "It makes no difference. Let the old man go, and when your head quits aching no one will be the worse. My friend and I are trying to find this prisoner who——"

"What? Dave Misterioso? The gringo devil who made love to my sister? You must let me assist you, my friend!"

He held out his hand with so engaging a smile that Roundtree accepted it instantly; and a few minutes later, to the astonishment of the crowd, they came out and ordered a drink.

"It was all a mistake," explained the Spaniard suavely and the Mexicans stood staring, goggle-eyed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEVIL'S SPIDER WEB.

THERE were a thousand apologies from the hot-blooded young Spaniard whose knife had been aimed at Jess' heart; and then, leaving El Crepúsculo with its loiterers still unconvinced, they mounted and rode off together.

"Come on over to our camp," invited Roundtree when they were well out of sight of town; and circling about he led the way through the thickets to an opening on the edge of the river. Here the rangers had concealed their packs and their faithful mule, who came hobbling out joyously to meet them; and soon by a low fire they had prepared a hasty meal which they spread on a canvas for their guest. But Trinidad, being a *mozo,* and in disgrace for his mendacity, did not share the feast with the rest. Ropes would not have dragged him to the same table with his master and while they sat down together he unsaddled their horses and turned them out, hobbled, to feed.

"What a loco!" exclaimed Valentino in despair as he gazed at his blundering servant. "But at least he has been faithful and if I decide to remain here I will send him with a message to Alicia. He is not the cause of all our troubles and disgrace, but this American you call Dave Misterioso. No, I will tell the whole truth—we ourselves were to blame, for we knew his cows were stolen—otherwise he could not sell them at such a price.

"We live, as you may know, far down in Coahuila and our cattle are of the old Spanish stock. They are bony and rough and they have no such meat on them as the cattle that come from Texas, so in order to breed them up my father bought the cows which Raymondo Cantara brought. Yes, that was the name which this rascal gave when he came through our country with his offers, and since many of our steers had been driven into Texas we did not consider it too wrong. So we bargained, at a low price, for two thousand cows to be delivered the following month; and neither I nor my father even dreamed that the fellow would dare to lift his eyes to Alicia. What? A common cow thief, an unprincipled American, making love to a daughter of our family? Yet that is what he did and before we knew it she had promised to run

away with him. It was only by an accident that I spied them together and heard his presumptuous proposal. I nearly went mad!

"But we have a way, in our country," he went on unsmilingly, "of protecting our women; and when I had him alone I warned this scamp to begone, and put his money in his hand. But because I wished to hush up the scandal he assumed that I was afraid, and with his hand on his gun he talked back to *me,* when already I could have had him killed. Because we had bought his cattle, which we knew were stolen, he thought he had me at his mercy; nevertheless I said nothing, intending to catch him that night, when he came to run off with Alicia. But, señores, he did not come; otherwise he would be dead and my sister would be saved this disgrace.

"We shut her up, and for many months I sought quietly for this man who had dared insult our family; but a curse was upon us for when he was shot it was Alicia who heard it first. Our vigilance had relaxed and before we knew it she had fled in the night, with old Trinidad. He covered their tracks well, having been raised among the Apaches; and while we looked in other places they traveled only by night until at last word came that she was staying at Dragoon, where her lover was in prison. That ended our search, for we saw that she was mad. How else could she bring herself to humiliate her parents by running away to marry this jailbird? So my father did no more and her name was never mentioned, until this muttonhead, Trinidad, came back. The rest you know yourself—I engaged you in a card game in order to take your life. *Oiga, Trinidad! Ven' acá!*"

He beckoned sternly and as Trinidad came, hat in hand, he rapped out his orders in rapid Spanish.

"Go back to town," he said, "and buy a drink at El Crepúsculo. Then tell those rascals that I was sent by Chico Cano to put an end to these rangers. After that they will befriend you, thinking I but wait my time to strike; and then it is my wish that you shall inquire for Raymondo Cantara, and where he can be found. Bring me news of his hiding place and I will pardon your blundering, which nearly cost your master his life."

"Si, señor," responded the *mozo* and, followed by Talley, who was on a scout, he started back through the brush.

Left alone with this Spanish fire eater who had so recently attempted his life, Roundtree sought by artful questioning to learn more of his family, but his answers were vague and elusive.

"I have sworn an oath," spoke up Valentino at last, "to wash my hands in the blood of this Dave. Until then I have no family, no home, no honored name; and I live but to get revenge. The knife I tried on you shall find the heart of that miscreant, and I swear by this holy cross"—he pressed the haft to his lips—"never to rest until our honor is avenged."

He slipped the knife back into its place beneath his sash and sat gazing across the river into Mexico. Jess followed his eyes, which had suddenly become fixed, and above the tops of the willow he saw the tip of a mountain, standing up like a finger against the sky.

"That is Santa Cruz, the Mount of the Holy Cross," explained the Spaniard, crossing himself reverently. "Do you see, there at the top, a little spot of white? That is a shrine much revered by our people. On the third day of May a great pilgrimage is made up the path to the top of the mountain; and at nightfall thousands of men, to atone for their sins, climb up barefoot bearing a back load of thorns. Then when each is in his place and their prayers have been said they light their bundles, one by one, and a long trail of fire ascends the mountains. For on that very peak, by the sign of the cross, the devil was conquered by a priest. He is buried in a cave that they call the Devil's Spider Hole—have you never heard of that?"

"No!" answered Jess with a touch of scorn; but the Spaniard's face was awestruck as he gazed.

"Many years ago," he began, "the devil came to that mountain and, finding a deep hole that went down into its heart, he took shelter there and spun a huge web. This web could not be seen, but the residents of Presidio saw a light like a candle at night. It was the eye of the devil as he ran out on his web, looking down to catch any who were abroad; and soon it was observed that many men disappeared, men of great importance in the town. Until midnight all was safe and people could go anywhere; but those who stayed out late were snatched

up and borne away. Every night after dark the devil threw out spider webs to all these little hills above town, and for many years his eye could be seen as he ran down his thread toward the town.

"But Presidio, as you know, is built by a good ford—one of three where horses can cross—and it was necessary that the people should stay here, so they appealed to the archbishop at Mexico City. He sent a holy priest, to exorcise the devil and drive him out of his cave; and for many years other priests climbed the mountain, but they were all dragged down into his hole. For the devil was very strong and each priest had committed some sin, which took from him his power; but at last a holy man came from far down in Mexico and he engaged the devil in battle. They fought for hours on the edge of the hole, and it seemed that the devil would win; but when at last the holy man made the sign of the cross the devil lost his power. Then the holy man hurled him down into the depths of his spider hole and tumbled great rocks upon him, until now only the mouth of the spider hole is visible, and there the shrine is built. Every year on the third of May the people make pilgrimages and pray for the remission of their sins; and I swear, if I kill Dave, I will bring a thousand dollars and put it in the box at the church."

He crossed himself again and Roundtree smiled tolerantly, thinking over the various angles of the story; but what astonished him most was the credulity of this man who had the blue blood of Spain in his veins. Here was no wire-haired Indian, but a member of the aristocracy, and yet he believed that the devil had been destroyed and was no longer abroad in the land.

"What a wonder!" exclaimed Jess mendaciously. "I am always interested in such stories, although we Texans do not believe in the devil. But tell me one thing—if the devil is confined there, why is there so much killing on the river? Every day or two some man disappears, and even the rangers cannot find him."

"Ah!" shrugged the Spaniard; and then, forgetting his reserve, he leaned over and tapped Jess on the knee. "We have noticed that, ourselves," he said. "But this was long ago, when the holy man came here and confined the devil in his hole. The devil, as you know, never rests—he is very powerful—and it is believed he has burrowed out. Not at Santa Cruz, for the sign of the cross prohibits it; he has burrowed under the river and come up over in Texas and made a new cave in the mountains. Have you noticed that rough mountain to the east of the trail as you first come over the Rim? That is called Sierra del Diablo, the Mountain of the Devil, and no one goes near it any more. From the caravan camps lights have been seen, late at night, passing down from the top of the mountain; and, as you say, many Mexicans have disappeared from around Presidio, but always after midnight. So it is thought that the devil has spun a new web and the people are very much afraid."

"Is that so?" murmured Roundtree, carefully dissembling his unbelief; and Valentino was still recounting tales of signs and miracles when Trinidad and Talley came back.

"Well," demanded De Montana, as his servant stood before him, "have you discovered where that craven Dave Misterioso is hiding?"

"*Si, señor,*" responded Trinidad. "He is concealed at a goat ranch, two days' journey into the mountains of Chihuahua."

"And do you know the way?" asked his master.

"I was told," replied the *mozo* and, smoothing out the trampled sand, he drew a careful map in the dirt.

"*Muy bien,*" nodded Valentino, "you have done your task well. Now take this bag of money and deliver it to Alicia, and remain with her until she recovers."

He drew a buckskin sack from the folds of his twisted sash and passed it over to his servant, and without more words Trinidad mounted and rode away, leaving the rangers still studying his map.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CARAVAN.

"WELL, boys," announced Sergeant Roundtree, rising up from the map which the Mexican had traced in the sand, "here goes nothing. I'm going after Dave."

"Here too!" chimed in Quick Talley. "I he'ped to turn him loose and by grab I'll he'p to ketch him."

"No, I'm going alone," declared Jess.

"You are not!" shrilled Talley. "That's the first rule in the service—all rangers travel in pairs. And you're going right into

the heart of Chico Cano's country, so I'm liable to come in handy to bury you."

"*Que dice?*" broke in Valentino, switching the conversation into Spanish, "you mean you are going into Mexico? But no, that is impossible, it is against the law—and besides, I am going myself."

"*You* are?" demanded Roundtree. "Since when?"

"Since my servant returned with the information I sent him for. This has nothing to do with the rangers. If Dave Misterioso crosses the river into Texas—very well, you may kill him if you can. But I have sworn an oath to wash my hands in his heart's blood and I forbid you to break in on my plans."

"You hear that?" said Jess, with a wry smile at Talley. "He says this map is his own personal property and he'll tend to this rat killing himself."

"And besides," reasoned Valentino, "I am a Mexican citizen and my coming will not be suspected; but if two Texas Rangers ride down into those mountains you will both of you surely be killed. They will shoot you from behind the rocks. Whereas I am known as a man favorable to Cano—having tried, if in vain, to kill a ranger—and if nothing else will serve I will join the Vinagrones, and so get into their stronghold. But you gentlemen remain here, where I can send word to you if necessary, and trust me to kill Mysterious Dave."

"Well—all right," agreed Roundtree, when at last he was convinced. "You got the information and that gives you the first call; but if you need any help—let me know."

He patted the young Spaniard on the shoulder reassuringly and Valentino, when he left, threw his arms about Jess and embraced him after the manner of his people.

"Ah, my friend," he smiled, "I hope you will forgive me for mistakenly attempting your life. If I kill this man, as I have sworn by the cross to do, it will help to atone for my sin. But if I do not come back, then send word to my father that I died for the honor of our family."

He waved his hand and was gone and as Jess gazed after him he shook his head and smiled.

"What a man!" he murmured in Spanish; but the thing which he remembered was the smile, which was like Alicia's. Yet now he was gone on an errand which, to Roundtree, had seemed almost certain death; and all to avenge the honor of his family, aspersed by Mysterious Dave.

But, close on the word that Dave had been located, Captain Ross came riding into town; and behind him rode eight rangers, all picked for their records and their courage and quickness with the gun. The time had come to make a demonstration in order to awe the Mexicans; for the rains had brought new grass and already the first caravan was reported to have left Chihuahua City. Who the caravan robbers were was still a mystery, but the rank and file were undoubtedly Mexicans—probably Chico Cano's men. But whoever they were it was the first duty of the rangers to give absolute protection to the caravans; and while the Mexicans muttered they established their camp by the crossing, where they could scrutinize every man that passed. Other rangers, disguised as cowboys and working on different ranches, came and went under cover of darkness; and the patrols were hardly begun when a great turmoil across the river announced the expected arrival of the caravan.

First a band of rurales, the dashing rangers of old Mexico, came trotting down to the ford; and after exchanging salutations their captain rode out and shook hands with Captain Ross in midstream.

"I have the honor to report that a caravan is coming," he said with a formal salute; and then, punctiliously, he refused all invitations and rode back to join his men. They were uniformed in the *charro* costume which Diaz had granted them when he organized them from the élite of Mexico—yellow buckskin jackets embroidered with silver braid, tight-fitting trousers and high-peaked, silver-mounted sombreros. Their horses were the best that a horse country could produce, and saddle and bridle were richly ornamented, while behind the cantle hung a tightly coiled red serape which served both as a blanket and cloak. Their guns and enormous spurs gleamed and glinted in the hot sun as the rurales gazed across at the rangers, but the jealousies of a century had forbidden them the privilege of ever setting foot in Texas. Nor, according to law, could the rangers cross the river which separated them from their turbulent neighbors. So with mutual salutes the captains parted in midstream as the caravan came into view.

First the wagon master, bravely mounted, rode down the long road that led from the town on the hill; and as he reined in with a flourish before the double-fronted Mexican customhouse his leading wagons appeared. They were huge affairs, nearly twenty-five feet long and loaded mountain high with freight. Some were laden with hides and swollen bags of wool, lashed down with strong lariats of rawhide, others with crates and cases of liquor; and in front, hooked up four abreast, were from fourteen to twenty Spanish mules. The drivers rode their near wheelers, shouting and cracking their long whips; and, perched high on the loads, were the men and women passengers, bound for distant San Antonio and St. Louis. The huge wheels squeaked and squealed, the brakes added their discordant scream; and running on both sides was a rabble of children from the whitewashed adobes of the town.

Twelve wagons, one by one, topped the hill of Presidio del Norte and dripped down to park before the customhouse; and behind followed a procession of two-wheeled carts and wagons, drawn by mules pulling three and four abreast. Taking advantage of the escort of rurales and fighting teamsters these wayfarers of the trail had tailed on behind, taking their dust to gain protection from the bandits. Women and children walked by the carts or rode on burros and spare mules—even yokes of plodding oxen brought up the rear; until at last in a great hubbub they settled down for the long wait while the customs officials looked over the manifests. Noon came and went and the Jefe de Aduana closed the doors and retired for its siesta; but finally, along toward sundown, the last stamps were affixed and the signal was given to cross.

From their camp above the ford the rangers gazed in awe at the skill of the Mexican teamsters. Wagon after wagon took the water on the run until, scrabbling over the rocks, the mules dragged them out triumphantly and went pelting up the bank and through the town. Then, safe at last from Chico Cano and with the first leg of their journey done, the captains of the train swung their wagons in two half circles and brought them together, mules inside, to form a corral for the night. Heavy ropes and rawhide reatas were passed from wagon to wagon, filling up the gaps between; after which the teams of mules were lined up at rawhide troughs and fed their bait of corn. Women unpacked their metate stones and pots of beans and corn and soon there was a smell of chili and roasting coffee, and the slap-slap of tortillas in the making. But everywhere was seen the order and obedience that comes from stern discipline and experience.

As he walked past their camps Roundtree could see the swarthy teamsters, each armed with a Colt's pistol and needle gun, standing guard like well-trained soldiers; but as the night came on their discipline relaxed and the ground was cleared for a dance. Canvas wagon covers were spread, musicians appeared with violins and guitars; then the women passengers of the caravan, the wives and daughters of wealthy merchants, joined with their escorts in the dances of the country. Other dancing grounds were cleared and the hilarious teamsters, having no women of their own, scraped acquaintance with the women of the town. Strange Mexicans from Presidio del Norte crossed the river to join the rout, gamblers and sharpers, and cutthroats as well; while cognac and grape brandy, smuggled across by the wholesale, flowed like water in all the saloons. It was an occasion which attracted every man in the country, either to look on or to participate in the revelry; and, knowing that the robbers or their agents were abroad, Captain Ross sent his rangers everywhere.

It was dangerous work, walking the dark and crowded street or pressing into seething cantinas; but, traveling always by twos for mutual protection the rangers patrolled the town until midnight. Then at last there came the summons which their captain had so ardently hoped for and, recalling his men to camp, he announced that Mysterious Dave had been reported down the river at the Casa Grande. Or at least a tall American who answered closely to his description had been seen to enter the gate; and a big band of smugglers, crossing the river in boats, were bringing in cargoes of grape brandy.

"Now, men," ended Ross, "here's the chance we've been looking for to round up the Casa Grande. Take no chances on Dave or any one else, and kill any man that shows fight. Sergeant Roundtree and Private Talley, ride ahead and answer their challenge—and don't let that American escape."

They rode quietly out of town, then at a gallop over rocky mesas; and as the detachment approached the house Ross gave a low order and Jess and Talley moved ahead. Counting the captain with the rest, there were fourteen rangers waiting, ready to charge if a battle commenced; but Roundtree had planned to take the gates by surprise and he rode in the shelter of the brush.

"Alto!" challenged the guard as they drew near the gate. *"Quién viene*—who comes?"

"Uno amigo!" responded Jess reassuringly; and even as he answered he heard the horses of the rangers as they started down the road.

"Como viene—bueno o malo?" cried the sentry in sudden alarm. "How do you come—good or bad?"

"Bueno!" mocked Roundtree, jumping his horse into the doorway and knocking the Mexican head over heels; and while the smugglers working within were milling around in confusion the rangers surrounded the house. Every door had its guard, appointed in advance, and at the cry of: *"Los reengers!"* the Mexicans gave a yell, and retreated to the labyrinths behind. But Roundtree had collared the sentry before he could escape, and after ordering the Mexicans out Ross put a light in his hand and beckoned him to go ahead. Following close behind with their pistols drawn, the rangers found rooms packed almost to the roof with smuggled brandy; and a thorough search revealed a fortune in contraband goods, besides eight heavily armed Mexicans. As one by one they came out of their hiding places and surrendered to the guns of the rangers they were placed under guard in a room off the courtyard to await the end of the search.

For an hour Captain Ross explored the hidden rooms and passageways, still seeking Mysterious Dave; but at last, reluctantly, he gave up the hunt and returned to examine the Mexicans.

"Sergeant Roundtree," he said, "have those prisoners been searched? Well, search them again as you pass them out—you can't be too careful with these Mexicans."

"Yes, sir," responded Roundtree and with Talley to help him he went over every man systematically, before he passed them on to Captain Ross. Three prisoners had been searched and, by the flickering candlelight, Jess was passing the fourth out the door when from the huddle of men inside a heavy knife flashed out, barely missing his throat as it passed. For a fraction of a second he had taken his eye from them and with a jerk of the wrist some one of the four had thrown the knife and stepped back. It stuck quivering in the door frame and as Roundtree swung about he met four sets of sullen, impassive eyes.

"Who threw that?" he asked in Spanish.

"Let's kill the whole bunch of them!" cried Talley impulsively. "Here's the man that did it!" he accused.

"No, señor," protested the Mexican vehemently.

"Well, then you!" he said to the next; but each man, after denying it, stood stolidly impassive and Ross himself took over the prisoners.

"It's no use, boys," he said at last. "These are dangerous men, and they don't dare to tell on their friends. But one of those four tried to murder a ranger and we've got to find the man, and punish him. We can't afford to let this pass—I'll take the whole bunch to Dragoon. Put that knife by itself, and let this be a lesson. You can't be too careful with a Mexican."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE KING.

UNTIL dawn ended their search the exasperated rangers ransacked the Casa Grande for some sign of Dave, but whoever the tall American was he had disappeared like a weasel and at last they gave up the hunt. There was the caravan to be safeguarded, the seized contraband to be looked after and the town combed for suspicious Americans; and when he had detailed men for each duty Captain Ross turned abruptly to Jess.

"Sergeant Roundtree," he said, "I guess you and I can take this bunch of prisoners to Dragoon."

"I reckon so," replied Roundtree grimly. "That is, if you think it's necessary."

"Ain't you going to take me along?" demanded Talley. "Them Mexicans might try to get away and you'd need somebody along that could shoot."

"I hadn't thought of that," observed Ross dryly and Talley narrowed his little eyes wickedly.

"Especially that pock-marked Mex with the knife cut over one eye—he looks like he was capable of anything."

"Well, since you've called my attention to it, he does look kind of bad," answered the captain after a glance at Jess. "You can come along with us, Private Talley." And, mounting their prisoners on captured horses they rode off up Rock Cañon on the long trail that led to Dragoon. But now the lynx-eyed vigilance of the rangers seemed to slacken, they dozed and nodded as they rode in the hot sun; and instead of handcuffing their prisoners they allowed them to ride free, not even tying their feet under the saddle. But instead of being tempted to make a break for liberty the Mexicans were suddenly cowed into a lamb-like obedience and kept their horses in the middle of the trail. A life of crime in old Mexico had made them familiar with the *ley fuga,* the law of flight, as applied by the rurales. Under its authority any prisoner who attempted to escape could be shot down by his guards as he fled; and in a land where jails were few and criminals many the *ley fuga* was not infrequently invoked. Hence this sudden apprehension on the part of the Mexican smugglers; and in spite of all temptations they remained model prisoners, and so arrived safely in Dragoon.

"Who's them Mexicans?" inquired King Wootan as he swaggered out and stood staring in front of his saloon. "What, you don't mean to say they're prisoners?"

"That's correct," replied Ross. "I want some dinner for them and my men, and then we'll throw 'em into the Snake Hole."

"What's the charges?" asked Wootan curiously, and the captain shrugged his shoulders.

"Smuggling brandy," he said at last and King Wootan gave a great laugh.

"Smuggling brandy, eh?" he whooped. "That's a new one on me. Say, bring 'em over after dinner and I'll give 'em a little trial. You know what I mean—in my kangaroo court."

"I might consider that," returned Ross, without cracking a smile. "In the absence of a J. P. or any recognized authority——"

"By grab, we'll do it!" declared Wootan. "The town is dead as hell. You want 'em convicted, of course?"

"Well—come over here!" beckoned Ross and drawing him to one side he explained the complexities of the case. "What we want," he ended, "is to find one man—the hombre that threw that knife."

"I'll find him for you!" promised Wootan, twisting up his long mustache. "That's where I shine—shaking down these Mexicans and putting the fear of God into their hearts. There's only one thing, captain—what I say, goes! If I order 'em turned loose I want you to turn 'em loose; and so on, down the line. But if I don't find that man I'll set up the drinks—I'm a wolf when it comes to Mexicans. They're accused of smuggling brandy—is that right? And I want all them knives and six-shooters. You watch me and you'll see something good."

He strode away in high spirits and while the prisoners were at dinner he arranged for the coming trial. Along with Benjy, the educated bear, Bill Pranty's skull and other devices for roping in strangers, one of the favorites with King Wootan was his kangaroo court, whose only verdict was: Guilty. The king himself presided, under the title of alcalde; and after examining the witnesses and listening to the accused he commonly sentenced him to buy the drinks.

First he rolled out a beer keg and set it up under the broad *ramada,* the brush veranda which shaded one side of his saloon. He set a table in front of it, on which the Revised Statutes of Texas was held open by a loaded pistol; and with his shotgun across his lap and a jug of whisky by his side he sat down and summoned the prisoners.

They came with the same cowed and spiritless mien which they had shown since the night of the raid and as he looked them over the alcalde reached into his pocket and brought out a fine-toothed comb.

"What is your name?" he demanded, combing out his long black eyebrows until they stood up like horns; and as Mexican after Mexican responded he wrote gravely in a book.

"You are charged," he went on in Spanish, "with smuggling brandy into Texas. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" they answered in a chorus.

"Captain Ross!" summoned Wootan and as Ross appeared before him he questioned him regarding the liquor. Then he examined the Mexicans, and after combing up his eyebrows he turned to the Revised Statutes of Texas.

"There's nothing in the book," he an-

nounced at last, "that makes it a crime to bring brandy into Texas. And, being as I buy it myself, the case is dismissed and the defendants are hereby discharged."

He repeated his decision in Spanish but as the Mexicans rose up grinning Quick Talley leaped forward and covered them.

"That don't go with me!" he shouted defiantly. "These men are my prisoners——"

"Sit down!" thundered the King, bringing his shotgun to the front and regarding the ranger angrily. "Since when?" he inquired, "have you been running this cote? I said the defendants are discharged!"

"That'll do, Talley," spoke up Captain Ross quietly and as Quick retired muttering Wootan called for the Mexicans' pistols and laid them out on the table.

"Whose gun is this?" he asked, picking up a heavy pistol and dexterously flipping out the cartridges; and after a moment's silence a Mexican stepped forward and the alcalde gave him his gun. He held up another and the owner claimed it eagerly, scarcely believing the evidence of his senses; But one by one the King passed them out until every Mexican was armed. Then as they glanced at each other, grinning, he dumped out a sack of knives and grabbed one up at random.

"Whose knife is this?" he demanded, and a Mexican shot out his hand. The King passed it over and delivered one after the other until the Mexicans were thrown off their guard. Each man claimed his own, there were quarrels and quick exchanges; and then, as the wrangling ceased, King Wootan held up a last knife—the knife which had been hurled at Jess.

"Whose knife is this?" he asked and as they recognized the *cuchillo* several men glanced instinctively at Juan, the man with the pock-marked face.

"Is this your knife?" inquired the King.

"No, señor," replied the Mexican sullenly.

"Then where is your knife?" went on Wootan quietly, and the Mexican saw he was trapped. Each man in turn had claimed his proper knife, and his was the only one left.

"I have no knife," he said.

"Bastante!" pronounced the King, suddenly cocking his shotgun and swinging it on its swivel to cover the Mexican. "There's your man, Captain Ross. Take 'im away. And here, you hombres!" he bellowed with startling vehemence, swiftly shifting his gun to cover the rest. "What the devil do you mean, carrying them knives in your pants? You're arrested for carrying concealed weapons!"

He rose up, burly and menacing, his little eyes under his black eyebrows traveling like lightning from man to man, and the Mexicans held up their hands. This was the kind of justice they had learned to expect and at the end they were hardly astonished.

"Six months in the county jail!" sentenced Wootan. "There's your prisoners, Captain Ross. Cote's adjourned."

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *November 7th.*

AHEAD OF THE LAW

HALF a dozen Republican congressmen were in their cloakroom discussing the proposed bill to enlarge the membership of the House so as to make it conform to the increased population of the country.

"The bill," said Mr. Fordney, the majority floor leader, "will give a good many States each a congressman-at-large."

"That will be nothing new," commented "Uncle Joe" Cannon. "From the way the roll calls are not answered here day after day, about a hundred of them are at large somewhere now."

THINKING ABOUT BUSINESS

THE last time Josephus Daniels, former secretary of the navy, was at Niagara Falls, another sight-seer there was a tailor from Mr. Daniels' home State, North Carolina. The knight of the needle was gazing in open-mouthed amazement at the Horseshoe Falls with its wonderful cloud of spray, and, as Mr. Daniels came up to him, murmured:

"What a grand place to sponge a coat!"

They Don't Answer

By Kingsley Moses

Golf is a game of many niceties—some of which are discussed and exemplified in this bright tale of sweet revenge.

THE two members of the threesome who had not yet driven started violently at a word of alarm from their companion. Then, with flagrant disregard of golfing etiquette, both simultaneously smacked their miserable little drives from the tee, and scuttled off down the fairway.

Near by on the clubhouse veranda, where the broad awnings cast safe shadow and partial concealment, the Judge chuckled. Comfortably he adjusted the generous contours of his three hundred pounds to the audibly yielding slats of his immense wicker armchair, and watched the three fugitives as they headed eagerly away from the green sand box clearly stenciled with the crisp caption: "No. 1—360 yds."

"Theodore failed again," he smiled. "Why don't you help him out, Mac? Have you no Christian compassion in your narrow bosom?"

"Nah," said Mr. MacTear; continuing to polish a well-worn ball with the flannel rag knotted into his belt.

"Why, he's a nice lad. Good natured, an eloquent talker, a generous spirit, an excellent golfer—the club champion, in fact —friendly as a collie pup——"

"Yah," said Mr. MacTear, without enthusiasm.

"Loquacious as ever, Mac," beamed the Judge. And, getting no answer—as he had rather anticipated—raised his finger to the colored attendant as mute signal for his eleventh lime and lemonade. "Excellent for reducing the flesh, lime and lemonade. Do you know anything better, Mac?"

To his surprise his companion replied prolixly: "Aye. Gawf."

Alone on No. 1 tee a tall figure in white-linen knickers, silk shirt and fawn-hued golf stockings gazed sorrowfully after the fast-retreating threesome. It had been the picturesque youth's intention, patently, to fill out their number to the conventional quartet. But the threesome didn't hesitate. They seemed rather to gather momentum. Their brassy shots were as expeditiously played as their drives—and about as badly. Any one of them would require a very well-hit iron indeed to reach the green. The youth on the tee might still have caught them with a passable drive. Yet he continued to hesitate. Then turned toward the club veranda.

The Judge gasped. His bulk of body

trembled with a premonitory heaving that indicated an arising. "He's coming back," he moaned.

Mr. MacTear glanced up swiftly. Then returned mutely to his labors, having discovered a minute grass stain on his battered ball.

On rubber-soled, noiseless shoes the young man whose foursome aspirations had been so bluffly balked mounted the veranda steps. Only his shoes were silent, however.

"You care for a round, Mr. MacTear?" he began, yet ten paces distant. "The Judge doesn't play any more; eh, Judge! I always warned you that some day you'd get so that even golf didn't appeal to you. Now if you'd just get out and move around the links, Judge, and get up a real good sweat you'd strip off some of that avoirdupois like a longshoreman loading pianos in August. If you'd only listen to me, Judge, you'd be out there every day with that crabbed crew of tightwads, the Major, the Miner and the Mick, instead of sitting here on this nice, cool veranda drinking up——"

"Don't notice as you're with them yourself, Theodore," growled the Judge, struggling to dam the fluent flood.

"No. You see they don't like to play with me because naturally it's not much fun for them. None of them ever broke ninety, and even when I give them a stroke a hole and tell them just how they should play their shots—and, believe me, they need a lot of coaching—they don't want to take my advice. I've gone as far as to play their shots for them. Why, last month, when I was out with the Major, we were coming up to the sixteenth and his ball had a hanging lie on the slope of the hill not more than a hundred yards from the green, and the poor old fish was going to play a mid-iron and let the ball just trickle down toward the green. So I stepped in front of him with my mashie and showed him how to drop it dead——"

"Drop what dead?" interrupted the Judge. "You stepped in *front* of him and played *his* shot! It's a wonder you're here to tell about it!"

Mr. MacTear again broke silence. "Aye," he said simply.

But young Theodore Somers was not sensitive. "Why, of course. He wants to improve his game, doesn't he? He might just as well have used a putter. There's no bunker in front of that green, if you remember. Of course, a shot will dribble down very nicely. But that's not golf. Never get anywhere with that baby stuff. The Major had been keeping his score, and a five there would have given him a seventy-eight for the sixteen holes; so that even with two fives on the easy seventeenth and eighteenth he'd have broken ninety. And that was the best he'd ever done."

"And nevertheless you played his shot for him?"

"Naturally. There's no sense in allowing a man to persist in slovenly habits. If you get to dropping your shoulder or raising your head when you drive the only way to get rid of the trick is to be told about it by some one who knows better. Havers says, you know, that every shot——"

But both the Judge and Mr. MacTear were gone. Theodore couldn't understand. His was a generous, helpful spirit; and he sprayed good counsel and wise advise as freely and gladly as a sprinkling cart spouts water—let the splash wet whom it may! But also Theodore was a philosopher. He pitied rather than scorned those reactionaries who actually preferred to remain ignorant. Discovering a magazine, he settled down to await the homecoming of the Major, the Miner and the Mick. He could meet them on the sixteenth green and escort them. He had a helpful spirit, had Theodore.

The threesome for whom this unexpected delight was in store were the stalwarts of the old guard of the Grassy Drain Golf Club. Since the days of the gutta-percha ball they had roamed the rough of the links, sturdily accepting each rub of the green. They were indomitable spirits with souls not easily stymied. But no gaping sand pit, no marshy swale had ever tried them as had this human hazard, young Theodore Somers. His bright young spirit flashed no reflected glint from their minds. His most earnest efforts were unappreciated.

"If that overgrown caddy in white rompers yaps at me again," grumbled the Major, furtively scanning the distant clubhouse porch, "I'll——"

He paused to gauge his distance. Then neatly lofted a divot across the tiny brook which purled athwart the fairway, and morosely watched his ball plop into the water.

"He'd have told you to keep your eye on the ball," soothed the Miner.

"My eye! My foot!" The ball, salvaged from its bath, was dropped back on smooth turf.

"Playing nine," prompted the Mick, a genial little contractor who devoted far more of his time to putting than to plumbing.

"Nine," came the echo. "I hope he chokes."

"Yeh. That might keep him from talkin'," agreed the Miner; "possibly, but I wouldn't say for certain. If he was dumb, now, somebody else might have a chance to think; but with him broadcastin' his priceless opinions all over the links what's the use?"

"Like one o' my dear old friends, he is," supplied the Mick, patiently studying his ball which he had just found cozily cuddled into a heel print. "One of our leadin' Feenians, he was. A great or*a*tor, the lad. So——" The ball, heartily propelled by a niblick, leaped upward like a rocket and bounded ambitiously to the edge of the green. "A great or*a*tor, the lad, as I was afther sayin'. But craved sympathy, understandin', reciprococity, ye might say. They locked him up, afther a bit, they did, in prison. All by his ownself; stark, starin' alone. An' he died of criminal ig*nor*ance."

"You mean they misused him. Criminal negligence," suggested the cultured Major, whose hobby outside of golf was the art of orthoëpy.

"No. Criminal ig*nor*ance! They ignored him. Totally and entirely. He fair talked hisself to death. An' the prison walls had nothin' to say in reply; as is the habit of walls."

"If we could only do that to Theodore we'd be public benefactors," moaned the Major. "But I'd like to see any one ignore him. 'Tis a feat past all human attainment. You're away, Steve. Putt."

So a pleasant brace of hours slipped away; Theodore forgotten.

They drove for the sixteenth. The sixteenth at Grassy Drain is called the Marathon. There's nothing difficult about it except its distance. Somebody probably made a similar remark to Phidippides just as he got off his mark with the crack of the gun back yonder in the ancient intercollegiates. Bitten by some morbid and fatuous ambition to get the course into the championship class our green committee had found it necessary to lengthen the total yardage to over six thousand. This was most simply done by sticking in one outrageously long hole. The tee box read: "Six hundred and forty-five yards." And you certainly knew it was all of that after a drive and two brassies put you about where you could see the green—if your eyesight was really excellent.

The threesome had each played five before their objective was fairly visible. The flag was yet far away. But since this was the goal that promised to settle the accumulated syndicates of four "one-tie-all-tie" holes hope rose high in each middle-aged heart. The Major's sixth was a low-flying, bunker-topping beauty that slithered smoothly along the crisp grass to the very velvet of the green.

Not to be outdone, the little contractor whaled out a lulu with his long brassy, laying his, too, close to the Major's; while the Miner, at an obvious disadvantage, with such sterling efforts to attempt to equal, could not get his high-hit mid-iron shot closer than thirty yards. His own chance was slim; yet it was, with a perfect chip shot, still a chance. At worst, with ordinary putting, the other two ought to halve the hole; so prolonging the settlement of the accrued syndicates to the next green. All three then strode blithely to their lies. To be greeted by Theodore!

As is the worm in the ripe Skookum apple; as is the sand in the lush mess of spinach; so was the sight of Theodore Somers.

Undaunted by their evident animosity—or actually unobservant of it, for he was by vocation a bond salesman with a soul no more sensitive than is customary in one following that commendable profession—Theodore greeted them like dear old fraternity brethren; in the same breath cautioning the Miner to choke his mashie for the chip shot to the pin. It was not his mashie the Miner yearned to choke. Nevertheless, the ball, by miraculous grace, rolled up hole high, not a foot from the rim of the cup.

"See," cheered Theodore, ecstatically; "that's the way to play it. I told you so."

On the Miner's lips was a vivid retort. But his ball was within easy putting distance for a snappy eight. His opponents, on the green though they were, could hardly expect to do better.

The Mick bent to his putt, bowlegs wide apart.

"Your knees together. Put your knees together!" caroled Theodore helpfully.

The Mick shot a malevolent glance—and a rotten run-up.

"If you'd put your knees together——"

"I'd not be bow-legged, laddie," was the pained retort. "If you'd keep your lips together——"

"He'd be dead," grunted the Major; and tapped his putt to the very hole. Then overran a foot.

Theodore, radiating good will and saturated, as are all enterprising salesmen, with the spirit of service, volunteered to lighten the caddies' labor, and himself manipulated the flag. His flow of kindly advice persisted. But with spirits still comparatively calm the three friends all managed to get down in eight; so that again the syndicate was unsettled.

"That's ten balls to the winner of the next hole," beamed the Mick, never so happy as when in a tight place. "Make it a half dozen apiece. That's a box to the lucky lad who's victorious—are you with me? Erin go bragh!"

"Clanny Gael!" seconded the Miner.

"You're on," said the Major, martially.

Now the seventeenth is a tricky bit of ground. The flag, high on a terraced mound, waves but a hundred and fifty yards distant. But one hundred and ten of those intervening yards are entirely occupied and monopolized by a pleasant little pond well lined with that verdant scum which the erudite call algæ. Behind the hole the ground slips away sharply, so that a ball too harshly hit will run far past the green, demanding a long mashie shot to get it back. It is an easy hole for a good player. As Theodore reassuringly remarked: "Should be a par two. Just a mashie pitch and a putt." And then, without a word of permission, proceeded to demonstrate his perspicacity with one of the Major's own balls and a mashie he nonchalantly selected from the Miner's well-filled bag.

"There. That way!" he smiled, as the sweetly sailing sphere described a perfect parabola, hit on the upward slope, leaped high just once, and fell dead almost on the lip of the cup.

Annoyed, but secretly envious, the threesome gazed at the flag. Yes, it had been a sweet shot. This Theodore pest was good. No denying it. But——

The Major, keenly emulating, lashed out like a Cyril Tolley. That great one lately hit his drive over a high fence which was placed two hundred and forty yards away from the tee. The Major did about as well. His ball never even grazed the ridge of the green. It vanished in full flight as if intent on an urgent tryst at the caddy house.

"Looks as if you'd aimed for the eighteenth instead of the seventeenth," cheered Theodore. "Some wallop, old-timer, some wallop!"

The Major's mashie quivered with emotion. But it eventually went back into the bag. The Major was beyond articulate expression. But resolutely he affixed his gaze to the bulging back muscles of the Miner, who, intent on making no similar error, was choking his jigger in its very middle. The shot had none of the might, the height, or the distance of the Major's. It had virtually nothing. With a gentle, unobtrusive "plop" it buried itself in the mere.

"Too bad," sympathized Theodore. "If you'd opened your stance a bit——"

"If you open your trap——"

But the Mick, unracially peaceful, interposed. "Try again, Steve. You're playin' three."

Steve tried, got his ball in the general vicinity of the green; and sullied the herbage with tobacco juice. The Mick, calmly overlooking a remark about breaking the wrists ahead of the body, hit a pretty skyscraper that dropped dead on the green. After that he didn't mind listening to Theodore, as they circled the lake. For he knew that the hole was his. It was. And with it a box of golf balls.

And now as, after three putts by the chagrined Major, Theodore obligingly replaced the pin, a shrill "Fore!" warned of a fast-moving follower. Across the lake were visible the thin shanks and unimpressive form of Mr. MacTear. The next instant, with a sharp spat, his ball fell almost at their feet, and died where it fell.

"Some backspin," breathed the Major. "That's better'n yours, Theo."

"Yes, he's pretty good." The magnanimous answer. "He's not strong at match play, though. I've won the last two club tournaments, you know." They knew. That was their sorrow.

Mr. MacTear, playing alone as was his wont, came swiftly around the pond. They were scarcely off the green before his short putt rattled in the cup. "A birdie two," breathed the Mick soulfully.

Checking up on the eighteenth tee, a discussion of syndicate values at issue, the threesome allowed the precipitous Mr. MacTear to go through. The eighteenth may be called an ordinary hole—as all first and final holes should be. It is an even four hundred yards, a straight fairway, cross-bunkered at one hundred and fifty and three hundred yards' distance; but with nothing else to hinder except a wide, shallow space around the green lightly powdered with sand—no deadly hazard. MacTear's drive, gaining height as it flew, cleared the first bunker like a Ruth home run and ran on far past the two-hundred-yard marker.

"Good!" admitted Theodore.

"Hell, man! It's perfeck!" grunted little Mick, between admiration and awe.

MacTear's second, with a mid-iron, they judged, was as good. The ball, sailing high, never sniffed the second bunker, flew on, hopped the sand trap as if it scorned to soil its metaphorical feet, and lay there silver, far away, on its bed of emerald green.

"If he could only keep his nerve in match play," sympathized Theodore. He sounded almost sincere.

The truth of the matter was, of course, that there was nothing vitally the matter with Mr. MacTear's nerve. Simply he had been reared up in another and sterner school of golf etiquette, a school where conversation was no part of the sport, where an exclamation was tantamount to profanity. He'd never become accustomed to America's loquacious ways. Least of all to Theodore's. Let him alone, and maintain a decent and seemly silence, and Angus MacTear could compete with the best of them. But talk to him—— And that was the best little thing Theodore did. No wonder MacTear won few matches with the juvenile wonder of Grassy Drain.

So much had in fact been murmured about the locker room of the club. More than once had a plan been sought to bring together the two star members of the club under circumstances that would permit Mr. MacTear a fair exercise of his undoubted abilities. But short of shattering the glum Scot's eardrums or cutting out Theodore's tongue no solution had as yet presented itself as feasible. It would, given equitable conditions, be a great match, all agreed. The obese Judge was its chief promoter; most heartily would he have welcomed the downfall of the links pest. The Major, the Miner and the Mick were, just now, in hearty accord with the common sentiment. Theodore had now talked unintermittently for half an hour. He was a helpful lad. Too goldurned helpful!

He patronized their rather schlaffy drives from the eighteenth tee. He surmised that the three gentlemen he chaperoned should have used for their second shots respectively a spoon, a cleek and a niblick instead of—as they did—a brassy, a mid-iron and a mashie. He told each one of them so; not once but various times. Ultimately he did shepherd them from the perils of rough and bunker to the very edge of the putting green.

The Major and the Miner had each attained the green's environs in four strokes. Either—or neither—might sink for a snappy six. They were both about thirty yards from the cup. The Mick, some fifty yards away, had taken, however, only three shots. His fourth, reasonably played, should lay him well inside his antagonists. A five was possible for him; a six practically certain.

Intent on the two leaders—in distance if not in score—Theodore had forgotten the impatient little contractor behind him.

"Now as you lie, Major," he was earnestly explaining, "there is no advantage in a chip shot with your mashie. The green, as you see, has a gentle slope to the right. So take your putter——"

"Fore!" remarked the eager little Mick, peremptorily, scenting victory in his advantage. "Fore!"

"And draw it," continued Theodore, "easily across the ball from right to left, aiming about three yards to the left of the hole. That will give your ball cut enough to hold the——"

"Fore!" came the wail. "Fore!"

"Slope of the green and allow your ball as it gradually loses its initial momentum to curl——"

"Fower! Fower!"

"Directly into the cup. No. Don't address with the heel of your putter. That throws you off balance. Keep your eye

directly over the ball. Don't look inside it or outside it. Directly over, I said——"

"Fore!"

It appeared that Theodore heard. Certainly the warning had been adequate and oft repeated. Actually, however, intent on demonstrating to the Major just precisely how one should gaze neither inside nor outside of a golf ball, opaque though that ball be, he had reached for the elderly warrior's putter. At this instant the Mick played. The ball rose in a clean, easy trajectory, bound straight for the pin. So straight was it going that the caddie at the flag had hastily pulled up the staff lest the ball should strike the pin.

But it wasn't the pin which the ball struck. It was Theodore, who at the moment had thoughtfully backed directly into its course.

It didn't strike Theodore very hard. No such luck. There might have been some satisfaction in, say, shattering his spine or scrambling up a few vertebræ. But no. Merely with a gentle, frustrated tap the ball patted him on the shoulder, and dropped to the turf—"Plunk!" The Mick, instead of being a clear stroke ahead, was suddenly reduced to a mere parity with his pals.

Let us depict no more. Fifty years of Mr. Flynn's life had been passed amid rough and uncouth surroundings. He, momentarily, reverted to the vividly expressive language of those happy and unrestrained days. He said a lot. And kept on saying it.

"Rub of the green," soothed Theodore. "So sorry." And gracefully strolled away.

That night the embattled three sat late with the Judge and Angus MacTear. The time, all agreed, was ripe for decisive action.

"What was the story, Flynn, of your friend the Fenian who died of criminal ig*nor*ance?" breathed the Judge softly, ominously.

Behind a long, rambling country mansion, large and window-speckled as a resort hotel, a brand-new golf links, clipped and curried to perfection, stretched away to the very rim of an azure little river. The fairways were of the hue of jade, the greens an emerald velvet. "A beautiful course," quoth Theodore Somers to his caddie. "Beautiful." The caddie merely grinned.

Theodore waited his rival. The great match was on.

The conditions of the contest had been suggested by the greens committee of Grassy Drain, including the Judge, the Major and the Mick. Mr. MacTear and Theodore were to play eighteen holes on a course unfamiliar to either of them, a course unfamiliar to any one indeed, for it had just been opened for play. The course was known as the Kenmare County Golf Links. The only other restricting condition of the match was that no acquaintance of either competitor, no member of Grassy Drain, was to witness the contest. Caddies would be supplied by Kenmare County.

"Mr. MacTear feels that he is adversely affected by the sentiment of the spectators," the Judge had suavely explained. "Recognizing his own unpopularity, the unfortunate result of his alien breeding, he wishes a contest entirely unhampered by critical comment of such parties as might have prejudice as their actuating motive. It seems equitable that a match should take place under such circumstances." The Judge did not add that he and the Noble Three who had so suffered from Theodore's loquacity had bet their very cheviot shirts on the outcome.

This was all jake with Theo. Strange courses and stray comments were nothing in his carefree young life. An opulent youth, he genially accepted all wagers at even money, and even offered to boost the odds a trifle. With the victory went also the honor of having his name inscribed on the handsome bronze plaque over the Kenmare club's fireplace, as winner of the first club tournament. Theodore was extremely partial to having his name inscribed in bronze. His was a nature that abhors false modesty. So, on the day of the great event, he went to battle with all the confidence of Doctor Henley's well-known hero, and the conviction that every mashie would be straight and every chip shot find the hole.

He waited now on the first tee, languidly coiling himself into an impeccable practice swing or two, hefting each perfect shaft with complete satisfaction and assurance. What spectators there were, all strangers and members of Kenmare County doubtless, hovered at a discreet distance. And yet Mr. MacTear did not appear.

The delay was irksome, but unimportant. Theodore caught himself somewhat over-

emphasizing this unimportance. He took two more practice swings. "Why doesn't the chump——" he grumbled. Ah, here he was. But on a bicycle!

It was Mr. MacTear's customary vehicle of transportation but the thrifty Scot did not usually ride it over the links. Now, however, he pedaled sedately up to the very tee, dismounted with stiff-legged deliberation and divested himself of his golf bag. Solemnly they tossed for the honor, Theodore losing.

From the pocket of his bag Mr. MacTear exhumed four golf balls. All four were smooth and free from scar or dent, but none were new, or even white. The least shabby of the four Mr. MacTear cupped in his palm, dropping back the other three, and, before intrusting his bag to the caddie, carefully snapping the tiny padlock with which he had prudently equipped the flap of the pocket. Gently expectorating upon one corner of the soiled flannel rag tied to his belt Mr. MacTear then polished his ball, almost with affection; scouring it ultimately to a dull grayness. From the tee box he drew a pinch of wet sand, patted it into shape, inspected it, went back to the box for another pinch, finally settled his ball to his satisfaction. Then, without more ado, he swung easily, and the gray orb fled away straight down the fairway. The caddie shouldered Mr. MacTear's clubs without a word. Mr. MacTear mounted his bicycle, and coasted away along the edge of the rough in the general direction of his drive.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" remarked Theodore, frankly nonplused. He had heard of golfers who used bicycles on the links. There was a legend that the great Walter Travis had thus perfected his game by months of intensive pedaling and putting, using twenty balls at a time and patiently following them one by one. Still—well—but so far as Theodore was aware there was nothing in the rules against it. Well—but—hum—nice, chummy sort of a proposition, this MacTear. "Can you beat it?" he grunted at his own caddie, who stood attentive, bag extended. The boy smiled vacantly.

A little thing like a bicycle-riding antagonist could not upset Theo, though. His own drive was twenty yards ahead of MacTear's. Naturally he felt a bit chesty about it. He turned with satisfaction to the clustered spectators. They had watched with interest; but with nothing else. Their faces were unanimously blank. Theodore looked at his caddie. That model youth was already off at a jog trot after his master's ball. "Pretty sweet," chuckled Theodore to himself—his only audience. He'd remark on the sweetness of that shot to Mr. MacTear. But again Theodore was wrong. As the odd, Mr. MacTear played first. He had reached his own ball and hit it while yet Theodore was a hundred yards away. Both were on the edge of the green in two; both close to the cup in three, though Theo was about two feet behind.

"Pretty sweet, that drive of mine!" smiled Theo, bending to putt.

"Don't talk on tha green," said Mr. MacTear primly.

They halved the hole. Both hit good drives toward the second. Again Mr. MacTear pedaled away. Again Theodore praised his own drive—to himself.

So it was to the turn. Mr. MacTear had won the fifth; Theo the sixth. On the way to the tenth hole there was, therefore, no advantage. Nor had Mr. MacTear spoken at all since the first green, save once again to warn Theodore against loquacity while within the putting sanctuary. That this was golf etiquette Theo realized.

But mounting more and more hotly in his distended thorax rose resentment against this smothering general silence. Mr. MacTear, save only when on the hallowed soil of the green, was, thanks to his use of the bicycle, continuously out of earshot. The gallery, frequently taken into Theodore's confidence, neither spoke nor smiled, but persisted in their grimly neutral attitude of nonparticipation. Only Theodore's own personal caddie was at his mercy. But that youth replied to all comments with a quick, birdlike nod of the head and a benign smile. Theodore, thanks to a sliced mid-iron, lost the tenth; but won the eleventh, squaring the match. Then to the twelfth he disastrously topped his drive; and became very shortly one down.

The thirteenth. Theodore was not ordinarily superstitious. Thirteens habitually meant nothing in his admittedly efficient young life. But this ominous silence was beginning to irk. He felt deeply the need of an audience. He craved appreciation; yearned for an outlet for several bright thoughts that were pent in his soul. Mr.

MacTear, utterly ignoring him, drove. Then mounted his infernal velocipede and trundled away. Theodore swung valiantly. His ball, viciously swerving, hooked off into the deep woods. "Hell's bells!" moaned Theodore, addressing his faithful caddie.

The caddie, as was evidently his habit, replied with a quick, birdlike nod and a benign smile.

This was too much.

"Don't you understand English? What you grinnin' at, dod-rot you? There's nothing funny about that. Costs me the hole!"

Again the caddie nodded.

Such cheerful confirmation of Theodore's fears did not soothe his troubled spirit. Was all of Kenmare County in league against him! Had some State decree ordained a period of sacred silence while this match was in progress? MacTear wouldn't listen; the gallery wouldn't listen; and now even his caddie! "Damn it!" Theo exploded. "Can't you say anything, caddie? Answer me, do you hear!"

The caddie, still with his benign smile, responded pleasantly: *"Non capeesh. Sono Italian'—da Napoli."*

Theodore moaned aloud. "An Italian and a Scotchman! What chance has a human being got!" He followed his ball, dumbly; found it pleasantly ensconced in a veritable deadfall of lumber; and eventually, after four frenzied niblick shots, conceded the hole to his opponent.

The fourteenth again they halved, Theodore just managing to get down a miraculous twenty-foot sidehill putt. Delighted, he leaped in the air, waving his arms, and turning toward his still silent gallery. To his infinite relief he, at last, saw smiles of approval on their faces. One or two nodded encouragingly. This was better. Before they had seemed inhuman. Their silence, together with that of his opponent and his caddie, had become well-nigh intolerable. "Pretty sweet, that!" he cheered himself as he started for the next tee. Even MacTear would have to admit that such was *some* putting. But Mr. MacTear, still retaining the honor, had quickly driven from the tee, and already mounted his bicycle.

For an instant, though, it seemed that the luck had changed. Here at the fifteenth tee Theodore's drive exceeded his happiest hopes. It leaped to the very edge of the green, almost three hundred yards distant.

Again waving his arms in ecstasy he turned to his followers. They were with him now, appreciative. Again they nodded approbation. The hole was easily won. And then the long sixteenth, where Theo's tremendous tee shot and two sweet brassies gave him a material advantage over the lighter-hitting Scot. Theodore took that hole easily, five to six.

Dormie. Two holes to play. Carefully Theo sighted at the short green, gauging his distance. It was, save that there was no pond, much like his own seventeenth at Grassy Drain. A trifle longer; not quite so difficult. Only one high, perpendicular bunker with planks on the hither side blocked the way. An easy mashie shot. Theo wrapped his iron about his neck. And topped! The ball hit the boards, dropped dead, sheer beneath the overhanging planking.

Careless of Mr. MacTear's feelings, forgetful of all golf courtesy, goaded only by ungovernable chagrin, Theodore slung his club from him as if competing in the intercollegiate hammer throw. He turned for sympathy to the spectators. To his dismay their faces were luminous with joy. Again they nodded approbation. They seemed silently to applaud his magnificent prowess in flinging a club so far. Did they think this was a pentathlon—or what!

It was too much. "What's the matter with you guys?" Theodore wailed, for the first time in his life completely broken and unnerved. "You stand there and grin like a lot of silly apes. Don't you see it's likely to lose me the match? Can't you say a damn' word? What's the matter with you, anyway? Ain't you human? Is that any way to treat a guest? We come over here to put on a championship match, and you don't even have the courtesy to——"

But the gallery only continued to smile, turning its attention to Mr. MacTear who, unmoved by Theo's flow of language, had taken his position on the tee, hit his shot toward the seventeenth green, watched as the ball curled right up to the flag, and then moved off with satisfaction.

Theodore plowed along miserably to his ball's impossible lie. "Hole out, MacTear. Don't wait for me. Hole out!" choked Theodore, hopelessly excavating in the abysmal bunker. Mr. MacTear did so.

The eighteenth was a rout. Mr. MacTear went down in a par four. Theodore was still attempting to dredge his ball out

of a brook when a new party arrived on the pleasant scene. The new party, four in number, sauntered very casually down to the rivulet where their panting clubmate labored.

"Too bad, Theodore," they consoled—the Judge, the Major, the Miner and the Mick, all at once. The gallery, timidly gathering closer, were still smiling, appreciative of Theodore's determined hydraulic efforts.

"Hope nobody annoyed you, Theodore," said the Judge chattily. "We know how you hate to be annoyed. But I was sure this gallery wouldn't bother you. This is the new links of the Kenmare County Deaf and Dumb Asylum, you see. The county is progressive enough to believe that its wards should have amusement, exercise in the fresh air, you know—all that sort of thing. Nice course isn't it, Theodore!"

"But the bike ridin' was Mac's own idea," smiled the Mick. "Good idea too, Mac."

Theodore somehow failed to see the joke. He turned on his persecutors plaintively. "Huh, frame-up, hey? Pretty funny, hey? You four, and Mr. MacTear, get me out here with nobody to talk to, with an opponent who rides a bicycle, caddies that can't speak English. Expect me to go eighteen holes without opening my mouth. A fine bunch you are. Do you call that sportsmanship?"

"Well——" temporized the Judge.

But Theo interposed accusingly. "Eighteen holes," he reiterated, "without saying a word. Call that sportsmanship, do you —do you?"

"Nah," Mr. MacTear abruptly interrupted. "I call it gawf."

THE POLITICIAN'S DOUBLE THRILL

EVERY few months "Uncle Joe" Cannon, who served longer in Congress than any man who ever went there, is asked to write his memoirs. The last time a publisher's agent put the request to him, he slowly took his cigar out of his mouth, carefully flicked it free of ashes, put it back between his teeth, tilted it to graze his right eyebrow and drawled:

"My son, whenever I hear of a politician writing a book about himself, I know he's in for the double thrill of seeing his views in print and at the same time keeping them a profound secret."

EXEMPLARY BREVITY

JOHN WANAMAKER, the merchant prince, was discussing calamity howlers. Their pessimism never bothered him, he said, but he resented their verbosity; they were forever hiring halls and filling newspaper columns with their lamentations.

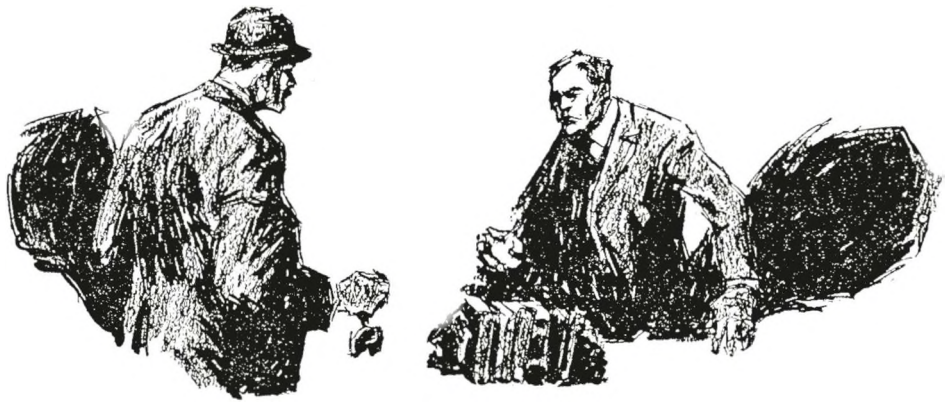
"Some day," he concluded, "I'm going to give them a model of brevity. It is the story of Elijah as it was written years ago by one of my Sunday-school scholars. It runs: 'Elijah, who had some bears, said to some boys who tormented him, "If you throw more stones at me, I'll turn the bears on you and they'll eat you up." And they did and he did and the bears did.' "

A DOUGHBOY MOTTO

ANNOUNCEMENT had just been made of President Harding's appointing General Dawes as one of the investigators of the war-risk insurance bureau and other relief agencies for the disabled veterans of the World War. A group of newspaper correspondents in the National Press Club was discussing what the soldiers needed most, and comment was made on the many instances of the government's failure to send the veterans their compensation promptly.

"That's the worst phase of the situation," said one. "The boys need the dough."

"A good motto for the officials to adopt," said Graham B. Nichol, the publicity promoter, "would be: 'For the doughboys, say it with dough!' "



Men Among Millions

By Stephen Allen Reynolds

Author of "Not on the Calendar," "The Timber Cruiser," Etc.

The product of America's money mill is safeguarded by a vast and intricate system—but the chiefest safeguard of our currency is a delicate device which officials of the Bureau of Engraving at Washington sometimes refer to as "the human conscience."

The plates from which money is printed are made with the most exacting care. The public is not permitted to see the engravers at work, nor does any one engraver prepare a whole plate. It usually takes about a year of continuous work to complete one of the original plates . . . The money is never printed from these originals, but by duplicates made from them by a mechanical process . . .

—*Haskin's "The American Government."*

IN the fat "Blue Book" wherein are printed the names and salaries of all governmental employees save those of certain Federal special agents and secret-service operatives, Francis X. Dowling was listed as "Engraver, Class B, two thousand one hundred and ninety dollars per annum." On the pay roll of the big money factory up on B Street, S. W., he signed his name in full, and was known to the other workers in the bureau of engraving and printing as a somewhat irascible, middle-aged and fastidiously dressed individual with perhaps rather pronounced leanings toward socialism and the inherent rights of the toiler.

Few men in Washington, apart from the diplomatic crowd around Scott Circle, were turned out more fashionably than was Francis Xavier Dowling in his off-duty hours; and high on the saddle of one of the mighty transfer presses in the engraving division of the bureau, he sat year in, year out, immaculate in a shirt of soft pongee embroidered with his initials, while manipulating the levers and wheels which controlled the hardened steel dies of the "originals" while they rolled and bit their delicate tracery four times across the annealed plates from which paper money is printed.

August Kohlman, the near-sighted and stoop-shouldered chemical genius of the bureau's ink mill, wondered often why Dowling cultivated him and sought him out. It seemed ages ago that the engraver had introduced him to the "quiet little place" near Cabin John's Bridge where real beer could be had in stone bottles—and most always crisp crackers and a bit of good cheese.

Kohlman, assistant chemist in his division of the money factory, was a scientist, a frail man given to few words. Long ago he had plumbed the shallow mental depths of the other, had laughed at his worn sophistries, and marveled that the engraver, in nowise rebuffed, still cultivated his society and insisted on paying for much of the beer.

But the evening came when Dowling

showed his hand. No longer was the chemist left in the dark as to the actual motive behind the cultivating process.

"What risk would you be willing to take," the engraver had asked, "to be able to retire from the service, a wealthy man, with practically any amount of money you'd care to mention?"

Kohlman had glanced sharply at the other as he put the question, and perceived that the engraver was in earnest. Dowling was leaning toward him, his fingers gripping the edges of the table between them. His features were set and intent as he waited for an answer. Little drops of moisture on his forehead sparkled in the sunshine of late afternoon.

Kohlman gazed long and hard at his companion, studying and analyzing him as he would have studied and analyzed a shipment sample of lampblack in his laboratory in the ink mill.

"I would be willing to risk a great deal," he said at length in the stilted English which came so sparingly from him.

Dowling leaned still closer. "Even prison?" he rasped.

A little thrill passed through the chemist. He pondered and sipped the last of his beer. Dowling noted that the acid-stained fingers of the chemist were trembling slightly as he set down his stone mug and looked around him at the deserted porch.

"Prison, I do not like," he said softly, and fell to making rings on the table top.

Dowling frowned. His right eyelid, always drooping and suggesting a perpetual wink, fluttered as it did when he was vexed or irritated. But within the space of a second or two he had calmed himself. With the finest of linen handkerchiefs he dabbed at his forehead and ran a finger around inside his close-fitting collar.

"Listen to me," he directed in a low tone.

The chemist left off his ring making. Meekly he raised his eyes and peered at Dowling through the thick lenses of his pince-nez.

"You admit," the engraver proceeded, "that you have a working knowledge of the process for bleaching paper currency—the process discovered by Nils Björnson, who died before he could profit by it."

Slowly, gravely, August Kohlman nodded in the affirmative.

"It is many months ago," he said, "that I was instructed—officially—to make certain experiments. The Björnson process took life from the fiber of the paper. It turned pale to some extent the blue-and-red shreds of silk distributed through it. I discovered a better method. If known to counterfeiters it would result in the forcing of the bureau to use indelible inks of almost prohibitive cost."

"Just so," Dowling sneered. "And yet you're still waiting for 'em to toss you a crust—a little boost in salary. Here you are—a man of brains and ability. You've found out something that would cost the government millions if it leaked out. They pay you less than ten dollars a day—about what a carpenter gets—and they look to you for silence and loyalty and ways to help 'em save millions on ink and paper."

Kohlman shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly, and turned to have a look at the setting sun. A brief silence followed, when the half twilight of September was filled with the pulsing monotone of tree crickets in an oak near at hand.

Dowling had paused, that his words might sink in. Now he resumed: "For the sake of argument, we'll *suppose* a case. We know that you can bleach a new one-dollar bill; we know that you're in a position to make authentic inks, identical with those used at the bureau. This gives us the foundation for a bank note of any denomination —even up to a ten-thousand-dollar gold certificate."

Kohlman, tense and with parted lips, nodded slightly. So far he had followed the engraver, and now he thought he knew what was coming.

"Now we'll suppose," Dowling continued, "that a certain party can provide us with perfect back and face plates of a one-hundred-dollar Federal Reserve note—plates rolled from a genuine die—and that a certain other party skilled in plate printing will do the actual work; would you be willing to do your share toward piling up a million or two?"

The chemist blinked thoughtfully. He wet his dry lips and seemed to be on the point of replying, when both men turned their heads at the sound of slippered footsteps. But it was only the dark-skinned woman who excelled in the brewing of forbidden beer. She approached. These Sunday-afternoon customers had lingered longer than was their wont. Perhaps they

were hungry. There was bread and cream cheese, and maybe a slice or two of——

Dowling, angry at the interruption, waved the woman away. The smile vanished from her face as she turned and made off down the porch. Not until the screen door of her kitchen banged behind her did the engraver utter a word; then he hitched his chair closer to the chemist and pressed him for an answer.

"It is a very ingenious and tempting plan," the ink expert pronounced in his formal and stilted English. "I see no objection to it save the matter of the consecutive numbers. Certain detection would follow the appearance of the first note in the redemption division. I—I would not care to go to prison."

Dowling's drooping eyelid fluttered. An exclamation of impatience escaped him. "There isn't one chance in a million of prison," he said hotly. "As for the numbers: The average life of small notes is about one year. Twenties and fifties get to the redemption division somewheres around the second year after issue. Hundreds—and that's what we're talking about—aren't worn out and sent in for redemption under three years. That gives at least two full years. The plate can be worn out in that time. Eighty thousand impressions can be pulled easily. That's eight million dollars."

Kohlman's pale-blue eyes widened. "Eight—million—dollars!" he repeated softly. He drew a handkerchief from his pocket and fell to polishing his glasses.

"Well?" Dowling inquired some moments later.

"I think," Kohlman said, "that I must have time to consider this matter. I like money. I do not think I would like prison. I will give you an answer—perhaps to-morrow; perhaps the day after. Let us now have some beer and cheese."

II.

Chief Saxon, of the engraving division, was a genius in picking men and assigning them to what they did best. Hence "Old Man" Tichnor, said to be the best steel engraver in the world, did nothing but portraits. From his graver had come the fine scratches on metal which resulted in the famous Indian head on the five-dollar note, the McKinley vignette on another, the buffalo on the ten. It usually took the old artist fully six months to complete a portrait, and the result was well worth the time spent.

Fresh from their oaths before the appointment clerk of the treasury department, new engravers came to Saxon on probation. He watched and encouraged the men who came to him from time to time. He placed them at various tasks. Some, he found wanting; others, excelling at script, he set to cutting "Washington, D. C.," and other cursive text on the thousands of "originals" designed for national currency, Liberty Bonds, and what not.

Thus artists in Gothic and Roman specialized along the lines for which they were peculiarly fitted, and men who "dug a mean numeral" were set at cutting nothing but digits and ciphers in the soft-gray steel.

Francis Xavier Dowling, on his appointment to the engraving division of the bureau, had excelled at nothing in particular. He went the rounds from bench to bench, and Chief Saxon was puzzled as to just where he fitted in, when came a vacancy at one of the transfer presses. Dowling was assigned to it. For more than a year he rolled stamp patterns into the mammoth plates from which postage stamps are printed; then he was promoted to the transferring of "one-dollar backs." He showed taste and judgment. He was punctual and scrupulously neat as to his person and machine. He ruined few blanks. Again he was promoted—this time to "faces"—and in the course of years was intrusted with the circular dies for rolling plates of high denomination.

These dies, lozenge shaped, softened at first and rolled over the hardened original plate, are in turn hardened, and in the transfer press are rolled under enormous pressure four times across the actual printing plates. Thus the combined handiwork of the bureau's best artists in steel is duplicated and reduplicated a countless number of times.

But what had taken Old Man Tichnor six months to accomplish—to say nothing of various weeks at other benches while scroll and script and numeral were cut—was copied by Dowling in an hour. The ease and magic of it appealed to his criminal instincts. A crook at heart, it wasn't long before he saw the opportunities in the situation, and decided to avail himself of them.

It was by no means as easy as he had thought. There were other men and presses in the transfer room. Chief Saxon passed through almost hourly, and sometimes unexpectedly, on tours which embraced a narrow scrutiny of all men and the progress of their work.

In the course of time there came to Dowling a requisition for the making of a batch of copies of the hundred-dollar Federal Reserve note. He prepared the back plates first, and taking the most desperate chances, rolled for himself a single impression on a flat blank which fitted snugly in his pocket.

A plate may not be made with the facility with which doughnuts are rolled and stamped out. It is an intricate process, involving the most delicate gauging and the nicest adjustment of pressure. During its repeated trips beneath the periphery of the chrome-vanadium die, the plate must be under constant scrutiny through a magnifying glass, and the operator is in no position to gaze around him. This very fact helped Dowling's plan in so far as the neighboring engravers were concerned, and he had adopted the scheme of shifting his plates for a few moments' work directly Chief Saxon had passed through.

With imprisonment for twenty years staring him in the face, Francis Xavier Dowling acquired the back plate and bore it away from the bureau in the breast pocket of his form-fitting spring overcoat. His heart had thumped somewhat faster and louder than usual when he passed the watchman at the B Street entrance, but quickly that ordeal was over.

The hardest part still lay ahead. Without the face plate bearing the Ben Franklin vignette, lacking the seal of the treasury, and without accomplices to furnish labor, good ink and paper, the back plate he had copied was no more than junk to him. It was worse than so much junk, in fact, because the mere possession of it was fraught with danger. In the safest place he could think of he hid the oblong of steel, and began the development of various ideas looking to the perfecting of his devious and daring plan.

The copying of a face plate, owing to the portrait and its greater variety of detail, was a lengthier and still more delicate operation than the one Dowling had accomplished. During the week he was still engaged on the finishing of the backs, he was tempted more than once to abandon the dangerous scheme and heave the plate he had made into the Potomac. Then fate came opportunely to his aid.

The "touch of pneumonia" that held Chief Saxon at home for ten days of sick leave was felt by others in the bureau. Dowling's neighbor wheezed and coughed and abandoned his transfer press one afternoon long before the quitting gong sounded. Next morning the covered machine stood idle, a goodly screen between Dowling and the nearest of the other transfer men. A window on one side of the plotter, a bulky and shrouded press on the other, served for privacy—a privacy now rarely intruded upon by an acting chief with the work of two men on his hands. Dowling chuckled and bent to his work.

A little thrill shot through him the morning the assistant custodian's rubber-tired hand truck passed through the division and came to a halt that a face die might be delivered to him. The drooping eyelid fluttered as he scrawled his name on the record card and saw the shining die lifted from its peg.

Ten o'clock came. The assistant, now acting chief of the division, passed through hurriedly, barely giving the men a glance. Dowling knew there was hardly one chance in a thousand of his coming through again before lunch time, and immediately whipped the half completed official copy from the bed and substituted his own soft blank.

At four o'clock, when the "O. K. gong" had given notice that each precious die and plate and every scrap of engraved paper were checked and safely locked in the vaults, Francis Xavier Dowling joined the crowd of released employees that surged out of the bureau like a great wave, engulfing the string of waiting trolley cars and trickling thinly down B Street.

Any one knowing Dowling to an intimate degree would have wondered what was agitating the transfer man as he passed the watchmen on the gate, for he was winking violently as he evaded their glances while tugging at a seemingly refractory button on his walking gloves.

Nothing remained for him now but to find the right partners and either steal or cut a treasury seal. So began the cultivating of August Kohlman of the ink mill,

and one Walter Pritchard of the plate-printing floor.

"Whitey" Pritchard, freckled and sandy, was a happy-go-lucky sort. Apt as not to disappear after one of the semimonthly pay days for forty-eight hours, he was almost as certain to report for duty with either a black eye or a bruised cheek. He had never forgiven Congress for putting over the Volstead Act while he was across the seas, and twice monthly registered his protest.

Yet Whitey was well liked. He wore the catcher's mask on the bureau nine, and was always to be depended upon for hard-fought games against the capitol crowd, the dude team from the library of Congress, and the husky "G. P. O.s" from the big government printing office. Furthermore, Whitey shared the honor of being one of the best and fastest plate printers who ever rolled a brayer across a vignette.

It was shortly after the finishing and secreting of the Ben Franklin plate that Dowling began to seek the companionship of the sporting plate printer. Whitey appreciated almost anything with a "kick" in it, but was particularly fond of Irish whisky. When he came to know that the engraver was the owner of a case or two of real James Jameson purchased from the butler of a certain convivial diplomat, it became no longer necessary for Dowling to seek him out. Rather, the process now became reversed.

Francis Dowling was nobody's fool. He realized the danger of taking for a criminal partner one who drank to excess, even occasionally. He applied certain tests. He came to know that Whitey could "take it" or let it severely alone. He proved to his own satisfaction that the plate printer was gifted with the knack of holding his tongue when in liquor. In due time, many weeks after the copying of the plates, Dowling spoke guardedly of the opportunity of making an independent fortune through some crooked but absolutely "safe" work.

Pritchard was enthusiastic, hungry for details. They were seated in Dowling's room in the little bachelor hotel where the engraver had lived for years, and on the table between them stood glasses, bottle and a siphon. Sparingly the plate printer helped himself to whisky and drank while Dowling unfolded to him a part of the plan.

When he had finished, Whitey stretched a muscular hand across the table and seized the softer right hand of the other.

"I'm with you," he said, his face lighting up. "And if you can land that bird in the ink mill that knows how to bleach bills and get the ink, we'll all be millionaires. I'll go off the stuff. When we get the right plant I'll work day and night till we wear out the plates."

Dowling's face shone with satisfaction. Kohlman had already agreed to join him. Now he had picked an expert printer in Whitey Pritchard. With copies of the authentic original plates, with genuine paper and ink supplied by the very individual who tested the paper and mixed the colors for the bureau itself, who could eye the finished product with suspicion?

This was not counterfeiting. It was printing real money. It was doing, on a smaller scale, exactly what was being done at the bureau of engraving. Dowling smiled at his thoughts. He wished, now that all was understood, Pritchard would take himself off, for a partly completed seal awaited his attention. Seals there were in plenty in the engraving division, but none of the copying requisitions had come his way.

So, under the skillful touch of his graver, night after night saw him at work on the treasury seal so necessary for a completed note.

Eventually it was finished. All was now ready as soon as a safe place to work could be found, and certain machinery shipped and installed.

III.

Kohlman shook his head a little sadly. "It is quite impossible that I put in money. I have it not. Ink I will furnish. Paper I will make blank for you. Money——" The chemist finished with an eloquent shrug of his narrow shoulders, then sat nibbling thoughtfully on an acid-stained finger nail.

Dowling mulled over the refusal, blinking his disappointment. And then it occurred to him that the Americanized German had a wife and two small children to care for on a salary by no means liberal. Whitey Pritchard, however, was a bachelor. In spite of his weakness for prohibited and expensive liquors it was possible that the plate printer had savings which he could cast into the pool. He was employed on a piecework basis. His output was big, and Dowling knew that he averaged a higher

rate of pay than either the chemist or himself.

"How much can *you* put in?" he asked bluntly, turning to the printer.

Pritchard laughed aloud at the question, and fished from a pocket sixty cents in silver. "That's my bank roll," he declared, and ran fingers through his shock of sandy hair.

Dowling eyed with disfavor the two coins Whitey tossed in his half closed palm. It seemed as if he alone was to shoulder the burden of costs for the start. There was the matter of six months' rent to be paid in advance to the absentee owner's agent for the abandoned farm down on the Manassas Road. A bleaching tank had to be put in. Chemicals were needed. A plate press of Whitey's selection remained crated in Baltimore, awaiting payment and shipping directions through devious channels.

And besides, there was the item of two hundred new one-dollar bills to be bleached for the initial run.

The engraver scowled as he gave thought to the approaching state of his bank account. And then he brightened as he thought of the immediate returns to come. Two hundred blank oblongs of silk-shot paper were to be changed as if by magic into Federal Reserve notes totaling twenty thousand dollars.

With a grunt of satisfaction Dowling gave his attention to the tray of glasses and other cheering paraphernalia on the center table of his comfortable room. His fellow conspirators, silent, watched the movements of their host. Three times the missing siphon drowned the faint blaring of horns which filtered up from the theater traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue, and Dowling passed around the tray.

"I suppose I'll have to foot all the expense," he said with good grace, and raised his glass. "So"—looking from one to the other of his companions—"let's drink to out 'Little Bureau' in Virginia."

"Prosit," Kohlman grunted, and solemnly drank to the toast.

Whitey Pritchard gulped his highball and smacked his lips in approval. Then both callers listened to the smaller details of the scheme looking to surreptitious millions.

Kohlman was to continue at his post in the ink mill. Whenever necessary he could be driven in Dowling's runabout to the plant. The preliminary bleaching and the supplying of colored inks in small quantities need not take more than a few odd hours of the chemist's time. Likewise Dowling was to remain at work in the bureau for the first few months. When the time should be ripe for the scattering through the country—the coast-to-coast distribution and exchanging of the Ben Franklin hundreds—both men could resign.

But it was imperative that Pritchard leave the government service at once—or at least the moment the plate press was installed. On his steady application, on his expert workmanship, rested in great measure the success of the huge undertaking. Day by day, taking barely needful time to rest and eat, he must print—print until the deep grooves in the plates should become shallow and hold insufficient ink.

Minor points came up for discussion, and in low voices the three plotters considered each in turn. Fully two hours passed, when as if by common consent, the trio spoke of their individual plans for lives of ease.

"I might buy me a ball team," Whitey Pritchard ventured. He leaned back in his chair, a flush on his freckled cheeks. "I could get quite a kick out of ownin' and managin' a good team with a swell battery. Then after a few years I'd like to go to sea. I've always wanted to go to sea. A snug little yacht with good men to sail her, plenty o' grub and choice liquors—oh, boy! I'd sail to China and Japan and fool away a few months seein' the South Sea Islands."

There was a far-away expression in Dowling's eyes. He had read much of the Old World rose gardens of the Riviera, the leisurely atmosphere of the Mediterranean where the winters were mild and the pulse of life beat slowly and undisturbed. A pastel of a white villa on the heights of Anacapri had once made a strong impression upon him. It was an inconsequential daub of curious angles and shadows—a silver house on a magenta cliff towering above an azure sea.

"I think," he said slowly, reflecting the memory of what he had absorbed at second-hand, "that I'll go abroad to live. I'll buy or build a palatial villa, and perhaps pick me out a dark-eyed wife that knows how to wear clothes. We'll cut quite a figure with the Monte Carlo bunch, and we'll have brains enough to keep away from the Casino. We'll see a good deal of Paris and

London, of course, and I suppose we'll take a trip up the Nile in one of those—darbears, or whatever they call 'em."

August Kohlman, silent, sat staring through the thick lenses of his pince-nez. He had not yet spoken of what the potential million or two meant to him. Dowling turned to him.

"How about you, Gus," he said, "and that stone castle on the Rhine? Oceans of beer in the cellar—a pack of those dachshund dogs to chase around with."

The chemist took no part in the laugh that followed. He stirred uneasily, then sat for some moments engaged in deep thought.

"The idea I have," he said presently, "is freedom from routine work. My money I would use for a laboratory. Much radium I would buy. It might be even that I could discover the secret of the electron—throw new light on the atomic theory. With radium and other costly chemicals and apparatus, I could——"

Words failed Kohlman. With a wide and comprehensive gesture that seemed to embrace all knowledge, he finished the sketching of his heart's desire.

Patronizingly, Whitey Pritchard shook his head and looked to Dowling as if expecting the latter to voice a criticism. But the engraver had sipped at the fountain of learning, and could therefore visualize to some extent the lure and appeal of the undiscovered to one of Kohlman's caliber.

"Every man to his taste," he said, and then glanced ostentatiously at his watch.

IV.

The house was well back from the miserable road which wound its seemingly interminable way through yellow mud and reddish clay from Fairfax Courthouse to Manassas. There was a roofless shed behind it, a bit of an orchard with unpruned and scraggly trees limned sharp against the gray sky of the November afternoon. The nearest neighbor, a white-thatched negro who claimed to remember the two battles of Bull Run, lived a mile away from the rotting fence pickets of the abandoned farmhouse leased recently to "city people" who were anything but hospitable to the stray visitors who chanced to lift the sagging front gate and approach the house.

Dowling had chosen well. The location was ideal for the purpose of the conspirators, and nothing untoward had marked the moving in of a knocked-down plate press and various other necessities purchased in three different cities and shipped to "blind" addresses. Kohlman had kept his promise regarding the bleaching and preparation of the paper, the furnishing of the various colored inks, and the moment was now at hand to begin printing in earnest.

In the square room at the front of the farmhouse the newly hung window shades were drawn tight against the possibility of uninvited observers from the outside. A small fire of hickory chunks sparkled in the old-fashioned fireplace. Above the press where Whitey Pritchard stood with bared arms, a bright acetylene light burned steadily.

"All ready for the plates," the printer said, rolling his brayer back and forth across the ink slab.

Dowling looked cautiously around. He had already made certain that every door was fastened, that every shade was drawn. Now he drew from his inside coat pocket two tissue-wrapped objects and laid them on the bench. A third and smaller package, he explained, was the treasury seal.

From his post in front of the fireplace August Kohlman lounged across the room and peered at the plates as Dowling divested first one and then the other of its wrappings. Whitey picked up the back plate and gazed critically at the geometrical lathe toolings faithfully reproduced from the original.

"Pretty!" he murmured, and then gave his attention to the face plate. "Sharp and clear as I've ever seen," he said, running the tip of a little finger over the vignette of Ben Franklin.

He rolled the brayer across the plate and wiped the surplus ink from it. He chalked his palms and polished it. The soft gleam of the metal was now threaded with dark-green scrolls and tracery where the ink lurked in the delicate grooves. On the sliding bed of the press Whitey set the inked plate against its gauges and carefully laid across it a strip of the damp paper which had once been a one-dollar bill.

A pull at the spokes of the big wheel and the bed slid beneath the felt-covered roller of the platen. A little thrill passed through each of the trio as they looked upon their work and saw that it was perfect. The "Three Graces" stood out in bold and green

relief. The magic numerals "100," stared up at them.

Dowling's right eyelid blinked triumphantly as he inspected the partly completed note.

"Looks like real money," Whitey Pritchard commented, and set about squeezing a tube of black ink for the portrait side.

"It *is* real money," Dowling said, and fell to thinking of his share in the distribution and exchange of the preliminary batch of two hundred notes.

A trip to New York was on the cards: the purchase of a suit case here; a pair of theater tickets there; some imported ties —any purchase in fact wherever the merchant was likely to have change for one of the forthcoming Ben Franklin notes. Eventually the buying of gilt-edged bonds was to be considered; also luxurious "distributing" trips to New Orleans and Pacific-coast cities.

Pritchard's soft whistle of approval brought the engraver from the consideration of the future to the needs of the present. The initial proof of the portrait side was perfect. Kohlman looked, and grunted his delight. The plate printer picked up the seal.

"It's a funny thing," he said, "that you never really trusted us until to-day. We simply took your word for it that you had the goods. Now we *know* it for a fact."

Dowling flushed. An explanation was due. Until his fellow conspirators had taken an actual part in the criminal work he had seen fit to keep to himself the hiding place of the unlawful plates. He spoke frankly now that the others were implicated, and told them of a little drawer he had rented in the safe-deposit vault of a bank less than an hour's drive from Washington.

Kohlman listened. Gradually he drew nearer to the bench where Pritchard's assortment of ink slabs lay. He toyed absent-mindedly with one of the heavy sheets of marble, raising it on edge and idly studying its grain. Dowling had barely finished telling of his caution in using an assumed name for the renting of the drawer, when the chemist's fingers slipped and the ink slab crashed to the floor.

"Holy smoke!" Pritchard cried, startled at the noise.

Dowling blinked down at the cracked marble and watched the confused and humiliated Kohlman stoop and retrieve the fragments.

"So sorry," he breathed.

"Don't need it to-day," Whitey said, smoothing over the incident. "And now I'd better get busy on these backs," he added. "They'll be dry enough to-morrow to run the faces."

He inspected the little pile of blank paper beneath the dampened cloth. Methodically he bent to his work. Inking, wiping, polishing and a pull at the spoked wheel —the stack of backed work, each sheet between protective tissue, grew thicker.

Dowling lighted a cigarette. Kohlman bit his nails, seemingly still dour and gloomy over his awkwardness. From time to time he glanced around the room as if fearful of interruption.

Ink, wipe, polish and pull—Pritchard fell into his stride. There was a rhythm in the sweep of his naked arms as, gracefully and without an inch of lost motion, his chalked palms moved in circles across the face of the plate.

"Now if I only had my girl feeder here ——" he paused to say jocularly, and wiped his hands on a ball of waste.

Dowling snorted at the suggestion. He stooped to inspect the latest print and failed to see the door communicating with the kitchen creep open noiselessly an inch or two.

"I think," said Dowling as he stood erect, "Gus and I'll be on our way. We've got a bad road and it's getting dark. Mind you take good care of the plates and the seal. In case of fire you'd better keep 'em right under your pillow to-night."

"You bet I'll take good care of 'em," Whitey said.

"No. *I'll* take care of 'em," broke in a strange voice.

All three whipped around to see standing framed in the kitchen doorway a man of medium size. There was something vaguely familiar about him. He drew closer, concentrating his attention on Dowling; and the latter, stiff with horror, now recognized the intruder. Under the white acetylene light he saw plainly the smooth-shaven features and blue-gray eyes of the secret-service operative who specialized in "bureau cases."

Petrified with astonishment Dowling stood motionless while the officer ran his hands lightly over his person. It came to

him dimly that he was being searched for weapons.

"Wha-what——" he uttered weakly, and gave up all effort for articulate speech.

Curiously enough, despite the stress of the moment, he noticed absurd trivialities. Operative Anthony wore a raincoat. Its sleeves were damp. The derby hat of "the man from the treasury" gleamed wetly. It must be raining outside. Dowling shivered. And presently, gradually, his full powers of observation returned.

He felt a cold touch at his wrists. The drooping eyelid fluttered angrily as he looked down at the patented cuffs which Anthony was fitting to him. And then he raised his eyes, expecting fully to see other officers.

But there were no others. And, stranger still, neither of the two fellow conspirators seemed to be particularly disturbed. Whitey Pritchard, far from being excited, was coolly rolling down his sleeves. Kohlman was peering at him, he thought a little pityingly, through the thick lenses of his glasses.

At last Dowling found his tongue. "Wha-what kind of a game is this?" he babbled thickly.

"I should call it solitaire," the secret-service man said. "We've been wise to you ever since you sprung the plan on Kohlman. But we'd never have waited this long if we knew where you had those plates. So we strung you along and gave you plenty of rope."

"I see," Dowling vented through distorted lips. He wheeled on the chemist and struck at him with manacled hands.

"You Dutch swine!" he raged as Kohlman stepped nimbly aside; and then Anthony had him by the collar.

"Don't get nawsty, Mr. Dowling," the officer cautioned as he twisted hard and leaned back. "Gus Kohlman's a better citizen than you ever dreamed of being."

Whitey Pritchard guffawed loudly. Dowling sensed that he also was involved in the double crossing.

"You, too?" he snarled.

The plate printer nodded and became serious. "Bet your life," he said. "The very night you sprung that dope about the plates I went straight to Director Wales at his club. He sent for Mr. Anthony, and I was told what to do. I might have fallen for the scheme, but for two things."

Whitey paused. The others hung on the words to come.

"It wasn't that I was too honest," the plate printer proceeded, "or that I don't like money well enough. It was because I couldn't throw down that white-mustached old sport of a director of ours. Nick Wales has been more like a father to me than a boss. He's labored with me to stop drinkin', and taken me back on the pay roll more times than I can remember. When this affair was due to come to the surface in the redemption division, Wales would be the one to get it in the neck. I couldn't stand for that—not even if I owned a ball team and could go cruisin' around the South Seas when I felt like it."

Whitey smiled faintly; then resumed: "And in the second place I knew that once the scheme became known—two years from now, or *twenty* years from now—that the secret-service guys would get the last mother's son of us back from wherever we were. It was only last year that they fetched a man back from Honduras for running off a few lead dollars. And if you had millions and a dirigible straight to the moon, the S. S. boys would ride rockets to get there and lug you back and stick you in Atlanta."

Francis Xavier Dowling was weak and actually sick. Betrayed on all sides, double crossed by two men who could have reaped millions, he was now a spectacle. Half choked by Anthony's savage jerk on his collar, he stood gulping and watching the wrapping up of the evidence against him.

"I am so sorry," a voice came at his shoulder, "that I was by you misjudged."

It was the chemist, suave and almost apologetic. "We have much in science that is exact," he purred on in his uninflected and stilted English, "but in your problem you failed into consideration to take the human equation."

Dowling grated his teeth as Kohlman smiled sweetly at him; and then, startled out of his rage, he stared in surprise at the transformation taking place directly before him. For Kohlman had suddenly drawn himself erect, his nostrils widely distended.

"I am, as I told you," he said firmly, "a Bavarian by birth and education—a *German* if you will so have it. Can I those things regret and be glad for the Great War?"

It was a different Kohlman who hurled the question. Gone to all appearances was the frail physique, vanished the scholarly stoop and apologetic mien. Whitey Pritchard, open-mouthed, stood with one arm thrust into the sleeve of his overcoat. The man hunter paused in the midst of his inventory to listen to the impassioned "explanation" of the chemist.

"And so," the latter resumed, "because I left a country strangled by politicians and military madmen, opportunity and greater freedom to seek, should you expect me for selfish purpose the currency of my adopted country help debase?—the country of my wife and the children of my blood—the country"—the harsh voice softened to a whisper—"where every man and woman in its great money factory respected my feelings, and during all the months of the terrible war, taunted me not. *Ach—Gott!*"

August Kohlman ceased, his clenched fist raised on high. An instant he stood thus, then turned on his heel and passed out of the room.

Presently Dowling and the others followed, down the uneven walk of crumbling bricks, through the chill November drizzle to the Manassas Road where a car was parked behind the first bend. No eye marked the departure of that car toward Fairfax Courthouse, but while it labored eastward through the red and yellow mud the night wind moaned through the naked treetops and whispered among dead stalks marking a garden of bygone years.

MORE ABOUT WASHINGTON.

IN the official files of the public-school system of Baltimore, Maryland, there is treasured a document that contains an important statement about George Washington. Written by a pupil, a young miss aged ten years, its principal sentence runs: "Washington married a famous belle, Martha Custis, and in due time became the father of his country."

AS TO SUICIDE PACTS.

SUICIDE pacts, agreements to die by shooting, were being featured in a Washington newspaper.

"I am not at all surprised," said a cynical congressman, "that the man who is a party to such an agreement with a woman is always a dead-sure shot against the woman but so small that he can't hit himself."

GOLF IN CONGRESS.

THE present aggregation of lawmakers in Washington is known as "the golf-crazy Congress." Senators and representatives alike crowd the links in the vicinity of the capital. Every Sunday morning, beginning as early as five thirty in summer, automobiles and street cars carry hundreds of legislators to their favorite country clubs.

THE WISEST DIPLOMACY.

MUSTAPHA KEMAL was burning Smyrna. A cynic in the Republican cloakroom of the United States senate remarked when he heard the news: "If America wants the protection of some kind, powerful European country, she had better hurry up and announce the discovery of a lot of oil in her territory."

EASY TO LIVE WITH.

SHERMAN L. WHIPPLE, the Boston lawyer and Massachusetts Democratic leader, is a fighter of parts in courtroom and campaign but not in his home. He has a chauffeur, a gardener and a housekeeper, all of whom have been constantly in his service for more than a quarter of a century.

Galahad of Lost Eden

By William West Winter

Author of "'Blue John' Wakes Up," "An Irrigation Project," Etc.

VII.—"ANGELS ARE BRUNETTES!"

"Blue John" Adams, the modern exponent of ancient chivalry from Showlow way, changes two things—his notion about celestial complexions and his nickname.

I NEVER took no stock in miracles—said the old teamster, on his next trip, as he meditatively pulled on his pipe—I always reckoned the machine of existence was geared and regulated to go in a certain way, and that way she goes, no matter who goes sticking his fingers into the wheels. Nevertheless, I'm a believer in a Providence, if it's only a benevolent sort of Universal Engineer who now and then sticks out an arm and pulls weak and inquisitive mortals out of the way of the buzz saw before they plumb get dismembered.

I reckon this "Blue John" Adams is a special favorite of some sort of Providence, at any rate, or otherwise he certainly is due to experience disaster a whole lot. You might think he does, after this recital of his vicissitudes which I've been delineating, but if you consider all the misfortunes his imbecile ways might lead him into, it seems to me his escapes so far are plumb remarkable. And even such tribulations as may seem to be some harrowing, when they occur, have a frequent way of proving blessings in disguise.

Take the last occasion I expound to you! Here is Blue John, riding off with a busted leg after the lady he has tried so hard to serve has rounded on him and given him a dirty deal from the bottom of the deck, endeavoring, as she does, to betray John to the authorities so that she can safely wed George Rayfield out of motives that are at least as mercenary as anything else. You'd naturally say he hasn't gained nothing from this at all, but has lost all his faith in female nature and got a jolt which ought to destroy all of his notions of chivalry.

But Blue John doesn't feel that way, somehow. In fact, as he gallops out of Camp Verde with rangers and townsmen saddling and spurring on his trail and raising a whoop and hullabaloo after him all same like he was a lobo with a bounty on him, he actually is heard to utter mirthful sounds. And they aren't entirely due to light-headedness and shock from the impact of a forty-five against his anatomy, neither. To be sure, he suffers some from the last, going dizzy and weak, and nearly losing his seat for a moment, while his attention is so

distracted that he don't take any account of the way he's going nor what's in front of him. But the real cause of this hilarity is relief.

Blue John, in fact, when he faces Hilda with his hands up and sees the look of mingled fear and triumph in her eyes, experiences a heap of enlightenment; the scales, so to speak, dropping from his eyes. He knows that he don't owe this lady any devotion and that he never did owe her any. And he's so glad to know this that he don't even feel contempt for her nor anger at her treachery. He looks at her, and he knows she's actually fat, as Miss Theba Willing ill-naturedly has declared, and he knows he don't like blondes nohow, and that he's been walking all this time in a fog of illusions and deceptions. He's so glad to be wise for once that he grins as he raises his hands and the rangers close in on him.

And when "Panhandle Pete" makes his unexpected break, giving Blue John a chance to escape, he don't more than threaten any one and the only shots he fires are in the air to inspire respect. He's feeling almost benevolent and he's recalling the distaste which Miss Willing exhibits toward target practice on humans, and he feels that he'd a heap rather be freckled all over with lead himself than injure any one at all.

But the pursuit don't feel the same way about it nor have any scruples about manslaughter, so John has to ride and ride hard. He does that, but as I say, he hasn't his mind on it, for one reason or another, so that he don't pick his way nor notice anything except that he's cracking holes in the atmosphere until its too late to round around and circle toward a refuge that's worth while. He's headed north in a general way and his horse has naturally picked the easiest road, which happens to be the trail up the Verde to the mouth of Beaver and along that creek up over the plateau toward Flagstaff.

Now, John hasn't any business calling him that way and if he keeps on, badly hurt as he is, he sure figures to get into a heap of trouble. Firstly, the trail up Beaver is about as well populated as any in that section and he is due to pass any number of ranches all along the valley. Which means that his trail can't be hidden none at all up that a way. Secondly, he is bound to ride onto the high country even if he gets past all the inhabitants and to be stopped by the snow. Thirdly, if he gets through that and don't perish of neglect of his wound or of hunger, he merely comes out eventually at Flagstaff, where they are sure to be looking for him, since there's a telephone connection from Flag to the upper ranches on Beaver Creek, though it hasn't yet been extended as far south as the Verde. So it's plain to the most feeble intellect that Beaver Creek offers no route which he can prudently follow.

He don't figure this all out at once because he's getting light-headed and hazy in his mind before long, with the pain from his busted leg and the struggle he has to make to keep his balance in the saddle. But his habit of caution and figuring ahead is ingrained by this time and in some way it is gradually borne in on him that his ultimate destination is likely not to be within reach of visions of brunet young women he is now seeing in place of former blondes, so much as it is to be a jail somewhere in the vicinity, provided he doesn't pass out before he's gathered in.

It gradually becomes plain that he can't ride much farther nohow and he slows down a little and begins to take stock as best he can of his predicaments. By this time he's rounding up the road along Beaver Creek and has gone past the first ranch with another two or three miles farther along. He's riding hard and fast and his horse is feeling the pace, but he don't feel it half so poignant as Blue John does.

Maybe you-all have investigated Montezuma's Well, which lies up on the bench above Beaver Creek not far from the mouth, as most pilgrims do, it being, aside from limestone caves and warm springs and such, about the most intriguing curio we have in this section. Of course it's well known about here to all residents, and Blue John has heard of it. I reckon he maybe has even been there to look it over before he becomes an outlaw. At any rate, as he rides along and holds on to his saddle, looking around him for possible cover, it occurs to him that the well offers his only chance to make a stand. And, falling in with his conclusion, he finds he is loping along the high bench above the creek which runs right past it and not far from it. He don't lose any time making up his mind, but drags his horse up and tumbles out of the saddle.

He hasn't the use of his leg and his pain is some excruciating, but he exhibits grit

and stamina that might be called unusual even in Arizona. He clenches his teeth, stops long enough to drag his carbine from its boot, and, using it as a sort of crutch, he whangs his horse with his flat hand into a gallop and then starts crawling for the well. It's fifty yards and more down on the lower bench, but he makes it somehow, though the sweat is pouring off of him and he's as drawn and pale as a ghost before he reaches the edge of it.

Montezuma's Well isn't anything but a mighty big pothole in the level bench, about a hundred yards back from the creek and considerable above its level. It's maybe a hundred feet in diameter at the top and not much narrower at the bottom, with the sides of it sheer up-and-down rock with a drop of over a hundred feet, which brings the bottom of it a lot lower than Beaver Creek. The bottom of it is sandy and slopes like a saucer on three sides, to hold a pool of water which is warm and always at the same level, as I intimated when I'm telling about Blue John's deductions concerning an underground lake. The fourth side is sheer rock running right down to the water, while there is a narrow beach on the other sides.

But the remarkable thing about Montezuma's Well, and the thing it gets its name from, is Montezuma's Castle. This is neither more nor less than a big cave dwelling built right in the rock of the pothole, about halfway down, with several stories and twenty-seven or eight big rooms in it. I reckon Montezuma didn't actually cut this hive out of the rock, but whoever did was surely some stone mason and all-around sculptor, and it may have been Aztecs for all that I know. Leastwise, it was certainly done a long time before the Lincoln County cattle war or any other modern times.

The original nesters in this domicile provide means of getting down to it and also down to the water below where they doubtless get their drink and maybe do their washing, unless they are like their relatives of modern days who don't make no such plays, preferring their natural squalor. They cut ledges in the rock at different levels and plant ladders from one to another which they can haul in when they are threatened with raids from other hostiles. But since Montezuma's Well and Castle have become a source of revenue and the resort of tourists whenever they frequent the Verde, the ancient and rotted ladders have been replaced by others and embellished by rope hand holds to enable the timid to descend without undue timorousness. And it's down these ladders that Blue John intends to crawl if his game leg will let him.

One thing life in a cow country endows a man with is sinews and muscles that will stand a lot of strain and a nervous system that can endure a heap of pain under necessity, which is sometimes frequent. It isn't any fiesta to crawl over the edge on one foot, drag a busted leg over after it, stand on the good leg and then, holding to the edge of the ladder by both hands, with one leg dangling free, ease oneself from round to round. But Blue John does it, with his carbine slung at his back. And when he reaches the first ledge he manages to stave off his faintness, clear the swimming of his eyes, and crawl to the next ladder and repeat the dose. Furthermore, he recovers sufficient sense when he's got down this second ladder to drag it down and lay it on the ledge. It takes him hours, as it seems, to crawl down the several flights to the castle, removing the ladders as he goes, but he finally makes it and drops in the outer room in a faint, long after he's heard the pursuit go boiling past him up above, on the trail of his horse.

But his troubles have only commenced, although he's reasonably safe for the time being. He knows they'll come back and find him eventually, since he's left his crutch-and-heel trail plain in the sand and come daylight they will have run down his horse and be looking for him in the back trail. Yet they can't get at him, provided he can sit up and shoot, because he can't be reached by a shot from the edge when he's inside the castle, while if any one comes down on a rope he can easily down him before he reaches the ledge and the caves. As long as he can keep awake he is safe enough that way. Also it ain't likely that, even if he sleeps, the pursuers will take any chance on his being asleep, they not being certain whether he is or not, since they can easily remain up above and wait for hunger to drive him out.

No, the thing that Blue John is up against is the necessity of getting water, which is plumb pressing in his state of fever and suffering. But all the water is nearly fifty feet below and has to be hauled up to the castle. He has ropes which he takes from the walls as he comes down, along

with the ladders, but while they might enable him to haul water up in his hat or something of the sort if he once gets down to the bottom, they don't facilitate that descent any to speak of. Meantime he's in a dead faint and not at all ready to consider this problem for the moment.

Yet Providence is working, and this time it negotiates through the weather bureau. Down along the lower part of Beaver Creek and in the Verde Valley there isn't much snow, though there is plenty of it up on the mountain and the mesa. In an ordinary winter you can figure on maybe three or four light falls that don't more than cover the ground nor stay very long. Beyond that it isn't later than the first of December and there's no reason to anticipate an early winter. Yet, although Blue John, when he flogs it out of the Verde, doesn't notice it, what with his wound upsetting his intellects and what mind remains to him being engaged in wondering how he ever comes to mistake his sentiments so long and persistent, there is a light snow coming down. As the night wears on it gets colder and cloudier and the snow gets heavier until it's a regular snorter, though not extremely cold. It isn't very deep when he crawls into Montezuma's Well, no more than little puffs and patches blown about by the wind, but when the posse goes past it has begun to whiten the ground and by the time they come back that way it has completely effaced all trace of his seeking refuge.

Providence, however, isn't satisfied with that, which probably wouldn't have been enough to call the dogs off his trail anyhow. Providence intends, this time, to do a job that's complete. It leads Blue John's horse to seek familiar pastures a little after John has dismounted and in seeking them the horse turns off the Beaver Creek road before it's too late, rounds about toward the southeast and circles back over the Buckhorn, trying to find its way back to Lost Eden.

The Buckhorn is mostly long, bare slopes, not very steep, peppered with juniper and mesquite and scrub oak, with a fairly clear sweep for the wind. By this time there's a light covering of snow on parts of it, enough to leave a pretty fair trail that's easily followed even in that light, the tracks showing black against the bare snow. For this reason the pursuit hasn't any trouble in following and are hard after Blue John's horse when it leaves the road and takes to the mountain.

But riding in the dark over ground half covered with snow isn't any pursuit to hurry over and neither are these people amateurs who are likely to founder their horses by trying to catch their game in the first mile or two. They figure that Blue John's hurt because he's left some blood behind him. When his horse heads over the Buckhorn they conclude he's seeking refuge up on the mesa, perhaps in Lost Eden, and they lope along steady and easy, figuring they can wear him down before he gets there, since he'll have to make a long detour around the head of Clear Creek before he can turn and strike out for Lost Eden.

But the horse ain't being guided by a reasonable intellect and takes its own sweet way, which in this case is pretty near direct. And a direct line swings him across the slopes of the Buckhorn and down onto the rim of Clear Creek, which is five hundred feet high and as straight as the side of a house at this point. Not liking the weather, the horse don't stop to graze or nothing but whoops along steadily until it comes into the main cattle trail running up the Buckhorn. Following that along for a while he strikes a side trail which is hard and narrow and well marked and turns into that.

Now, you-all know, undoubtedly, that trails are sometimes deceiving. A cattle trail over which hundreds of feeders have been driven may be nothing but a maze of separate tracks, a hundred yards wide, perhaps, with nothing much to show to the uneducated eye where the "trail" is and where it is just cattle drifting about. And, as a contrast to that, sometimes there will be a plain, well-marked rut or pair of ruts leading along from the real trail, which looks a whole lot more like a roadway than the actual route does. This may be a game trail, it may be just a blind path beaten out by cattle toward some particular good feed, or it may be a water gully which cows have followed because it's there to follow or for any other imbecile notion that strikes them. But the point of it is that such apparently well-marked and well-traveled trails have a way of frequently ending in just nothing at all. Of course, a long-horned gent used to the country can generally savvy which is which and avoid the

false trail, but in this case it ain't any reasoning human that is called on for judgment, but a horse seeking the nearest route to what he regards as home.

Now, that's what the horse got into just about the time that the pursuing outfit got in sight of him. They don't more than glimpse him in the juniper and scrub oak and they have no reason to guess that he's going free at the time, so they don't suspect that Blue John is not on him. But when he turns off into this blind trail they begin to wonder what's up and, for fear that he has some scheme of getting under cover, they spur ahead and try to round him up before he gets plumb out of sight.

When the horse follows this trail out through the juniper and into the rough rock rimming Clear Creek they are more puzzled than ever and figure John sure must have a plan to make a get-away. They flog their horses and come on with a rush, and John's horse naturally concludes they are after him to restore him to captivity and he accordingly strikes into a run in which he don't take no account of where he's going.

One young rider comes whooping on the trail just as the horse darts out around this trail where it runs through a crevice and out along the wall of the cañon where it narrows rapidly to a mere path. He hollers and spurs ahead to get his rope on the horse, not seeing that there isn't any rider and the horse loses his wits entirely and plunges on like a wild animal. And that trail suddenly comes to an end overhanging the sheer cañon wall.

Well, this posse hears the crash and the scream of the horse as it goes over and one or two ride out until they can see that it's nothing but a blind trail. It sobers them up somewhat and a great deal of the resentment against Blue John dissipates in the thought of how he winds up. They turn around soberly and begin the ride home again, talking rather subdued about how John was a pretty good hombre at bottom and that he suffered more from misfortunes and lack of judgment than from actual badness. There isn't any doubt in their minds but that he's lying all busted up at the bottom of Clear Creek and so they go on back to the Verde without ever looking for any trails that might have been his nor once thinking of projecting around down in Montezuma's Well, where their game is just now awaking to find himself blazing with fever and honing some frenzied for a drink of water.

A man in a fever is likely to attempt anything and come pretty nigh accomplishing it, and Blue John is no exception. How he gets down to the water is more than he could ever narrate afterward, but in some manner he does get there and plunges his head into the pool to get his fill of it. It's warm—almost hot—but that don't deter him any and I reckon it maybe does him good. For all I know that water may even have medicinal virtues that come in handy for him at this time. At any rate he recovers considerable, and, his leg having stopped bleeding, he makes shift to bandage it up after a fashion and then consider what he's going to do next.

There ain't much he can do, as a matter of fact. Even if he wants to get out he can't make it in his condition. He can't even crawl back up to the castle and get shelter, but fortunately the water warms the lower part of the well so that it's comfortable the same as Fossil Creek, only more so, it being more confined. Therefore he don't run any risk of freezing. It's still night, but after a while the moon comes out and it quits snowing. He can see pretty well down here while the moon's high and he begins to look around and take notice of his surroundings.

The first thing he notices is that the level of the water is lower than it has any right to be, as can be seen by the deposits of silica along the old water line, this water being right strongly impregnated that a way. It's fallen nigh onto two feet, and that's something unheard of because, as narrated previous, one thing peculiar about the well is that the water always stays at the same level whether it is dry times or wet and, being much lower than the bed of Beaver Creek, it naturally follows that it hasn't got any connection with that stream.

John, as I've told, has his own theories about this phenomenon and he ain't so surprised as some others might have been. But his wits are not in the best working conditions, what with fevers and such, and he gets to having fantastic notions which, in the manner of delirious hallucinations, are strong and clear from that fact. He gets to wondering and projecting about the underground lake that he imagines is here and that has an outlet on the cliffs at Fossil Creek, which is thirty miles away or

more as the crow flies. And thinking of Fossil Creek he naturally gets to seeing visions once more, wherein angels figure, but this time they are brunet angels instead of blondes, and there ain't any reality to promote his delusions, neither.

But he sees Miss Theba Willing plenty accurate for all of that and he gets to milling around as to how he can reach her in one way or another. While he's doing this and longing to get some sort of message to her in order to let her know he passes out with his eyes opened and his true sentiments finally revealed to him, he observes the surroundings with an absent eye. And thus he comes on a discovery that sets his addled brain roving in projects that are plumb ridiculous.

What he sees is a low notch in the pothole wall close to the water on the side where the rock comes right down into it. It's just a black slit maybe four or five inches high and three or four feet long, running above the water line, but there is a slight ripple in it and a straw dropped into the water, which has been slowly drifting around in it, comes in front of this slit while he watches and slowly sails through it and on down into the unknown.

Now what slight current there is is mighty puerile, and figuring a thirty-mile trip, which is a bee line and not likely to be taken under the most favorable conditions by any floaters, it'll take twenty-four hours or more, and probably nearer forty hours, for it to make the grade to Fossil Creek. But then, John is not specially concerned with the date his epistle arrives so much as he is that Theba hears from him posthumously that he ceases to favor blondes and has shifted his predilections to brunettes that a way. Somehow or other, while he don't exactly allow that Miss Theba is going to be interested in this here metamorphosis any, he has the notion that he can't die happy until he takes measures to enlighten her. And this slit offers a long chance, one so wild that any but a fevered man would have passed it up without ever thinking of it.

But John thinks of it a heap and he casts around how he can make his play. He can't write a message and sling it in because it would get soaked. But he has a brass match box, one of those water-tight cylinders with a screw top, and he finds that it will float when he tries it. So he drags out his book of cigarette papers and a stub of pencil he has and scrawls a farewell message on a number of sheets, as follows:

MISS THEBA WILLING, Fossil Creek, Arizona.

DEAR MADAM: Hoping this finds you well and not being able to say the same for myself, seeing that I've got a forty-five slug in my off leg, I take my pencil in hand to drop you a line.

Miss Theba, you were plumb right in your estimates of the young lady for whom I formerly harbored delusions. She is certainly no good, but as I'm thankful to have found it out before something worse happened to me, I'm not going to say anything more about her. All I want to inform you is that I've woke up, and while it's too late to do me any good, since I'm down here in Montezuma's Well with a game leg and no way of getting out nor anything to eat, waiting for the posse to come and shoot it out with me, I am able for that same reason to say without offense that it was you all along, from the time I first observed you, and you freckled me all over with bird shot, that I really entertained sentiments toward. You won't object to my saying this because I'm going out pretty soon and it won't hurt you to know it.

So please remember me with kindness and give my regards to Pete if you see him again. And if you run onto my roan horse anywhere, which I had to turn loose, please see that he is given a quart of oats every now and then. Also, would you mind letting my dad know about me?

I love you. Yours truly,

JOHN K. ADAMS of Showlow.

This here document he rolls up and tucks into the match box and confides to the water near the slit, and after a bit it goes drifting through. When it has disappeared Blue John heaves a sigh, rubs his forehead and sinks down on the sand beside the water where he drifts off into stupor. And there he remains without no one knowing he is there nor that he's even alive.

This here Panhandle Pete person, who makes the diversion which enables Blue John to escape the last time, has as many lives as a cat, I reckon. Likewise he has no such scruples as John has gathered, at the behest of Miss Willing, about committing assault and battery with deadly weapons. He takes it out of the Verde on the run as John does, but he goes whooping and shooting so promiscuously that he drives every one out of his way and when the pursuit forms they naturally go after the more peaceful game of the two and let Pete get plumb away. This is partly due to the fact that no one knows who Pete is nor that any one wants him except for this last outrage, Miss Hilda Raffe not being in a condition to explain and George Rayfield being plumb

senseless from the crack he gets over the head with Pete's gun handle. This time it's Pete who takes the road east and south across the flats and the malpais toward Fossil Creek, and, as has happened on another occasion to Blue John, he isn't followed at all.

As a consequence, along toward early morning before sunup he slides down the new trail into Fossil and comes racking up to Theba's door, where he piles out of his saddle. Miss Theba is sleeping light because she's still broken up some at Blue John's defection, so she hears him and gets herself into her clothes and comes out to see if it's maybe Blue John come back, she intending to take him over the jumps some severe before she ever forgives him. But when she sees Pete, and his horse all covered with sweat, while his face in the dawn is streaked with powder smoke, she gives a little gasp, turns as pale as a ghost and sinks back against the door jamb.

"Wh-what happened? Where's—where's John?" she whispers. Pete grins a little.

"Last I saw of him he was stepping high, wide and handsome over the boundless prairies," he says. "Ha! Ha! He'll not be bristling up the next time over this lady's playing it low-down on me, seeing she sure runs a ranikaboo on him, beside which the deceit she practices toward me resembles a harmless jest. I reckon he'd be saluting the walls of a jail right now if I hadn't savvied more than he did and been there to get him out of it."

Then he tells what happens—how he hears the letter from Hilda and concludes that it offers a chance for him to get even with her. He plans to crawl into the Verde before the alleged ceremony comes off and hide where he can reach them at the critical moment. He then intends, just as the parson asks who has any objections to the mating, to rise in a dramatic way and allow he has, emphasizing his protest by smoking up the bridegroom and any one else who objects thereto. It seems he figures that Hilda is probably running a blazer on Blue John and that she invites his succor for the purpose of betraying him, all right, but he also calculates that she is actually going to pull off these nuptials and he takes this way of throwing a monkey wrench into the machinery and so getting even with her.

But there isn't any wedding, as I've told, and the whole thing is a plant. When Theba hears the details of how Blue John is led into the arms of the rangers she grits her little teeth until they mighty near shoot sparks and clenches her hands with the desire to get them on Hilda. And when Pete goes on, grinning and chuckling, to tell how, at the critical moment, he arises from behind the counter, belts George Rayfield with his gun and shoots out a way for himself and Blue John, she turns pink all of a sudden, gives a cry of relief and throws her arms around his neck and kisses him. She does so!

This embarrasses Pete a whole lot and he is somewhat incoherent in his further elucidations, but she gathers that Blue John rides off with a crowd at his tail but well ahead of them. After that nothing will do for her but that she must first feed Pete well and then get ready to ride into the Verde on her pony and get the news as to whether John escapes or not.

It's afternoon before she can cover the miles between and she goes straight to the Montezuma Hotel, where the inhabitants are gathered around discussing the events of the night before. The posse has come in long ago with the news that Blue John is over the cliff at Clear Creek and Hilda Raffe and George Rayfield are beaming joyously at the news and summoning a preacher, she having got her annulment secretly some time before, with Swanson's aid and abetting. Which they are so far from losing time that, as Theba rides up, the ceremony is over and the beaming bride is receiving congratulations from such as offer them, between gushes to her friends enlightening poor George Rayfield, who weds her as much to escape paying her exorbitant stipends as anything else, that, now she's mated to him, he sets out to build a new house at once and while it's going up she and he will take a wedding journey out to Santa Barbara and other resorts, in the course of which trip she will have further time to figure ways and means of spending his money.

Blue John being dead, the sympathy of the camp has naturally taken a veer in the direction of mourning him a whole lot and even as Theba dismounts before the porch of the hotel she hears men remarking that it's plumb shameful to be rejoicing and celebrating nuptials the way these two are doing after leading her lover into a trap and turning him up to the rangers. They don't

say so much against Hilda, she being a female and exempt from criticism, but George Rayfield is sure coming in for animadversions that promise to make further residence in the Verde uncomfortable for him. From the tone of the conversation you'd gather that Blue John is some sort of spangled hero and George is a regular villain of a melodrama.

But all that Theba knows at first is that John is dead. And when she hears that, she turns as white as a sheet and stands for a moment leaning against her pony. Then she realizes that the bride is receiving congratulations and she suddenly straightens up, slim and with her head high and her eyes looking straight ahead of her. She marches through the door and up to where Hilda and George are standing all dressed up, he with a gold collar button on and she decked out in a veil and all the trimmings. She stands for a second in front of Hilda and she says just one word but that one seems to shrivel and scorch Hilda like a red-hot poker.

"Jezebel!" says Theba, and then turns and walks out to her pony.

After that she retires to the domicile of a lady that she knows and rests there during the night, or weeps herself to sleep, rather. And of course the tale goes out over the Verde and the murmurs of regret for Blue John and of disapproval of Hilda wax louder and louder until she and George are plumb glad to board the stage and tear themselves away from there.

Next day she returns to Fossil Creek, where she finds Pete still lingering, hiding in the cave. But she informs him of events and he's all sobered up by the news. She won't say anything to him, nor receive any comfort, only going, during the daylight hours, up to the upper basin, where she sits a long time gazing out with a stony face across at the cliff where the big jet of water that Blue John has developed comes shooting out of the cliff.

Along toward evening something flashes in the water and spurts out into the boiling hollow below, where it whirls about two or three times and then goes drifting down the stream. And it passes right by Theba's feet. It is Blue John's match box with his message in it, as I don't need to tell you. The millionth chance has been engineered by Providence.

Pete is sunning himself in the fading light down by the old dam reflecting sorrowfully on the way things have turned out and contemplating a return to his iniquitous life in order to deaden his grief when he hears loud utterances of joy and here comes a-running Miss Theba, her hair waving in the breeze and what looks like the makings of several cigarettes fluttering in her hand as she calls to him. He comes loping up and she thrusts these wheat straws at him and dances around him in a furore of impatience while he tries to spell them out and all the while Theba is shouting:

"He's alive! He's alive!"

Finally Pete makes out who's alive and wherefore and then he scratches his head.

"He's alive day before yesterday, but he's got a bullet in his leg and he's apparently been down in that hole in the ground for nigh forty-eight hours without no fodder or nothing. It stands to reason then that you-all better not go to celebrating this reunion until you find out is he still living. Which, even if he is, he's plumb likely to be some unsightly and low by this time."

"Then we must hurry!" shrieks Theba, all stirred up at the thought. "Hurry! Hurry! He'll die if we don't get him out."

"And he'll likely swing if we do," says Pete, who is practical in his mind. That brings Theba up with a turn and she at last begins to think. The upshot of it all is that in two or three hours she and Pete set out toward the Verde, she on her pony and Pete leading one of the work horses with a pack.

They don't go to the Verde, but take a shorter route, cutting across the lower slopes of the Buckhorn at Clear Creek and coming down on Beaver not far from Lem Higgins' ranch, which isn't more than a mile or two from Montezuma's Well. It's nearly daylight when they get here and Lem is up doing some chores, so that they don't have to wake no one. Theba rides up and puts up a tale of having broke down with a wagon up on the Buckhorn and wants to know could she borrow Lem's. Lem don't object any and she goes back to where Pete is concealed and brings up the work horse, which Lem hitches up for her. She borrows a half bale of hay also and undertakes to return it all in a day or two. Then she drives off and rejoins Pete down the road a piece without exciting no suspicion whatever.

They come to the well without any one observing them, since at that time of year

and that early in the morning there isn't much traffic on the roads around Beaver Creek. But to guard against discovery as far as possible they unhitch the horse down at the edge of the well and light a fire as though they are camping there for the night, in case anybody passes and sees them. Then Pete crawls to the edge of the well and looks over.

He don't see anything for some time, but Theba joins him and she edges around until she can get a view under the overhang of the cliff. Then she hollers out with a little catch in her voice:

"There he is!"

Sure enough, there is Blue John half sitting, half lying down on the sand far below them, his hat beside him. They can't see any movement and it looks as if he is dead, but they hustle with ropes and Pete goes down the one length of ladder Blue John has left and then swings down on the end of a reata to the next ledges, putting up the ladders as he reaches each one. It is a ticklish job, but he gets through with it all right and as each ladder is put up, Theba swarms down it.

From the castle down to the bottom the ladders are all in place and they don't lose any time dropping down them. They run over to Blue John and as Theba darts across the sand he looks at her and she hears him muttering.

"Angels," says he, "angels are brunettes!"

The next minute Theba is down beside him with his head in her arms muttering and fussing over him, with the tears running down her cheeks and her voice all broken. Pete is embarrassed a whole lot by these endearments and being a practical hombre he interrupts them to suggest that maybe John's leg could stand a little attention. Theba leaves off petting John, who all this time is muttering and declaiming absently about angels shooting him with bird shot and the two of them set to on John's leg. It isn't in the best of shape but neither is it as bad as one might expect, and they soon get it in as good shape as is possible. Theba has also brought down a can of soup which they've heated over the fire and she feeds this to him gradually until he begins to come out of his delirium by and by. The first they know of this is something he says which would sound as if he was plumb crazy to any one else.

He begins to stare at Theba and finally he remarks:

"Dying isn't so bad, but how did you get here ahead of me?"

"Get where?" asks Theba.

"To heaven," says Blue John contentedly, and adds: "Which I never expects to arrive at that bourne, none whatever, but it seems as if the Lord's more merciful to me than I've got a right to expect of Him. And whoever'd have thought even heaven could be so nice?"

"You're not in heaven," says Theba, blushing. "You're just here—on earth—with me!"

"Well," says Blue John, after a moment's thought. "I don't care. One's as good as another—or a bit better."

To make a long story somewhat shorter, they set to to get Blue John out of that hole as soon as he's revived sufficiently. Pete rigs the ropes together into a long tackle, with a bit of tarpaulin, and reeves it around through the angle iron of the wagon gate, hitching the work horse to the end of it. Then, with Theba climbing the ladders and holding John, who is tucked in the tarp, so that he don't take all the bark off himself swinging against the rock, they haul him up with the horse. It's a ticklish job and he don't escape without being skinned up some, but he grins throughout without any complaints, chiefly because they pause at each stage to let him and Theba rest, and whenever he swings around so his head is in reach of her, she comforts him a whole lot with osculations which he seems to find soothing. Pete is spared all this as he's up above throwing the gad into the work horse, and can't see nothing of it.

It's evening before they start again, with Blue John lying in the wagon bed on the hay, his leg fixed up reasonably comfortable and his strength coming back slowly under the influence of hot soup and warm lips, both of which have effects resembling a tonic. They drive through the dark, skirting around the Verde, and hit the road on the other side without encountering any embarrassing questions. It's a rough drive in the dark, especially over the malpais, but they make it before morning and are able to wait for the light before getting John down into the basin. They can't drive the wagon down there, of course, but they manage to mount him on Pete's horse and fasten him so he can't jolt himself

much and so he comes home to Theba and Fossil Creek.

"Is that all?" asked the forest ranger as the old teamster lit his pipe again with a splinter of pitch pine. "How did Blue John come out with the authorities, I'd like to know."

"Shucks," said the teamster, as though such explanations were redundant and spoiled the artistic quality of his narrative. "Shucks! There wasn't no trouble about that. When a *chiquita* like this Miss Theba Willing stampedes in on the Territorial attorney general, backed by old man Adams, one of the richest men in Arizona, both of them boiling and belligerent, there aren't no two ways for him to duck. To be sure, he endeavors, feebly, to point out that Blue John's activities are invidious to the peace and dignity of the commonwealth, but she downs him right at the start.

" 'How so?' she demands, and the attorney general reminds her:

" 'What about the assault and later the killing of "Rusty Mike?" ' he says.

" 'Self-defense,' says Theba, 'as Mrs. Rayfield and other witnesses will testify.'

" 'How about holding up the stage and robbing a traveler of a ring?'

" 'Produce your proof,' she retorts. 'Which the stage driver says he won't testify a word against him and the drummer he gets the ring from insists that it's a free gift. And Lawyer Short declines to prosecute because he knows mighty well that if it got out how he tries to beat John with a phony coin with two heads on it, he gets laughed plumb out of the Territory. Likewise, you can bet your last chip that Mrs. Rayfield, the only other witness, don't open her yap on this or any other occasion.'

" 'Well,' says the attorney general in desperation, 'he robbed the game at the Montezuma after killing Mr. Sinjin.'

" 'Which he's been voted a bounty for that slaughter,' says Theba, 'and it was likewise in self-defense. As for the robbery, that was done by Pete Bradley, alias Panhandle Pete, and that criminal is repentant and reformed to the extent that he makes free restitution of all his gains. No one who was injured thereby is willing to prosecute Blue John.'

" 'There was talk of his shooting Mose Scott,' says the attorney general, feebly.

" 'But not by Mose nor is any one talking about it in a critical way,' says Theba. 'Which he only does it to save me from having his blood on my hands after the way he treats me.'

" 'I'm a sworn officer of the law,' says the attorney general, plaintively, 'and I have got to do my duty.'

" 'And I'm Blue John's affianced wife,' says Theba, with determination, 'and I likewise have duties calling me. Which if these indictments aren't quashed *poco tiempo,* I'll recall that there's an election due before many moons and that I've got to take the stump and tell the voters how my husband is being persecuted. And if I know anything about Arizona, there'll be mighty small chance of any of the persecutors thereof going to Congress as delegates from *this* commonwealth.'

" 'Well, I'll think it over,' says the attorney general, with a smile.

"And that's all, I reckon, except that somehow they cease to call John Adams 'Blue John' about this time and take to referring to him as 'Happy Jack.'

"Panhandle Pete? Oh, that's another story."

More of Mr. Winter's work will appear in future issues.

VICTORY NOT TO THE SWIFT

I WONDER," said the man in the smoking compartment, "how they happened first to think of those slow-motion movies that are so popular now. You know what I mean—the pictures that show 'Babe' Ruth batting a ball as if he were walking in his sleep."

"That's easy," said his friend. "The inventor got the idea from seeing two Scotchmen in a restaurant struggling for the privilege of paying the check."

The Debt

By Alan Sullivan

Author of "Work for a Real Man," "He Walked Like a Sailor," Etc.

The desert, in a mood of irony, plays a grim practical joke—and an Englishman appreciates it.

THE great bowl of sky was a dull, baking blue, devoid of substance and depth, that lifted mercilessly over a rock-rimmed depression of the desert, and into this basin there seemed to pour all the savage heat of a noonday sun. The air, marvelously clear, was dancing in swimming, transparent layers above sand and ridge, so that the jagged horizon where earth met sky assumed momentarily strange and fantastic outlines. There was nothing green; but yellow, red, orange and ocher were all painted eternally in this vast loneliness. At times a little wandering wind crossed the basin, picking up small corkscrew columns of sand that swayed grotesquely for a few yards and dissolved like wisps of steam. Only in the sky itself was there any life, and this when a vulture, coasting through caves of air on ragged and motionless pinions, turned his bright, unsheathed eye on the desolation beneath.

It fell on an evening, about sundown, that two men, mounted on mules, emerged from the mouth of a ravine that opened into the basin and stood for a moment in silent wonder. One was short, thickset and powerful, with broad sloping shoulders and a bulldog face. The other was taller, more lithe and aquiline, with high cheek bones, dark eyes and a suggestion of the North American Indian in his lean features. Both were battered by long travel and tanned a copper brown. A small kit was slung at either saddle. The short man made a sound deep in his hairy throat.

"Well, Yank, you wanted Hell's Hole. Now what do you make of it?"

The other lowered his left eyebrow, which gave him an oddly saturnine expression. "Much the same as parts of Arizony, with a piece of Death Valley in southern California throwed in."

"Know those parts?"

"Only Arizony. I was minding cattle there when I was drafted. But I seen pictures of Death Valley—same as this. Lose the trail and miss the water hole—and you're done. What's our next move now?"

The other man did not answer at once. Hell's Hole glimmered up at him, masked in gorgeous and swimming tints. It invited, dared, mocked and taunted, while a breath from the void whispered that somewhere in that maze of orange and yellow there waited a fortune beyond all human dreams. Perhaps death waited too—if they missed the water hole. And at that something stirred in his breast.

"We go on," he said grimly. "We can't go back."

They went on, the mules slithering down

long slopes of broken shale; on till the moon rose and cast their ghostly shadows on the baking sand. There was no more talk, every instinct in mule and man being intensely alive, searching for water. In three hours they found, at the foot of a great rock, a tiny pool that held a few gallons. The rock itself was too hot to touch.

The Yank slept that night, but Johnstone lay awake, his mind pitching back to Bideford in Devon, where once, before the war, he had been a small farmer. From the farm he could see Lundy's Island when the weather was clear. He wished dumbly that he could see it now, and the green outlines of coast that led westward toward Clovelly. But on the day of the armistice the Yank had driven all that out of his head with tales of fortune to be had for the taking in New Mexico. So to New Mexico they came. Of late he had begun to wonder if the Yank knew as much about prospecting as he pretended. It was in the back of Johnstone's head that it took a Cornishman to understand rocks.

They went at it next day, after rolling big stones over the mouth of the pool to keep off the mules, working separately, and taking each what direction he would. The basin was perhaps twenty miles in diameter, a vast, irregularly rimmed saucer into which projected rocky peninsulas among rocky islands, the shores of which had been fretted by waves of sand for a million years. Johnstone's eyes were seared and his throat dry before he had been out an hour. The heat jumped at him out of the very ground.

Not far from the pool was a giant cactus, thirty feet high. He kept that in view all day, and once or twice caught the clink of the Yank's hammer, and clinked back. It was too hot to shout. Then he commenced to think about the Yank, and grew distinctly resentful. A man should not pretend to be experienced if he wasn't. The feeling strengthened as he trailed wearily back at sundown. He found his companion in the shadow of the rock reading a month-old paper. Johnstone knew every word in that paper. The other man glanced up inquiringly. Johnstone shook his head. There were no questions. The day's tale was told. When they had eaten the Yank returned to the paper.

"What are you folks going to do about that four billion dollars?" he drawled presently.

"What four billion?" Johnstone knew perfectly.

"That you owe us. Ain't you proposing to pay up?"

Johnstone stared at him.

"Of course we ain't going to press you, considering the circumstances—at least I ain't pressing you for your part of it—but I can't help being just a mite interested, as I reckon to get a bonus when the deal goes through. This paper says I don't get mine unless you pay up."

Johnstone experienced a sensation of wrath as sudden as it was inexcusable. He knew the Yank was what the latter called "stringing him." This had happened innumerable times, and always unexpectedly. To-night it seemed out of place. He recognized the slow drawl, the cynical humor in the lean face, the quizzical light in the gray eyes, and there was nothing new in any of them. But this time the joke seemed to get under his skin. Perhaps it was because for days past the eternal voice of the desert had been speaking to him that this sardonic tone sounded the more provocative. Now he decided that it was too damned provocative. The Yank was a good man, and could fight. That was admitted. But he had seen four months' active service, while Johnstone had put in a shade over four years. He never dwelt on those four years, but he was conscious of them by reason of pictures that flashed back when they were least wanted.

"That's not my business," he said a little jerkily. "There be others to look after it."

"According to this paper they're not straining themselves."

Johnstone frowned. "Happen there's more to it than the paper says."

The Yank folded the creased sheet and laid it carefully in the bottom of his pack sack, for in the wilderness the printed word, be it wisdom or rot, is above price because it recreates an invisible world. Then he glanced amusedly at his partner.

"Say, pilgrim, I'm ready to give you a quit deed right here for your share of it, and about two million other buddies will do the same thing. What about to-morrow? Do we stay here, or get out?"

Johnstone's gaze traveled to a ridge some three miles northward. He had wanted to examine that ridge that day, but the sun

had beat him. There was no particular reason why it should be more inviting than any other part of this blistering territory, but he knew he wanted to get there. Also he wanted to get there alone. This desire grew till it became resolution. More than that he wanted to take his soul away from the Yank for the entire day, and give it a chance. And the debt—he wanted to think about that too. A dozen answers were in his mind already. What a lot there was to be done—and at once; things he could only do for himself. Queer that one should be so suddenly busy in the desert, so much busier than he could remember having been in Devon. Devon! Where was Devon?

"We stay, while the water holds," he said slowly. "I'll work to the north—no use tramping the same ground."

He lay awake again that night, listening to the clink of the mules' feet in the loose rock, with a queer sensation, breathless and not understandable, that all his past life had led up to the next few hours. Perhaps in the great solitudes the mind of man divests itself of the worn garment of custom and becomes responsive to new and yet eternal influences that approach him the more easily because the doors of imagination are all flung open. Johnstone knew nothing of this, but perceived that strange and novel winds were blowing through the corridors of life. The war did not matter now—nor the Yank's talk about that debt—nor the heat that he would shortly endure—nor the dwindling water. It only mattered that he should spend the morrow alone on the torrid surface of that distant ridge. It seemed to have been saved over for him—Bill Johnstone, from nigh Bideford in Devon.

In the east the purple night was turning to orange when he woke, and a flame-colored lizard, six feet from his face, was watching him with diamond eyes. The desert, like a hollow, throbbing drum, gave out a myriad of tiny sounds that blended into the singing monotone men call silence. The Yank stretched his arms over his head, elongated his lean body in a yawn and sat up. Then he looked at the water hole.

"If we don't make a strike to-day, we quit. Gimme a match."

They ate deliberately, as do men who eat for a purpose, a shred of bacon, a new-made bannock molded in the mouth of the flour bag and baked beside a sagebrush fire, washing it down with drafts of strong black coffee. Johnstone used to make coffee a teaspoonful to a cup, but the Yank used four, saving the grounds to fatten the evening brew. The latter rolled a cigarette against his thigh, an Arizony trick that baffled the Britisher. Presently Johnstone got up, hooked a prospecting hammer into his belt and moved off. Fifty yards away he gave a short laugh.

"That four billion dollars," he said over his shoulder; "it doesn't include the interest we haven't paid." Then he rounded a boulder and disappeared.

The Yank blinked. He wanted to laugh, but something choked it. He never pretended to understand Johnny Bull, but had learned to depend on him—especially in a corner. "Interest!" he said half aloud. "Oh, hell!" He got his own tools together, stared thoughtfully at the water hole and struck westward.

In his turn the desert engulfed him, luring him with painted fingers along a trail where once the pterodactyl had pushed its scaly course. Pterodactyl and man were all one to the desert, merely marking succeeding seconds in the march of time. Once he got sight of Johnstone clambering over high ground a mile away. He looked like the only survivor in a ruined world. "Interest!" said the Yank again. "By the great horned spoon—interest!"

Johnstone, for his part, was thinking about something quite different. Approaching the ridge, he knew with a sort of dry-lipped certainly that he had seen this place before. In what life he had seen it was another matter. It may be that some horny-footed ancestor of his once followed the pterodactyl here, or that he had explored the ridge in the shadow of a dream. Anyway, it was familiar. So, as he progressed, his consciousness moved on a hundred yards ahead—and there were no surprises. He was going straight to the thing he had dreamed of for months past. There was no question of its existence, the only point being how big it was. He would take his time. There was no hurry. At last he climbed the ridge and stood on its saw-toothed summit.

Looking down into a little ravine on the north side he saw what appeared to be a wide, irregular ribbon running east and west. From edge to edge it was thirty feet. Its thousand-foot length dipped into

the sand at either end. In color it was a brownish-yellow. Johnstone licked his lips, then sat down abruptly. The strength had gone out of his knees. Sitting there, he threw stones at the thing. No, there was no hurry. He began to wonder just how long it had waited there to be found like this. Presently he moved on, weakly, like a man out of a sick bed.

He stepped on the lode, marveling at his own daring, and picked up a loose fragment. Heavy, yes, as it ought to be. All through it were tiny blocks and cubes of yellow, some of them seeming frozen together in oddly shaped lumps. From side to side it was the same, and for its entire length. Had there been only scattered yellow particles here and there he would have shouted. But this amazing display silenced him. He had not dreamed there was so much gold in the world. It was not a mine, but a prodigious storehouse of wealth, and to enrich it nature must have rifled her mountains of their treasure. Then he sat on the lode, running his palm over its sharp surface and talking to it as he would to a child. Came a confusion of whispers from the outer world of what he could now do if he wanted to. At this he smiled. He could do anything.

The sun smote on him, but he did not move, though there grew a dull pain in the back of his head. It was mid-afternoon before he reclimbed the ridge, stumbling a little as he walked. The distance from his eyes to the ground seemed to be constantly changing, and he remembered feeling like this the last time he was drunk. But he was not drunk now. Or was he? Halfway to camp he emptied his prospecting sack of all the samples except the yellowest and heaviest one, and swayed on with Hell's Hole dancing around him. He was king of Hell's Hole now. He could buy the whole coast of Devon from Appledore to Clovelly. And he would! Then, within a stone's throw of the water hole, he thought of the debt—and interest.

He lurched into camp, nearly falling over the Yank, who looked at him dully. A third man, seeing that look, would have called it resentful, but Johnstone only stood, still swaying, and felt in his sack, his eyes mysteriously bright, his dry lips twitching.

"Struck anything?" said the Yank briefly.

"I found a mint. See this, lad."

He dropped the one remaining sample into a calloused hand, his soul leaping within him as the gray eyes rounded and sharpened. Then the blood rushed to the Yank's face and as suddenly deserted it. The gaze of the two met and crossed like sharp swords, as though each demanded that the other give voice to unspeakable things.

"How much of this is there, and where?" The question came in a whisper.

Johnstone was not sure now whether there were two Yanks in camp or three. Yes. it was three. So he spoke to the middle one.

"Thirty feet wide and a thousand long—just on the other side of the ridge. Lad, lad, what do you make of it?"

"You mean thirty inches." It was still a whisper.

Johnstone's anger flamed up. The man was either a fool, or mocked him. The pain in the back of his head got worse.

"We don't take inches for feet in Devon. It's five times the span of my arms. I measured it on my face to make sure. What's it worth?" He barked this out defiantly, feeling that as a multimillionaire he was entitled to a certain respect.

"I don't know. Never heard of nothing like it before. Thirty feet! Oh, God!"

"Is it worth a million?" Johnstone had passed beyond thinking of measurements and wanted to get down to figures.

The Yank balanced the sample with a sort of unconscious reverence. "As many darned millions as you like."

"A hundred of 'em?"

"Yes, and more. The stuff's half gold. Twenty dollars an ounce, and you can ship it like cement. Shut up, now, and let me think."

Johnstone shook his head rapidly, trying to clear his eyes, across which little red specks were dancing. Then figures dangled in front of him on an invisible screen. These fell into line like troops on parade.

"Look here," he said jerkily. "Every bloomin' Britisher owes your damned country a hundred dollars, as I make it, and I'm going to pay for my battalion. Hanged if I don't pay for the whole First Army. I can afford it—with interest, too. And the next time you meet one of our lot you won't have so much to say about that bonus we did you out of." He hesitated. "Bobonus," he repeated thickly. "Give me

some—some water." Then he pitched forward on his face.

He came to himself with the Yank bending over him. A whisper drifted into his brain.

"There isn't any water, old son. You didn't give me a chance to tell you before."

Johnstone stared. His brain was not very clear, but there were two things in it, gold and water, both precious, and one of them was threatened. He could not make out which.

"The mules have moseyed too, pilgrim. I guess they missed the smell of the pool, and quit. Reckon we'll have to hoof it back to Sharp's." Now, Sharp was a sheepman whose ranch was just forty miles south, and there was no water between there and Hell's Hole.

Johnstone sat up, which hurt his head. "When?" he grunted.

"Right now. We travel by night, when it's cooler. Gimme that sample. We shed the rest of the outfit till the return trip."

They set out, the Yank in the lead. Johnstone's head felt like a balloon. Also he was very thirsty. When a man is famished he does not dwell on the Olympian meals of which he will partake later on. He may think of those he has had, but not of those to come. When, however, the tissues of his body seem like dry straw, his imagination wallows in deep green pools. He hears the mellow thunder of far cascades, pictures their drifting mist on his cheek, and catches the tinkling ripple of hidden streams that slide laughing to the sea.

So it was with Bill Johnstone of Bideford in Devon. The pictures came, not all at once, but slowly and with maddening persistency. Also there was a definite affront in being worth a hundred million and yet not able to have a drink. His lips were cracked, his tongue like a sun-baked root and the balloon at the back of his head was nigh bursting. Hell's Hole crawled past him, rock and sand, sand and rock, with scattered giant cacti; spiney, moonstruck sentinels stiff by the trail that led to a secret treasure house. His treasure house!

Then something twanged in his brain. The Yank and he were partners. Half of the lode was the Yank's. But the latter had not spoken of this. Damn decent of him. Johnstone liked him for that.

"I say," he rasped, "of course we go equal shares on this."

The other man glanced back and nodded. "Yep. Don't talk—makes your mouth dry."

The sand pulled so at Johnstone's feet that instead of lifting them clear he began to drag them. This gave him a pain in his thighs. And he wanted to talk. Looking at the Yank's long, sloping shoulders, it struck him that the latter was playing in luck to be handed fifty million for doing nothing at all. A man's word was his bond, especially down Bideford way, but the Yank struck it rich when he was drafted —and just as the row was about over, at that.

There is an hour in the desert just before dawn when a gray-green streak infringes softly on the solid purple bowl of the sky, In the resultant half light all things are ghostly, and dipped in a deeper silence than ever in order that mountains may talk and the empty places of the earth find speech. Johnstone must have guessed at something of this, for it seemed that things were talking all around him, but when he tried to reply and tell them about the lode all he got was a curt word from the Yank, who presently dropped back and walked close beside him. When the gray-green streak was ribbed with scarlet they lay down in the lee of a great rock on the southern rim of Hell's Hole.

The sun-struck man babbled all through the day of the debt he would shortly make good, of the fountain he would build in Bideford Park, a fresh-water fountain where any one could get a drink, and of various happenings, both fine and ugly, not unconnected with the First Army. The Yank sat beside him, interjecting periodical and comforting words in a slow, reassuring drawl that somehow filtered into the wandering brain when they were most needed. Johnstone never knew that every two hours or so he was moved a few yards, so that when the merciless sun went down there was left at the base of the rock a semicircular furrow which might have been made by a gigantic and slothful lizard.

Thus began the second night and the second half of the dry trail to Sharp's. Of the two, the Yank suffered most, for he knew he was suffering. No benison of madness clouded his reason, no fantastic imagery obliterated the stark peril of this hour.

He dipped into his very soul for strength to go on, turning to that secret source of fortitude which in crucial moments determines whether a man be indeed a man. When there was a chance of being understood, he drew pictures of what they would do, each with their fifty million. When Johnstone turned back to get the lode and bring it out with him, the Yank pretended to be a German soldier and, running southward, squeezed out a staggering, shouting, hundred-yard advance toward life and water.

He began to experience a sort of savage joy in doing these things, but it was not till well through the second night that he understood why this should be so. Then he knew that it was because his partner was a Britisher and had put in four years in another Hell's Hole against his own four months. Johnstone had never mentioned this, and he liked him for that. So if he could pull Johnstone through now it would help to even the score. He didn't think about the fifty million. That would take care of itself. The thing was to lure his crazed companion on till he could see the line of black alders that marked the trampled water hole a mile on this side of Sharp's ranch.

He won through an hour before dawn, the end being heralded by the softened and distant bleating of a multitude of invisible sheep.

He had never thought very much about Christ, but now he would not have been astonished to discern somewhere among those slow-footed flocks a Form, tall, grave and divinely compassionate. The thought gave him new strength, and he hoisted his staggering partner on his back, and, bent like Christopher with an immortal burden, summoned his last remaining powers. The gray-green streak was again painted on the horizon when he scooped up a palmful of muddy water and dashed it in Johnstone's face.

Twenty-four hours later there was a clatter of hoofs outside the ranch house, and four men, well mounted and followed by six pack mules, came up. They formed a section of a geological survey sent by Washington to determine what prospect of mineral value was afforded by this wilderness of ill repute. Johnstone, who was nearly himself again, heard a scrap of conversation between the chief, a short, brown-bearded man, and one of his assistants.

"Well," said the former briskly, "we'll stay here to-night, and strike east in the morning toward that quartzite intrusion. It may be more interesting."

"Is it anything like Hell's Hole?" asked the younger man.

The chief shook his head. "One never knows till one gets there, but it can't be more barren. Pity there's no market hereabout for pyrites."

"You're thinking of what we saw yesterday?"

The bearded man nodded. Then fell a little silence during which Johnstone's heart beat like a trip hammer. What was it they saw yesterday? He wanted to wake the Yank, who was sleeping in the shade a hundred yards away, but was afraid of missing something. It was the business of these men to know what they talked about. The assistant gave a little laugh.

"After we left that thirty-foot dike," he said thoughtfully, "my mind got to working on the effect that would be produced supposing it were discovered by a prospector who could not distinguish between fool's gold and the real thing. I imagine it might drive him crazy."

The chief already busy over his notes, did not answer. Johnstone sat quite rigid, and unable to move. "Strewth!" he whispered to himself. And again his lips moved: "Strewth!"

Moments later he seemed to come out of a trance which had obliterated all consciousness except that instead of being worth fifty millions his total assets were something less than fifty dollars. He glared at the chief and suddenly hated him with a deep, venomous antipathy. Who was he to go about blasting honest hopes like this? Simultaneously the latter thrust his notebook into a pocket, glanced at the battered figure with the strangely hot eyes, and tossed over a paper.

"Here's the news, if you want it."

Johnstone took it automatically. He didn't want any more news. The chief strolled off, and silence descended again. Johnstone, still numb, shook his head like a dog and his gaze wandered to the front page. He blinked at this; then, fingers stiffening, leaned forward, staring at the first article. The paper was only two weeks old:

SETTLEMENT OF BRITISH DEBT TO THIS COUNTRY.

AMICABLE ARRANGEMENT OF IMPORTANT QUESTION.

Washington Satisfied, and British Reputation for Honorable Financial Dealing Upheld.

He read slowly, carefully, and with absorbed attention, putting away point after point in his retentive brain. Finally he nodded.

"Bit of all right, those chaps at home," he said to himself. "And now I don't owe any blinking Yank a damned farthing. But we're both out fifty million just the same. Better tell him, and have done with it."

He walked over to where his Yank lay asleep, and looked down. There was something gentle and almost tender in the lean, brown face. The sun-cracked lips were moving, and Johnstone caught snatches of dreams that all centered on a thirty-foot lode and what would shortly follow. He was smiling grimly at this, when it came to him that the kindest thing to do was to let his partner and savior glory a little longer in his fortune, though it was but a phantom. So, feeling queerly tired himself, he lay down in the comforting shade a few feet away, and instantly grew very drowsy. Before he dropped off he put the paper within a few inches of the Yank's slack fingers, and, raising himself on his elbow, took a long stare at the blistering horizon.

"Strewth!" he said under his breath. "Strewth!"

More of Mr. Sullivan's work will appear in future issues.

MAKE THE LICK GOOD.

One of the favorite maxims of Julius Rosenwald, the great Chicago merchant, is: "This thing of striking while the iron is hot is all right—if you're sure your judgment's cool."

SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

"The dickens about this law of supply and demand," said Litt Mallory, the Virginia philosopher, "is that the fellow with the supply does the demanding."

FRANK CONFESSION.

Nine times out of ten the man who says the only way to get rich in business is to cheat, would like to.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC.

If the man in the street suffers from many more big strikes, he will be tempted to believe that labor and capital are as cruel and crooked as they say they are.

A TIP TO MEDIUMS.

Spiritualistic mediums would have a larger following if they could tell a man how to raise his pay instead of his dead.

THE UNFAILING TEST.

The honeymoon is over when the husband doesn't fear that his wife's love is growing cold but does fear that his soup is.

VIOLATING EQUAL RIGHTS.

"Funny," remarked Litt Mallory, the Virginia philosopher, "how many men who can't afford a silk hat have wives who never wear cotton stockings."

Talks With Men

By Martin Davison

HERE is an interesting letter from one whom I will call E. C. C.

"You made recently a statement which hits home and is the direct cause of this letter," he writes. " 'Bullheaded stubbornness,' you say, 'has ruined many a man and the cleverest player is the one who knows when to quit.'

"I realize the fact now and will show you that I am as bullheaded as any one and it has almost ruined me. My problem is very complicated, or rather my problems are many and so interwoven that each solution will have a bearing on the others, hence they must be solved coöperatively if possible. The story is long and I will omit details. I am thirty-eight and an only child, parents still living. I was raised in a small town where my father operated a sawmill and tile factory, owned his own home and eleven acres of land which he used to furnish meat, milk and butter for his home. I was badly spoiled as most only children are. Both parents had considerable musical talent which I inherited to a degree and my schooling was directed to the end of making me a musician.

"At the age of twenty-two I met a young lady in Indianapolis where I was attending school and fell in love. She was doing clerical work at the time and was more abused than spoiled at home. We could not get married and continue school because of financial conditions, so I quit school and went to work in father's drain-tile factory, dropping music as a profession—a glaring mistake as we had very little to begin on and went to live with my father and mother. Very few mothers and daughters-in-law get along and this is no exception. Father sold his factory and bought a retail store in another town in the Middle West. We operated this grocery store successfully for a number of years, we had two children—boys—and were doing well when we made mistake number two. We all developed an itch for farm life in the South and fooled ourselves and let others do so, trading in the store, our homes,

which we had almost paid for, and sinking a legacy of my mother's in farm land. Father and mother had one hundred and sixty acres, improved, my wife and I, sixty-five acres with no improvements. We had been there a very short time when we became convinced that we had made a mistake and we moved back to the Middle West and bought a large store, mortgaging our places for three thousand and going in debt for the balance, fifty-eight hundred. Then the slump in groceries began and continued. I could not obtain a house for my family and for several weeks lived in two back rooms, which was unsatisfactory to my wife and myself and so we decided to go back to another town and buy a smaller store there. Our credit was so good at that time that we took over this store by assuming notes at the bank and giving notes to partly pay for the balance. Business became worse however, and I saw that things were going to smash, and so I proposed, and my wife accepted the proposition, that she and the boys pay a visit to her parents, who had moved to Los Angeles, and when the smash came I could follow her. She left in December, 1921. We had not taken my parents into our confidence and this was mistake number three.

"Now troubles multiply. A man from my town—I call him Joe—visited California. Incidentally he visited my wife, took her out to shows, dinner, et cetera. She made no mention of this in her letters to me. Later, when Joe came back, he talked to his intimates about it and in a roundabout way it came to my ears.

"I am of a jealous disposition and it angered me on account of the character and reputation of the man. I did not allow the lady to know this, but when I asked her if she had seen Joe she ignored the question.

"Then I lost sense and control and said some harsh, unkind, ungentlemanly things. Our correspondence was bitter from that time onward. The boys became dissatisfied and made the trip East alone and we all lived with my parents. Then my wife had a sick spell, and wired me for money to come back on. I wired her fifty dollars—all I had. I received thirteen telegrams all C. O. D. urging me to come out as she was to be operated on. On top of this my wife's brother told me that he had been in Los Angeles and she had been going around with other men. I generally got the idea that she had been going at a rather fast pace—and the information was given me by her brother.

"On account of the boys we patched up our difficulty and started housekeeping again in the Middle West. There had been too much gossip in town and my wife decided that she could not live there any longer. I agreed to close out and go to California with her, but she became impatient and in a short time left me, taking the boys with her.

"Some time later, without the faintest warning, I received from her a registered letter saying that all was over between us. I went to California and after a search found her. I was looking for an apartment when she quit me cold and sued for divorce. It was arranged that I was to pay her thirty dollars a month for the boys and that she was to have the care of them. I had no money to fight the case. She would not consent to a reconciliation. On the suggestion of her attorney and her promise to explain my straitened circumstances I did not appear in court. The judge gave her sixty a month. I am working for twenty-five a week, my expenses are seventeen. She has called me up before the prosecuting attorney and raked me over the hot sands. What am I to do? I am convinced from observation that my wife is trying to use me. She says that there never has been any other man, but I am constrained by circumstances to doubt her word. The way California laws are she could make a lot of trouble for me on account of short payments. If I left this State she would have a hard time collecting from me.

"The sixty-five acres in the South is held in a joint deed and has a note on it for one thousand coming due next May. The land cost us six thousand.

"How would you handle this? My wife seems absolutely done with me. My father and I are going through bankruptcy.

"Here is where your quotation comes in. By my bullheaded stubbornness I

held on and lost three years' work, a wife and boys. Morally I am absolutely square and have always been so and have always tried to live by the Golden Rule. I intend to try hard and to pay back every cent if I can. I love Mrs. E. C. C. very much. I am a one-woman man and want a reconciliation and to have a home for my family. I also must take care of my parents. I like California and want to live there."

THE condition of E. C. C.'s affairs is such that it cannot be very much worse and must soon change for the better. He is fortunate in knowing where he made his mistakes—and he is right in placing his finger on the mistakes. It is almost invariably a mistake for a mature man, bred in one business, to invest capital in another. And if there is any business that a man should be brought up to to make a success it is farming. It cannot be learned overnight and it is one of the hardest occupations in the world to make money at.

E. C. C. married too young in the first place. It was folly for him to bring his bride to live with his parents—and it is foolish now for him to dream of a reconciliation. Let him get his boys if he can and support them, but in the circumstances the suggestion of a reconciliation should come from the lady. Fortune-hunting foreigners who succeed in marrying American heiresses have a sneer for the simple American male who lets a woman make an easy mark out of him. Whatever the qualities of Mrs. E. C. C. it is evident that she does not care enough for him to be happy with him. The idea of "winning" a woman by waiting or any other way is a poor one. If a woman does not naturally like a man he is much better off away from her.

E. C. C. should get out of California and back into the grocery business which he knows and at which he can make money. Also he should sell his farm land in the South and if he can raise enough capital try to settle in full with his wife for a lump sum. Then he should go to work to support his boys. He is young yet and if he is freed from care and anxiety he can get ahead. In his case it would seem that part of the time the boys should be with him and part of the time at a good school.

I print his letter to show the young men who are bothered by an appetite for cigarettes or the fact that the boss won't promote them fast enough what real trouble is like. Just a few mistakes and the wrong woman taken together may put a good man down. They can't keep him there, though.

Cougar Code

By Kenneth Gilbert

Author of "Blue, of the Arctic," "The Saga of Silver King," Etc.

A story of wilderness life and adventure.

DAWN was sunless, merely a lightening of the hills and a stronger glow in the east, for the Olympics were spotted with May forest fires, and the smoke, which for days had drawn an opaque screen across the sky, seemed thicker. In the rocky den among rankly growing young firs which crept halfway up the mightiest steep—a peak whose summit was still frosted with snow—Mistik, the she-cougar, blinked her topaz-jade eyes, uncurled her lanky length, and stood up. Three sightless kittens, less than two weeks old, thus abruptly deprived of warm nourishment, mewed fretfully and wandered about on shaking legs, trying to find her. She nosed them with rough affection, bestowed a loving lick of her filelike tongue on her favorite—the first-born male; biggest of the trio—then padded on noiseless feet to the mouth of the den, where she stood for a moment regarding the smoke-filled valley.

She was hungry, yet she had returned only an hour before from hunting; her range was decidedly circumscribed since the arrival of the kits. Although she had fed full on rabbits that night—she dare not leave the cave long enough to stalk bigger game—such was the drain on her vitality in nursing this, her first litter, that the weak diet of cottontails was not enough to keep up the fires of her nervous energy. She needed stronger meat, juicy deer flesh, and she was minded to get it.

Like a tawny ghost she ran up a tall stub just outside the cave, as though hoping to get above the low-lying smoke and spy out the land. There was no wind, and the scent molecules were deadened by the acrid taint of burning wood. Moreover, save for a few hundred yards, it was impossible to see in any direction. Yet she turned her head sharply as from the slope above there came the rattle of a stone. In that instant she underwent a change.

She crouched on a dead limb, ears flattened close to skull, her four great fighting fangs bared in a snarl bubbling in her throat; ocher-and-green eyes drawn to slits. Her long, rounded tail twitched with nervous tension. Her courage exalted by mother love that would carry her straight into the face of any hazard, Mistik was now a dangerous beast, an unreasoning she-devil blind to all but the seeming fact that an enemy

menaced her young. Unaware of the cougar, the forest ranger came down the mountain, setting his course by the dead stub looming above the small firs.

He was taking a short cut to see if a slashing fire of the day before had crept into green timber at the headwaters of the Tama-Tama. He was unarmed, save for an ax, and he was in a hurry, for from the mountain he had seen an advancing wall of smoke and flame at the head of the valley, and it would be nip and tuck for him to reach the higher ground beyond before the blaze blocked his path. The driest and hottest spring in years had made a death trap of the region, and but one thing was needed to turn it into a roaring furnace—a south wind. On the ground the fire crept slowly enough, but once it took to the treetops, as it would under a strong breeze, and the red death would be in the saddle for a mad race that only a drenching rain could halt, before exhaustion came at the clearings which marked the settlements. He had seen that the distant plumes of smoke which told of fire in the hollow shells of long-dead trees, had gently turned north. The south wind was coming.

He reached the rocks among the young firs and paused a moment as he drew his sleeve across his sweat-covered forehead. His practiced woodsman's eye took in the *used* look of the ground—the trodden earth—and then he saw the dark mouth of the cave, with a few hairs of tawny down clinging to a wirelike clump of brush growing close to the entrance. He felt a curious little tingling sensation along his spine, as realization came that he had stumbled upon one of nature's most closely guarded secrets. Instinctively, then, he glanced up at the stub looming over him—and saw the blazing eyes of Mistik.

The man stiffened. He stood very still, so still that at once there came to his ears a rapid *tick-tick, tick-tick,* which he knew was the escapement of his watch. The ax rested on his shoulder, but it would be a weak weapon in the face of a hundred and fifty pounds of devilish fury should the cat leap. He knew perfectly well that the she-cougar had little ones in the cave, that she feared he had come there to kill them, and that it needed only the overt winking of an eyelash to launch her from the limb.

There was something fascinating in that awful, malevolent glare of her eyes, which held his own as though with a hypnotic stare. The man felt that, for the first time in many meetings with denizens of these wilds, he was looking into the orbs of death.

Very cautiously he put his right foot behind him, and took a step backward. A shiver passed over the muscles which lay bunched on the cat's foreshoulders. He stood very still once more.

Another step; and then, almost in panic, he whirled and ran. When he stopped he was a good two hundred yards down the slope. He peered anxiously through the trees, but nothing was following him.

"Probably scared worse than I was," he decided. "But she certainly looked as if she meant business."

Within the cave Mistik examined her babies, but they were unharmed, although hungry as usual. She slipped outside to sniff once more at the tracks of the man, and at the hated scent the hairs along her spine rose and she whined uneasily. Nothing could have assured her at that moment that her little ones had not had a very narrow escape.

In any event the location of the cave was known to Man; therefore it was an unsafe place for her youngsters. They must be moved to a more remote place, and at once.

Inside once more, the matter of selecting which kit would be carried first to the new place of safety gave Mistik no thought. It was the big male, of course—the first-born. Although the three kittens were astonishingly small to be offspring of such a large animal as Mistik, the first-born weighed fully a pound more than either of his sisters, and gave promise of some day being a king of his kind. An urge deeper than Mistik could have understood prompted her to pick him as the first to be saved—the working of a natural eugenic law whose object is ever advancement of race. Size and strength count for much among the wild kindred, and the first-born, by his sturdy build, promised well for the development of his clan.

Gently though firmly she seized him by the loose skin of his neck, and he dangled limply, without a complaint. Down the slope and through the trees she went, pausing at the end of half a mile to allow him to rest.

Her objective was another wooded gully some three miles distant, a place she knew

well, and where her family would be safe. There were rock crannies where the kittens could be hidden; likewise, in the immediate vicinity there would be more game. Mistik kept a fairly steady gait, stopping only at intervals to relax the strain on the youngster's neck. At last she topped the rise beyond which was the gully she had been seeking.

A fierce, crackling sound came to her ears, and she went on for a closer view. The place was ablaze. The south wind had come and was sweeping the flames swiftly before it.

Mistik turned aside, and followed along the ridge for nearly a mile, but the situation was the same. A wall of fire whose wings spread on either side of her as far as she could see, was pushing on steadily.

The cougar mother was in a quandary. The nearest spot that now seemed to offer possibilities for a new home, this gully being out of the question, was miles distant. If she carried her first-born there, it would necessitate long trips back to the cave to bring the others, one at a time, and in the meantime he would be left alone. Yet there seemed no way out of it.

She quickened her pace, and the laps between rests for the kit were longer. At last he complained, and she stopped and smoothed down his fur with her tongue, and then fed him. When he was quiet once more she went on, uneasy with the thought that the kits back in the cave had already been left unguarded for some time.

But an hour more of her journey remained now, and she paused in indecision as the roof of a farmhouse showed through the haze-filled trees. She knew well the man who lived there, having secretly observed him many times during the winter, when incessant hunger thinned her and drove her nearer to the settlements. She knew that he kept a pair of hounds, blue-and-yellow brutes with which he hunted her lesser cousins, the bobcats and lynxes, but always her craft had managed to keep the dogs off her own trail. They had hunted her, to be sure, but by swimming rivers, climbing sheer precipices that seemingly would have balked a mountain goat, she had escaped them.

Now, however——

The south wind was blowing stronger, and incautiously she took almost a bee line for her destination, a route that led her perilously close to the farmhouse and outbuildings, but she was restless to cache the kit in the new home, and hurry back to the cave. She passed within a hundred yards of the barn, now trotting rapidly, now loping, covering ground at a swift pace, although the kitten dangling from her jaws slowed her. Across an open space she slunk, and then the woods swallowed her. Yet she had not gone far into the screening brush when there came to her ears a dread sound, one that set her heart thumping with savage fear.

It was a bell-like note and the peal of it was echoed from somewhere near the farmhouse. The yellow hound, prowling across the pasture, had seen Mistik, and had taken her track. His joyous song of the chase was caught up by his fellow, a great blue hound with flapping ears, sunken eyes, and the long, deep nose which bespeaks the trailer.

Mistik whirled, snarling in sudden fear, not for herself so much as for the kit which encumbered her. Alone, there was an even chance that she could have outwitted the pair, but now the risk was increased tenfold. She heard a door bang, and a man's voice, and in that instant she collected her wits. Stilling her futile outburst of rage she wheeled and went through the smoky forest aisles with long, lithe bounds, for she guessed that the man was following the dogs.

She did not know that wild cats had repeatedly raided his chicken pen, and that he had sworn an undying feud against the feline kindred. Left to herself, Mistik was harmless to humans; deep within the wilds she carried out the work nature intended for her, yet the hunting cry of his dogs meant but one thing to the man—that the hounds had jumped the animal which had been killing off his hens. As he ran he jammed cartridges into the magazine of a stubby carbine.

Swift though Mistik was, she was no match in speed for the dogs while she carried the kitten. Yet before she would have dropped him she would have died a hundred deaths. The hounds ran easily, for the scent was breast high, one that a blind puppy could have followed.

Once she tried the foolish experiment of doubling, but the trick failed and cost her valuable time. The dogs overran her track, struck it again by turning at right angles,

and thereafter straightened out in deadly fashion her devious twistings.

She was tiring now, for like all cats she was short winded. A tremendous sprinter, she could not keep up for long that tireless lope which is all in a day's work to a trailing hound.

The brush began to thin, and the trees, although larger, became spaced more park-like. If only she could strike a stream she might throw the hounds off her track, but there was no stream. Moreover, the dogs were in plain sight of her now, and they broke into clamorous triumph. Heartsick, breath whistling between her teeth, yet determinedly gripping the kitten who, all through this ordeal, had not whimpered, Mistik made her last desperate play—she took to a tree. It was merely a respite before the end, for she sensed that the man was coming, and the man personified death.

The note of the dogs changed; it became more excited, more triumphant, as though they urged their master to hurry. They pranced around the tree, tonguing joyously, impatient for the moment when they could rend her. As the minutes passed, Mistik lay crouched in a crotch of limbs twenty feet up, kitten held firmly, and glared hatred of these beasts who had hunted her down. She feared them, yet there beat in her breast a fighting heart unsurpassed—that of a cornered mother, fighting for her young.

From far off there came a shout, and the clamor of the dogs broke out anew, as the great moment neared. The master was coming!

At that moment, too, something whispered to Mistik that tragedy had come to the little ones she had left behind. That mysterious, telepathic bond which at times spans distance faster than light, is never stronger than between adoring mother and offspring, and Mistik loved her little ones as she loved nothing else in this world. Only she knew of the terrible danger that threatened them. Nor was it, strangely enough, the forest ranger who had found the cave, although he was a menace, she felt. No bear would go near the cavern; no prowling wild cat or lynx would approach the spot, knowing that it was a cougar's den. As for the lesser predatory animals, they feared her as they feared death itself. Yet there rang in her brain the thought that her long absence had brought about the thing she wished most to avoid.

Now, she, too, would die as swiftly as they had undoubtedly died; yet no more gruesomely. She settled herself on the limb, and stared at the raging hounds below. In her poise of calm silence, of contemptuous indifference of the end they would mete out to her, of resignation to the fate which she could not avoid, the cougar mother seemed suddenly of an exalted order, greater than the dogs who voiced their lust for her blood.

She turned to watch the man. He was nearer, and hurrying. She guessed that he would not approach too near. Presently he would stop, and the fire-spurting stick which he carried would speak its message of death. As if words failed them in this moment of anticipation, the dogs fell silent, and squatted on haunches, eying her.

She lifted her head. The man had stopped, and was calling to the dogs, who, however, having treed their first cougar, were not minded to hear. Now the man had dropped to one knee, and raised the gun. Below her the dogs, tensed by her sudden movement, closed their jaws on lolling tongues, and stared shrewdly. Out along the limb she ran, and the hounds set themselves as her purpose became clear. She was going to jump!

Something *zoomed* like an angered hornet, and she felt a burning pain in the skin across her back, just as the clapping report of the rifle came to her ears. For a second she forgot herself, and snarled defiance; then once more calculated the distance to the ground with a single glance.

The dogs seemed to read her mind—they *knew* where she would land—and they half crouched, ready to jump back and in, the instant she struck.

She took off; a wide, arrowy leap. The blue hound's muscles knotted; he would seize her first. But a curious thing happened. In mid-air she twisted, and fell short. The next instant the blue hound went sprawling, raked from shoulder to flank by one stroke of her right paw.

But the second dog hurled himself at her, as the first one regained his feet. Courageous enough, the dogs were proving the folly of the man who had shot at a treed cougar without first tying up his pack. No half dozen dogs can kill a full-grown cougar

on the ground, but Mistik was hampered by the kitten. She could not use her fighting fangs; she must rely solely upon the death-dealing claws, and always she kept the kitten above the fray.

There was a flashing, writhing movement, and then she seemed to be standing on their backs. A duet of shrill yelps, and the hounds were flung apart, one not to rise again, while the other limped, whining. He was beaten thoroughly. While bullets sang about her to the accompaniment of curses, Mistik raced for cover, running low but swiftly. The thickets swallowed her.

An hour later she halted, somewhat bewildered. The rock crannies where she had hoped to find a new cave were barred by a far-flung line of fire. She had gone on, however, turning more and more to the left, until she discovered that she was approaching another blazing bulwark. Retreat she dare not, for somewhere back there was the man. Vowing vengeance, he was still trailing her with the one hound that was able to walk. Yet he was compelled to give up the idea before he had gone far. Ahead of him the woods were blazing, fanned by the south wind. It was one thing to hunt down the cougar mother, and quite another to be trapped in a forest fire. He turned back, hoping that the fire would get her.

So far it had not. Her course was narrowed down to a strip of unburned woods, and like the inexorable jaws of a vise this gap was closing. She knew that not far distant was a lake, and if she could reach it, she might yet save herself. Filled with a greater fear than she had known when facing the dogs—that roaring crackle of blazing trees on either side was unnerving—she sped on.

Ahead of her the fire line closed, almost at the shore of the lake. Closed behind. She was trapped.

The kitten mewed plaintively, and she put it down, licking it solicitously. Then resolutely she caught him up once more, determined to take the longest chance she had ever taken. One wild dash for the lake!

Straight into the flames she bounded, blind in her fear. Blazing spears stabbed at her, red-hot embers scorched her pads, smoke choked her. Hardly daring to open her eyes, she ran by intuition, miraculously dodging trees in her path. Suddenly the ground fell away, and with a gurgling splash she went under. She had won through!

Coming to the surface instantly, and holding the kitten above water, she struck out strongly for a dark blot that showed through the pall of smoke. She knew that it was an island, and that strange influence which sometimes gives the lie to the assertion that animals do not reason, came to her aid—the water-surrounded bit of land meant safety. Cat though she was, and supposedly water hating, she nevertheless swam with a steady, powerful stroke.

It was not far, and presently she was dragging her lanky length through the willows that fringed the shore. Safe, and a hard-won respite. Once the fire had burned itself out, she would find another cave, where the first-born male could be reared to fulfill his destiny as nature had intended.

From a low-lying limb above her head came a frightened snarl, and she looked up to see a wild cat, his fur still wet from the swim, regarding her fearfully. A pair of raccoons hastily shuffled out of her way, while from beneath a clump of brush a lean coyote stared at her with misgiving. But although she could have slain all of them with ease, for the present she elected to declare a truce. Perhaps her harrowing experiences of the last two hours had dulled the edge of her hunger. She was concerned more for the safety of her kitten than with seeking prey.

Then she stiffened, as her twitching nostrils detected the presence of another animal, screened in the brush, and at the scent the hairs along her back rose; her ears laid back, and from her throat came a muffled, purring growl. At that instant the brush parted, and there stood another cougar, slightly larger than Mistik.

Here was the mate of Mistik, father of the first-born kit which dangled patiently from its mother's jaws.

A strange meeting, and one that should have been joyous, yet the air seemed to become charged with vague foreboding. It may have been a look in the eyes which the big cougar bent on his son; or the scent of a dark deed which still lingered about him; or it may have been merely the infallible intuition of a mother's mind where her children are concerned.

Whatever it was, *Mistik knew that her mate had slain her kittens!*

For some mysterious reason of her own,

nature has decreed that the male of the cat tribe shall turn cannibal upon his own offspring. Kept from his youngsters by the prowess of the fighting mother, Mistik's mate had finally discovered her absence, and had entered to gratify his blood lust. Then chance had decreed that he should be driven by forest fires to this lake where she had sought sanctuary. He stood here now, with the guilt of his murders fresh upon him.

He advanced a pace, and she drew back, whining dangerously, while other animals who had come to the island for safety backed away in apprehension. Suddenly the big male, with an explosive snarl, struck like lightning at the pitifully limp figure of his son who, sightless and uncomplaining, hung there temptingly within reach.

But Mistik, reading the murder light in her mate's eyes, was too quick, and sprang back. In that instant, as though her trials had drawn her nerves to a fine thread that had snapped, the mother cougar seemed to go mad. With a flirt of her head she tossed the youngster aside; then, her blood-chilling war cry rising like the whine of a band saw biting through green timber, she launched herself straight for her mate's throat. So quickly did she strike that he was all but caught napping, and with her teeth almost reaching his jugular, he rolled to his back, the fighting position of the feline. Dodging inside that guard of flying pads that were armed with razor-edged claws, she drove again for the throat hold.

The male cougar's fiendish squall as her teeth touched him brought every inhabitant of the tiny island, save Mistik, upstanding, trembling, ready for flight. Savage fury which knows no compassion, nor asks it, was in that scream. With an agility that only his mate could match, he was on his feet, and the two for a moment battled almost toe to toe. A devil himself, he was fighting in the valiant cougar mother one who for purpose and determination seemed ten devils in one. He had slain her little ones; he would have slain her first-born; therefore he must die.

As far from the combat as it could get, the coyote stood breast deep in the water, and whined cravenly, while the raccoons stared in unfeigned alarm. Only the wild cat, draped along a limb, seemed to gloat as he stared downward with his cruel eyes. Better than the other onlookers, perhaps, he understood the motives involved, cat as he was.

Slashed and torn, both antagonists sprang apart, and even then Mistik might have been content, but the now thoroughly infuriated male would have none of it. He leaped at her, to kill, and she, slighter of the two, was bowled off her feet. But as his widened jaws snapped at her throat, she twisted and struck again for the hold she had sought—and found it!

Twilight, and the great reaches of the Olympics, now blackened wastes in many spots, were steaming under the warm rain. Here and there embers that had been sheltered from the downpour still glowed, but throughout the immensity of the wooded peninsula the forest fires were quenched.

In a wooded gully that had somehow been spared by the destroyer who rode on the wings of the wind, Mistik, the cougar mother, lay curled inside a rock cranny, licking her grievous hurts. Within the curve of her warm body, the first-born, fed to rotundity, slept the sleep of tired babyhood. Mistik, the mateless, was content.

More of Mr. Gilbert's animal stories in early issues.

AN ACUTE DIAGNOSIS

AS a rule," declared old Cy Blandenbaker, who had voted the straight Republican ticket for forty years, "when you hear a woman telling a crowd of patriots that this government doesn't work right, her trouble is a husband who doesn't work at all."

A NEW BUSINESS

FOR the past few months the bootleggers in the capital of this liberty-loving country have been offering five dollars apiece for the photographs of prohibition-enforcement agents. They prefer this way of becoming acquainted with the features of retribution to waiting for the spine-chilling clutch on the shoulder.

THE MALAY

By BERTON BRALEY

'NEATH skies that are burning,
On hot jungle trails,
The Chinese are earning
The cash and the taels;
The White Man is steaming
His vigor away
In work and in scheming
—But not the Malay!

Decidedly not the Malay!
He's shiftless and lazy, they say.
That's true of him, maybe,
But listen, that baby
Ain't wasting his substance away.
A small patch of paddy
Keeps mamma and daddy
And all of the kids fat and happy and gay—
"So why should we fret?" asks the canny Malay.

Some palms and papaya,
Rice, chickens and fish
Will serve to supply a
Malay's every wish;
The "Dominant Races"
May toil as they may
In tropical places
—But not the Malay.

Decidedly not the Malay!
—And maybe he's right, in a way.
In calm inanition
He smiles at ambition
And loafs at his ease day by day.
There's no rush or flurry
To hurry or worry
This lazy philosopher, scorning the fray—
"So why should I strive?" asks the canny Malay.

The Short Man

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "White Emeralds," "The Futurist Muse," Etc.

The Great Macumber produces evidence from the world beyond.

MACUMBER dropped the last of the morning papers onto the littered floor and, chuckling over the unfeigned celerity with which I transferred myself from the chair at his side to another situated in more salubrious nearness to the window, held the hundredth match above the bowl of the new pipe to whose breaking in he had been devoting the early hours of that dreadful forenoon.

"Thank the Lord for the venerable *Standard,* lad!" said he. "May it hold forever to its ideal!"

"I thought you were a Republican," I remarked, and turned my face toward the life-giving fresh air of the court as a cloud of blue-black smoke came billowing across the room.

"Tush!" exclaimed Macumber. "It's not the politics of the sheet that I admire, but its policy."

"There's no accounting," said I, "for any taste of a man who smokes the sort of tobacco you do. To me the *Standard* has always seemed stupid. No pictures——"

"Aye! That's the strength of it. No pictures, no big headlines, no sob sisters, no comics, no 'colyumists.' And it's for lack of such sprightly elements, youngster, that the *Standard* continues to find room for the news—for all the news."

I observed, not without satisfaction, that the combined fumes of his outrageous tobacco and of the rebellious scorching brier were causing Macumber himself to wince.

"It would seem," I said, "that you've found something in the paragon of papers that interests you."

"Something, let's say, that enlightened me. Thanks to the *Standard's* passion for thoroughness I begin to divine the purpose behind a visit I'm expecting at eleven. It's true it may be only a matter of small importance this time, but—hark, lad! Did you not hear the clang of the elevator gate beyond? Here should be our man now!"

Macumber rose and flung open the door.

"This way, James!" he sang out, after he had peered up the corridor. And then as a stalwart ancient with red cheeks and a redder nose stood blinking in the doorway he asked: "Will it be necessary to introduce Mr. James Nolan, youngster?"

The name had meant nothing, but I recognized the man.

"Hardly. I've ridden with you in his taxicab often enough to claim an acquaintance, I think."

"You have that, sir," confirmed the jehu warmly. "And as for Professor Macumber, it's himself remimbers the days whin he rode beneath Jimmy Nolan in the smartest figger av a hansom that iver flew round a Broadway horse car. Days thim was, if you please, whin Times Square was Longacre; the which in turn was before they'd

come to bill himself as the 'Great,' and before the people was fightin' their way into theayters to marvel at the magic av him."

The Great Macumber grinned.

"Careful, James!" he admonished. "The lad here knows little of my early struggles —nor have I permitted him to know what an age lies between those times and these. Help me to keep my secret, won't you?" He drew Nolan into the room with a friendly hand, waved him toward a chair and for a moment stood looking gravely down at him. "Magic, you say? But I've a better talent than for legerdemain, Jimmy. In recent years I've been going in for mind reading—which is another secret I hope you'll keep."

"More tricks, is it?"

"This isn't a trick, James. The real thing. For example, I divine in what I see behind your honest eyes that your thoughts at this minute are chiefly concerned with some one not here present, some one of whom you stand in fear."

"Divil they are!"

"No, no, James; I can't be mistaken. Indeed, I can see the person pictured in your brain. He's a tall and rather portly man—a man whose black hair is streaked thickly with gray. I should say he was of an irascible disposition. But that's not so hard to understand, for I perceive that in walking he leans heavily upon a cane owing to a rheumatic affection of——"

Our visitor started from his chair.

"Glory be! Who else but Judge Driscoll could ye mean?"

"Driscoll? Why, so it is, James. Judge Driscoll of the Traffic Court, of course. And now I have the whole story from your eyes, Nolan. You'll not need to speak a word. You've come to me because you know the judge and I are friends. Your hacking license is in jeopardy. You believe an intercession by me may save it for you, and thus you had me out of bed this morning at an hour when I was too sleepy to do aught but bid you call in person later. Come, am I not right?"

"Ye—ye are."

"You've been in a smash-up?"

"I—well, the car has."

"And you'd been drinking, I take it, James?"

"On me sowl, I'd not. But that's what they say, in the charge I've to face down in the Traffic Court. Would you read this, now?"

Nolan fished from his pocket a wrinkled and soiled sliver of newsprint which, when it came to my hands by way of Macumber's, I knew to be the paragraph he had discovered in the highly esteemed *Standard*. In the tiny, eye-straining type used exclusively by that solid and stolid journal were set forth the meager and not overly consequential facts that had challenged the Great One's attention:

TAXI CLIMBS A TREE; DRIVER HELD.

A wrecked taxi was found early this morning at a spot in Central Park where, it is safe to say, an automobile had never been before. The machine was leaning against a tree in a woods near the Swan Lake, which it had made a determined though not completely successful attempt to climb. James Nolan, the driver, was recovering some portion of his senses when Patrolman M. Kleindienst happened along. But he didn't have his wits sufficiently about him to explain why his taxi was a hundred yards from the nearest road when it came to grief, and was arrested. His chauffeur's license will probably be the price of his auto steeplechasing.

"I'm sorry for you, Jimmy," said Macumber as he returned the clipping. "I perceive this paragraph is from a newspaper noted for its accuracy, and the last sentence is ominous. Do you tell me you'd not been drinking?"

"Never a drop, sir."

"You're not going to say, then, that you fell asleep over your wheel?"

" 'Twas not I who was at the wheel, professor. I'd been left behind before the cab started among the trees. A wild cut-up of a fare it was that steered me bus off the road. He'd took himself off, and th' big feller with him, by the time the cop come."

"I'm afraid that fact doesn't improve the situation for you, Jimmy, even if we should be able to convince his honor of the truth of your story. You were at fault in permitting the man to take control of your machine."

"Divil a permission he asked of me, sir. There was no 'By your leave, Mr. Nolan,' about it. Th' runt had the strength av Ould Nick, I'll tell ye. He lifted me from me seat and threw me off the machine as easy as ye please—and me all along thinkin' him a little dude with his spats and his gloves and his walkin' stick. 'Tis only the truth I'd have ye put in the ear av the coort, professor."

"Then it was your fares who had been trifling with the bottle, Jimmy?"

"I'd not noticed it at all, though if I'd me wits about me I might have guessed it at the beginning. First, you see, it was the tall man who hailed me while I was slippin' down Central Park West afther haulin' a party to Harlem.

" 'Wait here a minute, me man,' he says, and off he goes into the darkness of a side street.

"Whin he comes back th' short man is with him. The arms av the two av thim is linked together, but for all that there was a swagger to the walk av the little feller. I mind that now, and also that he was not for cab ridin'. He didn't seem to want to step into th' bus.

" 'Where to?' says I, whin they're inside.

" 'Anywheres,' says the tall man.

" 'It's by the hour you'd ride?'

" 'As like as not,' says the tall man. 'It lacks ten minutes to midnight now. You might take us through the park. My friend has had a long siege indoors. He needs the air.'

" 'Faith,' says I, 'and he looks as if he'd been amusin' himself in a public fight.' For the short man has turned his head now so that I'm favored by th' arc light on the corner; and his face, so help me, professor, is no more than one big bandage. All av it that shows through the white is two snappin' eyes.

"Through the Sivinty-second Street gate we went, it bein' but a few blocks away, and off along the drive beside the lake. I took me time, as you may guess, and the first hour was finished as we came from the east toward the other lake they have the swans in.

"It was then the short man got to actin' up. I felt a grip on me shoulder that was like to crush the bone.

" 'Terry!' yells the tall man. 'Leave go. Can't ye act like a gentleman?' From which name I took it that the short man came be rights by his strength. But Irishman or not, I wasn't for lettin' him make game av me with his educated grip.

" 'Yes, I felt it,' says I, 'if that's what ye'd like to know. But do that just wanst again and I'll stop me rig and let ye feel the knuckles of James Nolan.' And to show him I was not for denyin' him opportunity for trouble, should that be what he was lookin' for, I slid the glass behind me wide open before I started up the bus again. Not a word did the short man answer, sir, and it seemed to me the sternness of me voice had been enough to bring him to his senses. Above the rattle of th' engine I could hear the tall man talkin' to him, seemin' to lecture him on manners.

"After maybe a couple of minutes the tall man speaks up.

" 'I'm afraid, driver,' says he, and his voice has a kind of shakiness in it, 'I'm afraid that my friend has taken a dislike to you. He's unreasonable at times. Perhaps it would be as well if you were to drop us here.'

" 'As you please,' says I. 'If it's a driver who'll stand for manhandlin' ye want, another cab is what ye'll have to get. There'll be a hundred passin' to the hour beyond the park wall.'

"Now, I leave it to you, professor, if I didn't speak fair enough. But the short man found an offinse in me words. He said nothing, but he dropped his hand upon me shoulder again and I thought he'd be twistin' off me arm. I turned at wanst in me seat and brought me right fist down on his wrist.

" 'Don't do that, you fool!' shouts the tall man, but whether he means me or his friend I'm not present to learn. Of a sudden I'm grabbed under both arms, lifted off me seat like a babe and chucked into th' road.

"For a second I sit there, dazedlike—for I'd landed sittin'. I see the short man leap through the window and fasten his hands onto th' wheel. I've left the motor runnin' and just as I start to pick myself up the car shoots off for the ditch. It must 'a' been the fender that got me. Anyhow, I'm bowled off me pins and the rise av th' road hits me head a bump that wafts me to dreamland.

"Five minutes or maybe ten I lay there. Then I wake up and start in the direction I've a kinda hazy notion the rig was takin' whin last I saw it; and no sooner do I come upon it than th' cop shows himself and wants to know can't I read simple signs like 'Keep Off the Grass.' What I've told to you, professor, I told him. But what good was it? Good for a laugh, and no more. I'd lost me tariff, me fares, me radiator and a front end I'd had put on new only a month since—and now I'm like to lose me license too. Is it a wonder I

come with me troubles to a friend of mine who's a friend av the coort's as well?"

The Great Macumber shook his head.

"You'll not be believin' me, sir?" cried the harassed hackman.

"That isn't the point. I'm not the man you have to convince, Jimmy."

"But you'll see his honor for me?"

"I'll do what I can. That probably will not be a great deal, though. Driscoll is by nature a skeptic, James, and his years in the Traffic Court have not made him otherwise. Scarce a man is brought before him who is not equipped with a wondrous alibi. The one sure way to clear yourself is to locate your late fares. Make them come forward and assume the blame that is theirs."

"And how am I to find thim, sir?"

"That shouldn't be difficult. Inquire about the neighborhood in which you picked them up. The bandaged face of the short man makes him easy to identify. People who've seen him won't soon be forgetting him, I dare say. In all likelihood the tenth person you ask will point out where he lives. Then, if you wish, come back to me. In the meantime I'll try to persuade the judge not to act hastily—to continue the case until you've had a chance to round up your witnesses. And now, James, if I'm to see his honor before I go to the theater, and still am to have time for luncheon, you'd best embark on your search without delay. A nip before you go? Ah, there'll be no harm in it with your car in the repair shop and your license in abeyance. Lad, if you please—the MacVickar for Mr. Nolan."

II.

When Nolan had gone upon his way and we sat with one of the cheerfully painted tables of the Rawley grill between us, I remarked to Macumber that the chauffeur's midnight adventure seemed to me to have an authentic flavor of some newer "Arabian Nights" entertainment.

"It has," admitted the Great One. "And yet it is a most unsatisfactory fragment. In the careers of the short man and the tall man, James, I surmise, was not more than an accident. Truly I hope he finds his fares, lad—as much for the satisfaction of my own curiosity as for the sake of his precious license. If he does, I intend to make it a point to learn more about the queer comrades." And after a moment he asked abruptly: "Well, what do *you* think about them?"

"That's genuine mind reading, maestro," said I. "It was of the taxi riders I was thinking. And I do have a sort of idea about them. Don't you remember that when we were in Chicago last fall there were a number of robberies committed by a pair whom the newspapers fell into the habit of describing as 'the tall man and the short man?'"

Macumber smiled.

"I haven't forgotten, lad. Moreover, we've had some 'tall man and short man' holdups in New York quite recently. So it's your theory, is it, that Nolan ran afoul of those two noted modern highwaymen, Mr. Short and Mr. Tall?"

"I'd not be surprised if the two had been his passengers."

"What attraction would Central Park have had for them?"

"They might possibly have expected to come upon some one walking alone, and thus to transact a little business on the outing. Or they may, on the other hand, have been solely on pleasure bent."

"At any rate," remarked Macumber, "they had their ride for nothing, didn't they? So in effect they robbed Jimmy Nolan without going to the trouble of turning out his pockets. But the fact that the short man had his face in bandages appears to dispose of your theory. I can assure you that bandages have not been referred to in the descriptions of the tall and short highwaymen who have been operating of late in New York. How about that, youngster?"

"Probably the short man hadn't been wearing his jaw in a sling so long. I think his impetuosity accounts sufficiently well for the bandages. Perhaps in the course of a social evening he'd been trying his grip on some fellow craftsman who objected to better effect than Nolan."

"Perhaps," echoed the Great One. "It's an insidious word, lad. You may be right, but I think we'll have a chance presently to inform ourselves accurately concerning Jimmy's strange fares."

"You really believe he'll succeed in digging them up?"

"Possibly James will not be finding them single-handed. But I've no doubt he'll call a most puissant agency to his aid. There's

scarcely such a freemasonry in the world as exists among the cab drivers of New York, and once Nolan takes his troubles to his other friends there'll be twenty thousand pairs of eyes on the watch for a tall man and a short man with a bandaged face who travel in company. Indeed, lad, were I looking for one certain man among these Manhattan millions 'twould more likely be the chauffeurs than the police I'd set to find him."

There was so pronounced a sparkle in the Great One's eyes that I doubted he was in earnest in lauding the man-hunting potentialities of the genus cabby; yet when Mr. James Nolan presented himself again at the Hotel Rawley—which as I recall was on the morning of the third day following his first visit—my mind was straightway taken back to our conversation in the grill.

"I did as ye bid me, Professor Macumber," said Nolan, "and asked around the corner where I picked up the bad little actor with th' bandaged phiz. 'Twas useless, beggin' your pardon, sir; so thinkin' it might be worth the while I inquired of a hackman or two of my acquaintance."

"I rather thought you would," murmured the Great One. "And I judge from your expression that you've had some news, James."

"I have had," announced the other with satisfaction. "Ye see, professor, the wans I asked went along and asked friends of theirs until the word that old Jimmy Nolan was lookin' for a pair of meter dodgers come to the ears of a lad that drives for th' Green-and-Black Company. 'Sure,' says he, 'I've seen them fellers. Didn't I have the both of 'em inside me cab no more than a week since, and didn't I haul them home to their very door?' And, faith, he had but to look back over the books av his company, which has a system av keepin' track av all calls, to find the address where he left them."

"Rare good luck! So now you have the address, Jimmy?"

"Indeed I have."

"And you came straight to me with it?"

"That I did."

"Excellent. Then you may leave the rest to me. I shall call upon the gentlemen not only as your representative, but as the personal investigator for Judge Driscoll. And you may depend upon it, James, that whether I get them to admit the escapade or not I'll carry enough corroboration to the judge to save your license. Ah, it's little more than a mile I'll have to travel, eh? Make yourself free of our humble apartment, Jimmy, in our absence. You'll see the MacVickar yonder. If you find your patience taxed 'twill prove a comforter. Au revoir!"

In a taxi from the line outside the Rawley on which Nolan for some months past had had his "stand" the Great Macumber and I embarked on a brief journey which brought us to a rooming house in the Chelsea section, off Eighth Avenue.

"It's Mr. Howarth and his friend you mean," said the woman who answered our ring when Macumber had described the two whom we sought. "They're not here any more. It's a couple of days since they left. No, I couldn't tell you where you might find them. I think they left the city. Leastwise, Mr. Howarth spoke as if they was going away for quite a trip." She eyed us curiously, and added after a moment. "You didn't know them well, did you?"

"As you may have judged from the manner of my inquiry," replied Macumber, "I don't know them well enough even to call them by name."

"A queer lot," said the woman. "Between you and me and the lamp-post over the way I'm not sorry to have them out of the house."

"So? Well, from what I've heard, this friend of Howarth's is a bit of a trouble maker."

The landlady's eyebrows raised.

"Him? I'm surprised to hear you say it. He was the quiet one of the two. Not a word did I hear out of him so long as he was in the house."

"And how long had that been, may I ask?"

"A matter of a week. Just a week, to be sure. It was when their second rent fell due that Mr. Howarth told me they were going. And that very afternoon they were out and away."

"You mentioned having felt there was something strange about your roomers."

"I did say that and yet, glad as I was to see them go, I couldn't hardly say they wasn't as decent and respectable gentlemen as I'd care to rent to. With me they conducted themselves perfectly proper. But I didn't somehow like it that they'd only

leave the house of nights. It wasn't as if they was night workers the same as Mr. Driggs, the printer, that used to have the third floor back. They didn't seem to have any employment at all. Mr. Howarth said he and his friend—and what the friend's name was I never did find out, though I heard Mr. Howarth call him Terry—was just visiting in the city."

"Many a visitor in New York finds more to see at night than in the daytime," remarked Macumber. "By the by, did you learn how they came to seek out your house? Had they been recommended to you by any chance?"

"I think they were. Some years back quite a few show people used to stop with me, and I got the impression that was Mr. Howarth's line. Anyhow, he come with as many clothes as an actor. Between him and Mr. Terry, they had one regular piano case of a trunk besides three ordinary-sized ones.

"This Mr. Howarth was alone when he came to look at my rooms—which I tell you by way of leading up to something else that you may think queerer than them being out so much at night. He seemed to take a fancy to the second floor front, which is really a little apartment with an alcove and a private bath.

"'Most people,' I told him, 'don't care for so expensive a room just for one. I've always had two and three in this suite, for a suite's really what it is.'

"'Oh, as for that,' says Mr. Howarth, 'there'll be two of us. I'm intending to double up with a friend. You may think him a little peculiar at times, but I assure you we'll neither of us be a bother. In fact, if it's the same to you we'll make our own beds and keep the room shipshape ourselves.'

"I told him he could suit himself, and that afternoon Mr. Howarth and his baggage came in.

"'My friend will be along some time tonight,' he says. 'Maybe he'll be late, but don't you worry. I'll sit up and see that he gets in.'

"Just why I can't say, but I couldn't sleep well that night. If I dozed off at all, it was only for a minute or two at a time. The bell never rang, and I could swear the front door wasn't so much as opened and closed; and yet when I met Mr. Howarth in the hall in the morning he told me his friend had arrived and was very much pleased with the room.

"'If you happen to see him around the house,' he says, 'for Heaven's sake don't let on you notice anything out of the ordinary. He's very sensitive about his appearance. A few months ago he had a bad accident. His face was nearly burned off him by a gas explosion, and he's had to wear bandages over practically his whole head ever since. If you don't find him talkative you can know that it's extremely painful for him to utter even a single word. In fact, you'd show consideration if you'd refrain from speaking to him at all, or even paying the slightest attention to him.'"

The Great One had been listening with an interest which was plainly on the rise.

"You followed Howarth's suggestion, I suppose—didn't speak to his friend?"

"Little enough chance I had. I don't believe I saw him more than twice during all the time he was here. Then it was late at night, and he was on his way out with Mr. Howarth. An odd-shaped little man, he was, very round shouldered and walking with a stoop; and yet for all that an elegant dresser. Spats and gloves he always wore, and he had the habit of carrying a cane. Quite the gentleman—but queer, when you come down to it. Didn't he slip out of the house just like he'd slipped in?"

"You don't tell me!"

"I do. When I expected to see the both of them going, there was Mr. Howarth by himself again.

"'My friend?' said he, and smiled as though he was enjoying some joke all to himself. 'Why, it's near an hour ago that he left the house, Mrs. Crowder! Surely you must have seen him on his way!' And with that, smiling still, he was out the door—and I've laid eyes neither on him nor his friend Terry since."

"As like as not you're well rid of them," said Macumber, and when he had bowed himself away he turned elated eyes upon me. "Now, what say you, lad?"

"The night prowling of the tall man and the short man would appear to support my theory concerning them."

"So it would. Indeed it would. But, more practically, we've found substantiation in some degree for that weird story of Jimmy Nolan's—which in truth I've not been for swallowing up to now. I was but giving the old fellow the benefit of a doubt,

youngster, when I went to Judge Driscoll in his behalf. And 'twas well I did. Our friend need worry no more about his license. Enough that we know the feckless short man with the bandaged face and the spats and cane is no creature of Nolan's imagination. It saves him. But oh, lad, what would I myself not sacrifice for a better acquaintance wi' the little strong-arm!"

III.

The New York *Morning Mercury*, which calls itself "the People's Paper" and illustrates its text so liberally and restfully that one may follow the news with scant reference to the printed word, engaged my attention the morning following while Macumber plowed through the close-typed columns of the *Standard*.

"Auto Kills Cop; Speeds Away," proclaimed the big block letters arrayed across the top of the *Mercury's* front page, and caught by a glimpse of a name that was both odd and somehow familiar I read on.

"Ever hear of any one named Kleindienst?" I demanded of the Great One presently, offering a second form of pronunciation and then spelling out the name when his eyebrows remained up.

"Oh!" said Macumber. "Yes, I have. And in an interesting connection."

"Where? How?"

The Great One lowered his newspaper.

"Kleindienst," he elucidated, "was the name of the policeman who brought Jimmy Nolan before the Traffic Court. How should I be forgetting so soon? What about him, lad?"

"He's dead."

"Eh? Nolan's Kleindienst? You're sure it's the same one?"

"A policeman, at any rate. And a policeman on duty in Central Park. They found his body there. He'd been killed."

I had phrased my intelligence craftily; and very literally Macumber rose to the bait. With a bound he was out of his chair, his hand eagerly outstretched for the paper.

"By the Lord, lad!" he cried. "I might have predicted there'd be a bloody aftermath to that senseless adventure of Nolan's! There was that to the beginning. Psychic or not I may be, but——"

I had a grin for his vehemence.

"Don't go too far, maestro," I cautioned. "It wouldn't be wise to commit yourself, in the circumstances. For once you've gone off at half cock. Permit me to finish, and you'll know that Jimmy's jamboree and the policeman's death could not have had the remotest connection. Kleindienst was run down—either late last night or early this morning—by a speeding motor car. The machine raced on, leaving him for dead. And dead he was. His neck had been broken. So far as Nolan and the runaway taxi are concerned the thing's coincidence—if you could call it even that."

Macumber snatched the *Mercury* from my grasp. He reserved comment until he had read the last line of the highly colored account of Kleindienst's end.

"Coincidence?" he echoed softly then. "Ah, lad, but there are more kinds of coincidence than one!"

"Dare say," I admitted. "But even so your remark doesn't mean much to me."

"I'd suggest to you, youngster, that the real coincidence in the matter may prove to have lain in the fact that I am the friend both of Jimmy Nolan and Magistrate Driscoll."

I shook my head over him.

"You can't coax me out where I can't touch bottom," said I. "I suppose that if I were to analyze my feelings I'd find myself sorry for Kleindienst—in the same impersonal way I'd be sorry for any other poor devil who'd met a like unpleasant and probably undeserved fate. But I can't see how the man's death especially touches me. Or you."

"No?" queried the Great One. "And I suppose you read your *Mercury* carefully?"

"I read what was printed. But I won't pretend to share your faculty for reading between lines. What did you see that was so interesting?"

"What interests me happens to be what I failed to see. Is it your recollection that the report referred to there having been any witnesses to the killing of Kleindienst?"

"Why, I presume there were witnesses. Of course there must have been."

"But there were none," said Macumber. "You're appallingly unobservant, lad. The one fact worthy of absolute credence put forward by the *Mercury* is that Policeman Morris Kleindienst was found lying dead early this morning in a Central Park roadway. It is only a slenderly supported assumption that the man was killed by an automobile; an assumption based, so far as I can see, upon no more than the nature of

Kleindienst's injuries and the location in which the body was found."

"It might be worth while, then," I suggested, "to see what your complete and reliable *Standard* has to say."

But for once Macumber's favorite newspaper and mine were in accord. The Great One read dourly through the *Standard* report when finally he had found it tucked away on an inside page.

"Odds seem to be against me," he admitted. "Yet I'll hold for the time to my doubt. And it's my intention to do exactly as I'm in the habit of doing when I've doubts in a case. I'll be off and see for myself."

Then he jammed on his hat, and I saw no more of him until evening. He was whistling with an unmelodious vigor indicative of high spirits when he returned along the corridor.

"I have been and I have seen," he announced loftily. "Also, I have asked and I have been told."

"No one's told you that Kleindienst was killed by anything other than an automobile?"

"Aye, that's a good part of it. Nobody seems to harbor a suspicion to the contrary. Yet if you leave it to me to say, lad, the man was no victim of an accident. He was murdered!"

"Bosh!"

"It's my theor-r-y," said the Great One doggedly.

"Based on what?"

"On the man's past. He'd been on the police force no more than a year."

"And before that?"

"Before that," replied Macumber, with the air of one who settles a question with a word, "before that Morris Kleindienst was in a line of endeavor much like our own. He was a showman, a performer. Which in itself was enough to set me to thinking, as you must realize. Or do you?"

"I pass once more," said I. "You're as full of riddles as the cross-word puzzle book I've been spending my time with since you left."

The Great One regarded me with an exaggerated compassion.

"There are times, lad," said he, "when out of sheer pity I am tempted to tell you all I know and all I suspect. This, I confess, is one of them. But the thought in my mind is so extraordinary—so fantastic, if you will—that I'm not for sharing it just yet."

He put a match to his pipe and sent forth a sigh in the wake of a mouthful of acrid smoke.

"But, oh, youngster, if I'm right and if I'm lucky, I can promise you a dénouement worth the waiting!"

IV.

Macumber left me to myself at the Rawley again the next morning, and I spent the first hour or two following his departure trying to figure out the tortuous chain of reasoning which he must have traced through to fetch up at the belief that there could be an association between the singular conduct of Jimmy Nolan's fares and the subsequent death by violence of the park policeman.

After all my pondering I decided it could not be reason at all which was guiding the Great One, but rather one of his rare hunches. There had been a suggestion from his landlady, I recalled, that the companion of the pygmy Hercules with the bandaged face was a showman; and adding that to the significance which Macumber obviously attached to the former profession of Kleindienst, I reached the conclusion that he must now be trying to get on the track of the man Howarth.

And in this conclusion I felt myself confirmed when a young man with a flashy suit of clothes and an elaborate set of manners walked in upon me and after inquiring for the Great One introduced himself as Mr. Rollo Rollins, publicity agent for the Jolly Brothers & Great Western Consolidated Railroad Shows.

But on Macumber's arrival, a minute or two later, I was both mystified and disappointed. Their talk was of a scheme with which I was unfamiliar and of persons with whom I had no acquaintance.

One of these persons, indeed, was referred to by the ornate Rollo Rollins in the very first remark he addressed to the Great One.

"Your idea sounded fine in the wire," said he, "but I'm sorta afraid we're not going to have Mr. Dooley with us long. Climate doesn't agree with him. And you know how that kind go off."

Mr. Rollins snapped his fingers.

"Yes," acquiesced the Great One. "Just like that. Too bad. Properly handled from the publicity standpoint, he could be

developed into a wonderful attraction. Have you spoken to Captain Bonventure?"

"Sure. Soon's I got the telegram. The world'll tell you that young Mr. Rollins don't pass up bets like that one."

"He understands that quite aside from what the newspapers may choose to print I have a genuine scientific interest in the matter?"

"I gave it to him strong. He's a serious sort of bird himself. It wasn't any trouble selling him on the notion. So Jolly Brothers are ready to go ahead whenever you are. .What day you want to make it? Sunday, I s'pose?"

"Why delay? I could make it this afternoon—or, better, this evening?"

"Oh. You're not playing yourself, then?"

"Not this week or next. I've a chance, thank the Lord, to give attention to my interests outside the theater."

Mr. Rollo Rollins fastidiously tapped a cigarette on a glistening thumb nail.

"How about the press end?" he wanted to know.

"I'd rather not have too many reporters about. To me it's more than a stunt, you know. Scientif——"

"Yep," interrupted Mr. Rollins hastily, "but my view of having the newspaper boys out is the more the merrier."

"*My* plan," said Macumber, "was to have only one present. Do you happen to be acquainted with Jim Thorley of the Associated Press?"

"No; but if you can get the A. P. to fall for the yarn you're good."

Macumber smiled.

"I can do it," he promised. "Thorley's an old friend of mine. He's covered other experiments of the same sort, and I've halfway engaged he should have a beat on the test with Mr. Dooley."

" 'Sall right with me," said Mr. Rollins. "I've heard of Thorley. Guess he can write us as pretty a story as anybody in the business. And having it shot all over the country on the A. P. wires won't go so bad with Jolly Brothers, either. I'll expect you on the lot in Newark to-night? Good enough. I'll have the captain ready. Toodle-oo!"

When the press agent for the Brothers Jolly had gone breezily on his way I turned a broadside on Macumber.

What, I insisted on being told, was the purpose of this projected trip to a one-ring circus lot in Jersey? What the meaning of his talk about a "scientific test?" Who was Captain Bonventure? Who was Mr. Dooley? And how could it be that Jim Thorley of the Associated Press, if so close a friend as the Great One pretended, should still be a stranger to me?

Macumber shrugged off the questions one after another.

"Have just a bit of patience, youngster," he recommended. "Within a few hours you'll have met the people you're so curious about, and I assure you it's my dearest wish that you should be among those present at the test."

I recognized symptoms of stubbornness in the Great One's eyes, and veered off.

"When you started out to-day," I said, "I somehow got a notion you intended to look up that fellow Howarth."

" 'Twas a good guess, lad."

"I wondered how you'd begin your search."

"Oh, that was simple. I merely consulted the *Billboard,* which is a publication no less comprehensive in covering its field than the *Standard.*"

"You found a mention of Howarth's whereabouts?"

"Not directly. But I gathered a hint from the circus news."

"Which you intend to follow?"

The Great One grinned.

"I don't mind telling you I know where to find the man," said he. "Don't worry about him, lad. We'll come to him in due course, I promise you!"

V.

I had anticipated that Macumber planned to have an early dinner and to get under way for Newark immediately we had risen from it; but it seemed to be on his program that we should dine leisurely at the regular hour, and it was consequently well past nine when we left the Rawley.

Until that time the Great One had kept me guessing. It had been his pleasure to make his arrangements for the meeting from the privacy of a phone booth, and so I was left to wonder until an alert-looking man of forty or thereabouts had walked up to us at the Hudson Tube entrance and I had been introduced to "Mr. Jim Thorley of the A. P." With this chap Macumber talked guardedly and earnestly during the ride to Newark, but after we had trans-

ferred to a cab at the Park Place terminal both were silent.

Silent, too, and dark was the lot of the Jolly Brothers & Great Western Consolidated Railroad Shows when eventually the three of us were deposited at its edge. The night was overcast, and under the black sky the canvas tops bulked up a muddy gray.

Stumbling over tent pegs and rope ends we made our way toward a lighted ticket wagon, and found the genial Mr. Rollo Rollins waiting there. With him was a tallish and rather anæmic individual, whom the press agent introduced with a ringmaster flourish.

"Gentlemen," said he, "get acquainted with Captain Tom Bonventure, world traveler, hunter, explorer and guide—and running mate, just now, of the celebrated Mr. Dooley!"

Bonventure's lusterless black eyes singled out Macumber.

"Dooley's in a bad way," said he. "He's run down something terrible just in the last few days. Lungs, of course. You understand I wouldn't want to put him up against anything that'd——"

"Have no fear," reassured the Great One. "He won't even know what's going on. Mr. Rollins has explained everything, I suppose?"

The world traveler, hunter, explorer and guide shook his head slowly.

"I don't exactly get the drift yet. No."

"I'll make the whole thing clear in a few words, then," volunteered Macumber cheerfully. "Are you interested by any chance in spiritualism, captain? In those psychic phenomena, I mean to say, which the conservative world still insists on regarding as of supernatural origin?"

Captain Tom Bonventure blinked at the ponderous question.

"I get you," he said after a moment. "No, I wouldn't say I've paid a lot of attention to any kinds of spirits myself."

"But you must have heard references to automatic writing? Writing, that is, done by living people in a trance condition at the dictation of the dead."

"Yes, I've read of that being done. Never took any stock into it, though. I'd have to see it myself—and better than see it."

"There are too many like you," said the Great One gravely. "I myself am convinced after having studied more than a hundred instances of automatic writing that the phenomenon is genuine. Frauds I have encountered, of course, but I am certain that in the great majority of cases the subjects have been honest. It is only in an effort to fortify myself with material with which to vanquish brother scientists who doubt that I have come to you.

"There are some, you see, captain, who contend that the control in automatic writing rests really in the subconscious of the writer—that the theory of a communication existing between this world and the next by way of the pencil is untenable. So I would answer them with this test of Mr. Dooley. If we are successful the argument based on the possible intervention of the subconscious will be defeated. You see?"

Captain Bonventure nodded.

"That's plain enough," he said. "If you can get Dooley to write anything no one could ever say it was something out of his own head."

"Precisely," agreed Macumber. "Dooley, as every one must concede, is no writing gentleman. He can hold the pencil as well as any, but to allege him to be the author either consciously or subconsciously of what he may write would be absurd. You'll subscribe to that, won't you, Mr. Thorley?"

"Absolutely."

The one word from the press gallery had the effect of instantly dissolving Vonventure's doubts.

"Bet you draw a blank, but let's go to it," said he, and hopped out the side door of the ticket wagon.

Into a small dark tent, not more than a dozen yards from the wagon, Bonventure led the way. As he struck a match and lighted a lantern that stood on a rough camp table, I became aware that the tent already had an occupant. Over in a far corner, still deeply shadowed, sat a dim and tragic figure. A man was sitting there, silent, at another table like that which held the lantern. His arms were folded on the table, his head buried in them.

Now, a moment after we had come, this morose figure moved languidly. A chinking of metal accompanied the movement, and straining my eyes into the shadows I perceived with an inexplicable sensation of horror that the creature of despair whom we had come to visit was a prisoner in chains. One chain, at any rate, I could see in the vague and flickering light. It ran from beneath the chair at the far table and was

fastened to a stout iron stake driven deep into the earth of the tent floor.

"Been keeping him tied up since we joined out," explained Bonventure, and I marveled that his tone could be matter of fact. "In Dooley's condition he might go off his nut and run amuck. It's happened before."

Just then the captive Mr. Dooley stirred again and raised his head, and a fresh horror was mine.

It was a scarred, hairy, unspeakably hideous face that I saw back in the shadows—a face that surely was not a man's. Two wicked little eyes were peering out of it, and these were not human eyes.

Mr. Rollo Rollins, standing at my side with his hands sunk in his trouser pockets, betrayed no sign of shock. He contemplated the frightful countenance of Mr. Dooley with a sort of proprietarial affection.

"Beauty, isn't he?" he remarked. "Looks like he meant wrong by us, eh? But shucks! That gorilla's just as kind and gentle as a properly brought-up St. Bernard! Ain't it so, captain?"

The Great One turned to Bonventure.

"Will I require an introduction to Mr. Dooley?" he queried. "Really, I'd rather meet him in the usual way. His kindness I'll take for granted, but I'd not excite him for the world."

The anæmic man smiled faintly.

"Dooley'll behave himself as long as I'm around, I guess," said he. "It's only when my back is turned that I'm doubtful of him."

Macumber delved into his coat pocket.

"Then we'll proceed with our little show. Here I have a pad of blank paper and a pencil. They're all the paraphernalia we'll need for the test. So!"

With the eyes of the great ape unwinkingly on him, he walked across the tent and placed the pad on the table.

"Shall I bring the light?" called Bonventure.

"No, thank you. The less light the better for our purposes."

Into one of Mr. Dooley's mighty hands Macumber put his pencil. I observed that for a few seconds he held the unresisting paw. Then, unscathed and unruffled, he came back to us.

"How about the hypnotic eye, Macumber?" asked Rollins.

"It's done its work already," replied the Great One. "Take a look at our friend. He's drowsing. Now watch his head go down. But the pencil's still in his grip. Can you turn down that lantern just a bit, Bonventure? Thank you."

We waited. Minutes passed. The sprightly Mr. Rollo Rollins ventured a facetious remark, and was summarily hushed by the Great One.

"No talking, please," he directed. "We need silence. That and darkness. The paper, the pencil and open minds are all else required." And then after a time he spoke up querulously: "I'm afraid not all our minds are open. And that's vitally necessary. In the other world they fight shy of incurable skeptics. You're the fellow they don't like, Rollins, I'll wager. Suppose you step out for a moment?"

The press agent laughed.

"Sure," he said. "Everybody can step out, for all I care—except Mr. Thorley."

The door flap swung, and he was gone. Nor did he linger near to eavesdrop. After a little I heard his footsteps on the ticket-wagon stair. Almost immediately came another sound—a faint scratching. It seemed to my ears to have its origin in the black corner of the tent where Mr. Dooley sprawled over his table and his pad.

"Hark!" whispered Macumber. "That will be the pencil. He's using it at last!" He tiptoed away into the gloom. "I'll get the top sheet and see what we have."

In a few seconds he was back, near the dimmed lamp. The others of us crowded about him to inspect the paper which he had brought. It was covered with penciled lines which at the top of the sheet were a wild and meaningless scrawl and at the bottom seemed to be developing toward definite shapes—letters in embryo.

Captain Tom Bonventure grunted incredulously.

"He's seen me writing a good many times. And Dooley's specialty is imitation."

"We'll see," said the Great One quietly. "Keep that mind of yours open, captain. In a moment we may all be standing in the presence of a miracle. Listen! Mr. Dooley's at it again!"

Silently Macumber had flitted out of the little circle of light. The scratching once more was audible. And then a minute sound of tearing. Another sheet had been

lifted from Mr. Dooley's pad. The Great One returned with it.

"By the Lord!" he gasped as he held it to the light.

Now the aimless scrawl covered only half the sheet. The lines on the lower half, clumsily but unmistakably formed words. There were three of them:

"God is good!"

Captain Bonventure's dull eyes were popping.

"Holy Christopher!" he cried. "Dooley's writing!"

"He is," said the Great One softly, and was gone into the darkness for another sheet. On this the characters were both smaller and more legible. The sheet contained a number of words—complete sentences.

Leaning close over Macumber's shoulder, I read:

"I am Kleindienst. Shield 21633. I was killed. New York. Park. Murderous ape. Find Howarth. He knows."

Another cry escaped Captain Tom Bonventure.

"I've had enough of this business! Too much like bargaining with the devil. Cut it! You hear me? I won't be a party to it. Dooley! Come out of it! Wake up, you fool! Terry! Wake up!"

Macumber reached for the lantern and turned up its flame. In the brighter light I saw that Bonventure, chalky of cheek, had sunk back into his chair and was staring wildly from one to another of us. Mr. Dooley sat humped over his own table as when I had last seen him, motionless.

The Great One caught Bonventure's eyes and held them.

"My friend," he said soberly, "this is a strange business—and a bad one as well. I happen to know that in private life your name's Howarth. Perhaps it's none of my affair, but nevertheless I'm going to put the question fairly to you. Have you ever known a man of the name of Kleindienst?"

Bonventure was mute. It was another voice which spoke up—Thorley's.

"Kleindienst? I know that name, Mr. Macumber. A queer one. I'm bewildered myself by what's transpired here; can hardly believe my senses. But I'll wager none the less that the author of the incredible communication which we've just read is a—or would you say *was* a?—New York policeman who was found dead in Central Park last week. They thought he'd been struck by a speeding motor. But——"

"But," put in the Great One grimly, "we seem to have stumbled onto another aspect of the case here. Mr. Howarth doesn't appear inclined to talk. But we've still Mr. Dooley. He'll write until my own voice wakes him, I promise you; and I've no doubt the astral Kleindienst will stand by. So we'll proceed with our séance, and hear from the dead direct."

The wilting master of Mr. Dooley straightened and stiffened in his chair as Macumber's hand went to the lamp.

"No!" he cried. "Kleindienst would go to hell to put a rope around my neck! You'll have the *truth* from me!"

VI.

For a minute or two Captain Tom Bonventure, née Howarth, sat staring at the canvas roof above him. Then he lowered his gaze and looked steadily at Macumber.

"Listen," he said. "I've promised you the truth, and that's what you get. I won't start with a lie. I won't say I'm sorry Kleindienst is dead. I'm not. He got what was coming to him. But I didn't kill him, understand. I wouldn't have gone that far. I'd like to have pounded him to a pulp—beaten him until I hadn't strength to raise a fist or a foot. But his life I wouldn't have taken.

"Kleindienst wasn't always a cop. Know that, do you? Well, maybe you know he's been on the New York force less than a year. In other days he was in the show business—was my partner in a little wagon show touring the Southwest.

"Ours wasn't a big enough show to keep two bosses just gathering in the kale. Kleindienst and me were our own star performers. He did a strong-man act, with a side line of wrestling all comers for a prize he never let any one draw down when a foul would save it, and I had a string of trained dogs. Animals, you see, was always my specialty.

"Kleindienst—and I say it about him dead as I've said it about him living—was a cheater and a bully. He had me tied to him with a contract, and he ruled the combination by the weight of his fists. I've felt 'em, I tell you. He could be mean.

"Right and left Kleindienst robbed me. If I ever got a third of the gate for my rightful half I was lucky. I was afraid of

him. I admit it. He had me buffaloed. If it hadn't been for my sister I'd 'a' been glad when finally he skipped out with half a season's takings. But Jennie went with him, and I was more afraid for her than I was for myself.

"That was two years ago. On account of Jennie I never put the police onto Kleindienst. It seemed he'd got out of the show business, and I never did learn what become of him until maybe a week since. Or less than that. I'd come over here to join out with Jolly Brothers then—me and my Terry Dooley.

"Dooley? I've got to tell you about him. I'd bought him, just weaned, a little before the split up with Kleindienst. He wasn't much stronger than a human kid then, and Kleindienst used to get a lot of rough sport out of teasing him. You've got to know that. Terry hated Kleindienst as bad as I did. Maybe worse. You can't tell about gorillas. They're good friends and bad enemies.

"Well, not so long ago I broke up my own show and came to New York with Terry Dooley hoping to get a break for the big money in vaudeville. Except for what would be going on inside his head, I'd made Mr. Dooley into a regular little gentleman. He could eat with a knife and fork, smoke cigarettes, dress himself in all the clothes that real people wear and come pretty near to understanding what I'd tell him.

"But the big time was fed up with animal acts. I couldn't even get a try-out for the act I'd built around Terry.

"I had the Jolly Brothers' contract in reserve, and at last I had to fall back on it. One week in New York showed me I was licked for anything but the sawdust.

"That week Dooley spent living like a lord in a regular room. Private bath and everything. I smuggled him in and out again in a trunk cage, and the landlady doesn't know to this day that she had a guest from the jungle in her pet suite.

"Kleindienst? Well, during the whole time I was in New York I didn't even guess he was there, too. But Terry found it out. Funny thing, that was. I had Terry out in a taxi in the park, airing him. And Kleindienst must 'a' been somewhere close to us that night. The scent of him came down the wind, and Terry went wild. He near wrecked the taxi trying to get back of that scent. Yes, sir. He threw out the driver and started off the machine just like he was human. We fetched against a tree—and I didn't wait to explain. I got Terry out of the park right away, and home in another cab.

"But, as I say, I didn't know it was Kleindienst that upset Terry until I was over here in Newark. Then word came to me that he was a cop in New York. And I got the news at the same time that he'd put Jennie down and out. Never married her, and threw her off. Well, I'm not going to say anything more about that.

"I made up my mind, anyhow, that I was going to have a reckoning with Kleindienst. Didn't expect I could do much to him myself, but I had Terry. Mr. Dooley was a match for a dozen strong men, I thought.

"So me and Terry together, we went looking for Mr. Kleindienst one night after the show closed here. I'd found out he was on duty in the park from midnight until eight in the morning. That was convenient. Nice quiet place; nice quiet hour. It was made to order.

"Central Park's a big place, but luck was with us. Call it good luck or bad, we found Kleindienst less than an hour after we'd started walking around under the trees.

"Kleindienst recognized me, but he didn't get Terry right. For, as maybe I told you, I'd got in the habit of bandaging up Mr. Dooley's face when we was out in company; and with gloves to cover his mitts and the rest of the make-up he'd have passed most anywheres for a little man.

"'So it's you?' said Kleindienst right away. 'If it's trouble you're looking for, Howarth, you should have had sense to bring a bigger friend.'

"And that, so help me, was the last word out of him—the last he ever spoke. Terry made a jump. Right for Kleindienst's throat. There was a crash and a crack, and down they went together. Kleindienst didn't get up. Terry sniffed at him a second, down on all fours, and then waddled away. I looked. Kleindienst was dead.

"What was there to do but beat it? I started with Terry, and never stopped till we hit Newark and the Jolly Brothers' lot. In the morning I saw that the newspapers figured Kleindienst had been hit by an auto. I decided to let it go at that. And that's the truth. What am I going to do, now

that I've told it? Go to the district attorney?"

Macumber had fished out his pipe long since. He blew forth a half dozen perfect rings of smoke, and watched the draft from the door flap whirl them off in streamers.

"It won't be necessary, Howarth," he said. "The district attorney has been to you. I took the liberty of introducing him as Mr. Thorley of the Associated Press. And if I read his expression aright, he believes what you have told us. How about it, Mr. Manning?"

The pseudojournalist nodded.

"The story rings true," he admitted. "Even if I had large doubts I'd not expect a conviction. And since you furnished so much corroboratory material in advance as a result of your own investigation, I can't say I'm disinclined to let matters stand as they are. Since there are just the few of us here together who know how Kleindienst died, we may as well agree to forget. But as for this Mr. Dooley—the ape—human blood is on his hands. I believe it should be stipulated that——"

"That Terry Dooley die?" demanded Macumber.

"He must."

The Great Macumber swept his hand toward the motionless figure in chains.

"Behold!" said he. "Accident has executed the sentence in advance of its pronouncement. An inadvertent dose of morphine did it. 'Twas with that I hypnotized the beastie!"

Another Great Macumber story in the next issue.

A VALUABLE LESSON.

It is time for all Americans to learn that passing laws can't do everything and that passing the buck won't do anything.

THE BASIC TROUBLE.

Most of our national problems spring from the fact that we hear a whole lot about the right to strike and nothing about the right to work.

DIFFERENT ANIMALS.

We have heard a lot about the dogs of war, but it will be just as well to keep one eye on the hogs of peace.

GROUNDS FOR DOUBT.

Sometimes, when you are riding on a street car, you doubt the statement that electricity travels at the rate of millions of miles a minute.

A REPORT ON BOLSHEVISM.

Some of the American senators who have studied the Russian situation report that bolshevism won't work because bolshevists don't.

SUBNORMAL PATRIOTISM.

We have among us men who think too little of what they can put into government and too much of what they can get out of politics.

THE DRIVING MOTIVE

Love of the game, never love of the money, is the inspiration that carries you on to great achievement. Midas, who turned into gold everything he touched, had the ears of an ass.

UNINTERRUPTED HAPPINESS.

"There is one unfailing recipe for domestic bliss," remarked Litt Mallory, the Virginia philosopher. "Let the husband and wife each do exactly as she likes."

A Chat With You

LAST night we got into an argument with a man who claimed that the late William Shakespeare of Stratford on Avon, did not write the plays which are credited to his name.

We stuck up for Shakespeare. Fascinated as we are by the great reputation and marvelous intellect of Francis Bacon, we have still a preference for the country boy who went down to London to hold horses in front of the Globe Theater. We think that the great lord, the ornament of court, the wealthy man who still trafficked in judicial decisions would have found it a further cry to the forest of Arden than the youngster who married Anne Hathaway.

* * * *

IT is quite possible to prove logically that William Shakespeare did not write the plays. It is quite possible to prove also that no one could have written them. The information, the knowledge of the world and of character, the historical background, the vocabulary, the intimate acquaintance with men of all sorts and conditions, with nature animate and inanimate—no lifetime could have sufficed for all of this. If it is a miracle that Shakespeare who was in the business of producing plays wrote those that bear his name, it would be a still greater miracle if Lord Bacon, whose business was that of a lawyer and whose avocation was that of a man of science, had written them.

* * * *

AS a matter of fact any imaginative writing that is at all worth while is something in the nature of a miracle. People come to us and ask us if we can teach them how to write. If we could teach people how to write we would be in possession of a secret as valuable as any gold mine in the world. Good writing cannot be taught. It is extremely doubtful if it can be learned. As much as anything in the world it is what we call a gift. You are either born with the ability to write or you are born without it, just as you are born with blue eyes or brown. We know that there are schools and professors who claim to be able to teach the art—but if their claims are true they are in possession of a secret that we have been trying to puzzle out these twenty years without success.

* * * *

THIS, as a matter of fact, is the charm of the business of writing and printing stories. If writing could be taught any intelligent person could learn it just as one learns Latin, or plumbing or the automobile business. Stories could be clicked off in quantity—it would be just a humdrum an affair as making barrel staves. It is nothing of the kind. The good story is a rare find, the born author is wild game and a sporting proposition, hard to find, hard to recognize, hard to catch.

* * * *

EVERY two weeks we publish one book-length novel, an installment of a serial and about nine short stories. Literally, we ransack the markets of the literary world to get these stories and to get them right. We pay the best prices and we do our best to keep in personal touch with every one who shows the faintest promise. And yet we have never suffered from an overload of good stuff. We are always wondering where

the next number is going to come from. We are hunting for originality, for wit and humor, for dramatic thrills, for the fascination of smooth and well-spun narrative. What hope is there for discovering these things afresh twenty-four times or so a year? And yet the miracle happens over and over again and we can look back to number after number of the magazine in which it seems we were building a little better than we knew.

* * * *

ONE thing that helps us is the fact that generally speaking any one who can write one good story can keep it up. There are numerous and notable exceptions to the rule—but still it is a rule and holds good in the main—once an author, always an author.

Years ago, almost twenty, a battered envelope with a battered manuscript was laid on this desk. It looked so unpromising that we remember commenting on it at the time. If you are one of the old and seasoned readers of THE POPULAR you will remember it. It was "Chip of the Flying U," by B. M. Bower. Both novel and author have since become famous wherever people read good stories.

WE have just finished reading another manuscript by B. M. Bower. It is a long novel, full book length and will appear later on between cloth covers at a price of two dollars—and it will be worth it. We are giving it to you complete as an opener for the next number of THE POPULAR. It is called, "The Meadowlark Name," and it is just as good as "Chip" or any other story that Bower has ever written. All this in one magazine means that it would be well for you to order in advance from the news dealer if you want to be sure of getting it.

And this is only an opener. In the same issue are stories by Ralph D. Paine, Holman Day, Stacpoole, Percival Wilde, Ernest Douglas, Dane Coolidge, Theodore Solomons, Robert Rohde, Kenneth Gilbert and Raymond Brown.

Perhaps some day, three centuries from now, some one will write a book to prove that neither Bower, Paine, Stacpoole nor Day could have written the stories attributed to them.

Just at present, though we have a fair idea of who wrote them—as to the mystery and miracle of their writing we know nothing. We do know a good story when we see it, however, and you are getting a bunch of the best in the next issue.

Mind-health, first

DO you know about the new phase of warfare against disease called Mental Hygiene? It is teaching people to guard their *mental* health—just as they have been taught to guard their *physical* health.

Physical health depends to a great extent upon mental health. Excessive anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, fear, revolt, malice—a hundred and one mental conflicts if persisted in—often cause serious mental and physical trouble. With continuing wrong thoughts and emotions we can't be well. That is one of the first things that Mental Hygiene teaches. Its underlying idea is as old as Time. The only new thing about it is that it has now been developed into a science that can be used to prevent mind-sickness and to solve individual mental problems.

Frequently people who are ill take remedy after remedy, travel north, south, east or west—all to no avail. Why? Because the *source* of the trouble—wrong thinking, false beliefs, distorted imagination, misdirected emotion—never has been touched. Such illnesses are not physical diseases although they may be accompanied by physical pain and may be manifested by sleeplessness, nervousness, indigestion and many other physical symptoms.

If you were physically ill—if anyone in your family were threatened with diphtheria or scarlet fever—you would do something about it. Mental sickness is quite as real and likewise should have prompt attention.

There are men and women—graduate physicians—trained especially to treat troubles of the mind and to teach Mental Hygiene. Their work is known as psychiatry and all over the country wise and successful physicians are practicing it.

Dr. William J. Mayo, of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., says that mental ailments are the cause of more misery than tuberculosis or cancer.

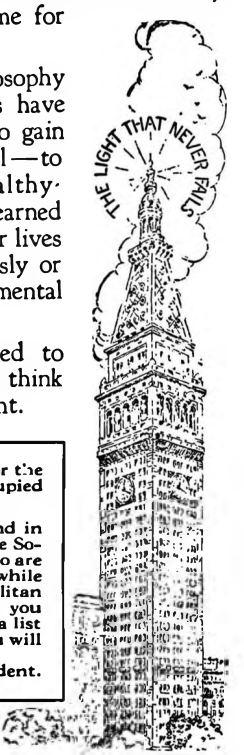
If you are feeling ill and find no physical reason for your discomfort, your doctor may discover that the real trouble is with your mind. This may be true, also, of those who have difficulty in maintaining a happy personal relationship with family, friends or business associates. Chronic worriers and pessimists show evidence of unhealthy mental operations.

Frequently it is possible to straighten out your own mental difficulties. Sometimes talking them over with some wise man or woman who is by nature a mental hygienist will help to solve the problem. If you have a serious trouble do not keep it bottled up. Repression often is harmful.

Associate with happy, normal people. Exercise and have all the fun you can. Don't devote every minute to work. Take time for recreation—*re*-creation.

For centuries religion, philosophy and inspirational writings have helped men and women to gain poise and mental control—to know themselves. Healthy-minded people who have learned how to plan and direct their lives harmoniously are consciously or unconsciously employing mental hygiene.

Mental Hygiene is needed to help millions of people to think right, act right and feel right.



The time has come when Mental Hygiene—the science of mental health—should take its place with other major activities in the great field of preventive medicine. As the work of prevention progresses, much of the mental suffering, mental deficiency, criminality and insanity in the world will be reduced.

The cost of caring for the patients in mental hospitals alone is nearly $75,000,000 a year. The economic loss, because of their disability, is more than $200,000,000 annually. In several states, one out of twenty of all people who die in adult life dies in a hospital for the insane.

The number of beds in public hospitals for the insane in this country equals those occupied by all other sick persons combined.

In 26 states in the Union, in Canada and in many European countries Mental Hygiene Societies have been formed to help those who are mentally troubled. It will be worth your while to get in touch with them. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will gladly tell you where they are located and will mail you a list of books relating to Mental Hygiene if you will ask for it.

HALEY FISKE, President.

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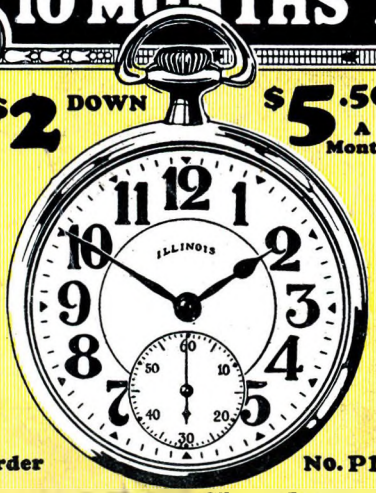

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