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EDITION

VOLUME XXXIII

NUMBER 5

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXIII.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1914.

No. 5.

The Coquina House

By Charles Wadsworth Camp

Here is a novel that will keep you awake nights to finish. Food, sleep, shelter are forgotten in its magic. We speak from experience. The story has an atmosphere—you can actually *feel* it enfold you. Gradually you realize that you are slipping away to Captain's Island, an eerie place, where the hero strives to break the deadly spell hanging over his friends, only to become enmeshed himself in a tangle of mysteries. But he finally lays its ghosts and goblins and snakes in a manner that finds you unprepared and utterly astonished, and a wraithlike girl materializes most satisfactorily. If you are good at guessing, we advise you to use your wits in anticipating the solution of an impenetrable mystery which the author weaves. We acknowledge that we failed.

(A Book-length Novel)

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN'S ISLAND is not far from civilization as one measures space. Dealing with the less tangible medium of custom, it is—or was—practically beyond perception.

James Miller didn't know this. When he had thought at all of his friend Anderson's new winter home, he had pictured the familiar Southern resort, with hotels and cottages sheltering Mammon's peerage, and a seductive bathing beach to irritate the conservative.

That background, indeed, was given detail by his own desires. For he had received Anderson's letter concerning the new move while still in bed with a wearisome illness. Now, after two

months' convalescence in quiet waterways, he was ready to snare pleasure where it was most alluring before returning to the North, and Wall Street. So he sent a telegram from Allairville, instructing Anderson to meet him in Martinsburg and conduct him to the revels of his tropical resort. As a matter of fact, it was this wire, dispatched with such smiling anticipation, that became the leash by which he was drawn into the erratic, tragic, and apparently unaccountable occurrences which at the time added immeasurably to the lonely island's evil fame.

Still it went, and Miller, ignorant of what he faced, went after it as quickly as he could, which was with the speed of a snail. It took his small cruising

launch forty-eight hours, including a minimum of rest, to conquer the fifty miles between Allairville and Martinsburg. Because of this aversion of his boat to anything approximating haste, he had caused the name *Dart* to be painted across the stern in arresting letters.

As the droll craft loafed down into the busy roadsteads of the Southern metropolis this warm May morning, Miller, in perfect consonance with its bland indifference, lay in a steamer chair on the upper deck. Clothed in white flannels and smoking a pipe, he surveyed, with gentle calm, a petulant, unreasonable world. He smiled pleasantly at enraged tugboat and barge captains. Crawling through the railroad drawbridge, he waved a greeting free from malice at the keeper, who, arms akimbo, chin uptilted, bawled his expectations of a train by midnight, and his reasonable ambition to clear the draw before that hour.

Nor did the native, leaning against the wheel forward, respond even by a glance to these studied incivilities. His ears seemed to be occupied exclusively by the engine's capricious symptoms; his eyes, by his goal, at last within view; his hands, by the wheel as he coaxed the *Dart* to the urgencies of traffic.

Miller eyed the fellow approvingly. By rare good luck, he had hired him down the State when he had bought this boat as the first ingredient of the doctor's prescription for a long rest in the South. At the start, the man had proved his fitness by exposing an abnormal affection for diseased gasoline motors. Since then he had served Miller acceptably as captain, engineer, deck hand, cook, and, in a sketchy sense, valet. Moreover, he knew obscure, uncharted channels. He had a special intuition for the haunts of fish and game. In the villages where they paused for supplies he outbargained the store-

keepers almost without words. Miller appreciated that it was due only to his devotion and ingenuity that the *Dart* at present indifferently blocked traffic in the river before Martinsburg. With the inexcusable confidence most of us bring to the contemplation of the immediate future, he regretted his early parting with this Admirable Crichton.

When the *Dart* was made fast to her appointed place at the dock, Miller lowered his legs, arose, and stretched himself to his full height comfortably. He glanced at his watch. It was noon. He had wired Anderson to meet him at the boat at one o'clock. For the first time he realized he had made a thoughtless rendezvous. Why had he not mentioned a hotel? This thriving town might have offered comparative culinary luxury after the plainness to which he had abandoned himself on the *Dart*. As it was, he must offer his hospitality to Anderson at that hour, and Anderson, no doubt, after two months of heavy luxury at his winter resort, would gratefully accept.

"Tony," he said, "you deserve the rest of the day. Why should injustice always trouble the deserving?"

Tony, standing below, leaned his elbows on the break of the upper deck. His eyes behind the bushy brows expressed no positive emotion—certainly not chagrin or revolt.

"I've asked some one to meet me here at one o'clock," Miller went on. "I must offer him luncheon unless you strike, in which case I wouldn't be much annoyed. In fact, I'd take you back to-night. Do as you wish. I'm going uptown."

Tony lowered his bearded face and slid down the companionway. Miller stepped to the dock.

"Tony!" he called.

The native thrust his head through the hatch. Miller handed him some silver.

"For what we lack in case your sense of duty throttles common sense."

A brown hand closed over the money. The emotionless face was withdrawn.

Miller strolled through the city. After his months of exile from so familiar a setting, he experienced a sense of elation at the thud of a hard pavement beneath his feet, at the cacophony of street noises, at the air of badly guarded impatience given out by these men and women who crowded him at the crossings. It was good to be well, to be on the threshold of that vaster, more selfish hubbub of his own city. No more days and nights on the boat in lonely places, he reminded himself. And he was glad.

This was the frame of mind in which he returned to the dock to meet his first dampening and significant disappointment. He saw Tony leaning, sphinx-like, against the rail of the *Dart*, but there was no sign of Anderson.

"Any word from the guest?" he asked Tony, as he came up.

The native drew a crumpled, soiled envelope from his pocket. He handed it over the rail.

As he took it, Miller recognized his friend's writing. While he read the brief note, a frown drove the satisfaction from his face, leaving bewilderment.

Anderson had commenced in his customary affectionate manner, but beyond that everything was unexpected, puzzling.

"It is far from convenient for me to leave Molly," the letter ran; and Miller could frame no satisfactory explanation for that except the serious illness of Anderson's wife. Yet the rest of the letter said nothing of illness, did not even suggest it. It ran on:

"For Heaven's sake, or more strictly for our own, come down to Captain's Island, Jim! Come this afternoon if it is humanly possible. Anchor in the inlet if you can get

anybody to steer you through. The channel is hard to negotiate, but you won't find that the chief difficulty in finding a pilot. I'll watch for you. If you make it I'll row out immediately and tell you the rest. Then you can make up your mind if you want to help us out of this mess and back to common sense. Molly sends her anxious best."

Miller read the letter twice before returning it to the soiled envelope. The only clear fact was that Anderson and Molly were in trouble. Anderson had written that he would tell him the rest on his arrival. But the rest of what? For he had told him nothing.

"How did this come?" he asked Tony.

The native pointed to a steamboat, diminutive and unkempt, made fast to a neighboring dock.

"Boy brought it over," he mumbled.

Miller glanced at his watch. Curiosity was useless. His friends needed him. He would leave at the earliest possible moment.

"This letter, Tony," he said, "is unexpected and important. If you've the usual plans of seafaring men while in port, banish them."

He swung on his heel.

"I'll be back in a few minutes."

He hurried from the dock to a telegraph office, which he had noticed during his walk. He saw only one operator on duty, and he found himself the only patron. He wrote a dispatch to Anderson, saying he was leaving at once, and handed it to the agent, a good-natured young fellow in his shirt sleeves.

The man glanced at the address, raised his eyes quickly to Miller's face, and let the yellow slip flutter to the counter.

"Well?" Miller demanded.

"Can't send that to Captain's Island."

"Place censored or quarantined?" Miller asked impatiently.

"Might as well be quarantined—for the yellow fever," the agent drawled; "but the main thing is, there isn't any

wire there. Of course, I can send a messenger boy down on the little boat to Sandport this afternoon. He might get somebody to row him across the river, and he could walk the three miles or so. Sent one down to Mr. Anderson that way yesterday. But this doesn't seem important, and you can figure the expense."

Miller's preconceived notions of Captain's Island began to crumble.

"Not worth it," he said.

"Besides," the agent went on, "it's hard to get anybody to walk that island at night. Since you're going yourself what's—"

Again he stared curiously and with a sort of wonder at Miller.

"I don't want to pry, but mighty few people go—"

Miller laughed.

"It seems to me my question comes first. What's the matter with Captain's Island?"

The agent picked the yellow form up and handed it to Miller.

"And you ask me! I don't know. Nobody knows. People been asking that for a good many more years than I am old."

Miller tore the message up. He glanced around the somnolent office.

"I'm not good at riddles, either," he said, "but if you'll let me have this one I'll try. You see, I'm going there."

The agent shuffled uncomfortably from one foot to the other.

"It's this way," he said at last. "It's all talk, but it's been going on a long while, as I said, and we understand it down here. Now, you're from the North. I don't want to make myself a laughingstock."

Miller smiled. Then he recalled the troubled tone of Anderson's letter, and his smile died.

"I promise I won't laugh," he said. "Of course, I can guess. Superstition?"

"That's it," the agent answered.

"The negroes and the fishermen around Sandport have given the island a bad name. They won't go near it if they can help themselves, and even the people here have got in the habit of leaving it a wide berth. I went down one Sunday with a crowd of wild boys, and I've never wanted to go back—not that I saw anything. Don't think that. But there's a clammy, damp, unhealthy feeling about the place. I'll say this much: if there's such things as ghosts, that's the proper place to look for them."

"Probably climate. Close to the ocean, isn't it?"

"Yes. It's like most of these sea islands—marshes on one side, an inlet on the other, across that, rolling sand dunes for maybe a quarter of a mile, and nothing beyond but the everlasting ocean. They say in the old days it was a hang-out of the buccaneers. And lonely! I can't tell you how lonely that place looks. Besides, it's got a bad reputation for rattlesnakes—no worse in the State, that I know of, but that isn't why people stay away."

"Superstition," Miller said, "always comes out on top. It's funny how these yarns get started."

"Not so funny, when you think of all that's happened on Captain's Island," the agent answered. "Trouble is, everybody knows its history. Guess they scare the children with it still. They did when I was a youngster. I've behaved myself many a time because they said if I didn't old Noyer would chain me up."

"Old Noyer?"

"A giant of a brute from Louisiana, who laid the island out as a plantation in the thirties to raise sea-island cotton. They say he carried fifty or sixty slaves, and was a big dealer on the side. Ruins of the quarters are still there, if you've got the nerve to go look 'em over. I started, but I didn't get far. The island was a jungle, and I tell you it didn't feel right to me. I'm not su-

perstitious, but you're kind of looking for something all the time there. Anyway, old Noyer was a regular king. He ruled that island and the inlet and that lonely coast. Wasn't accountable to anybody. When the law made it a crime to import any more slaves into the country, he laughed in his sleeve, and ran raving shiploads in just the same. He kept the poor devils prisoners in the quarters until he could scatter the ones that didn't die or go stark crazy around the biggest markets. Those quarters have got a right to be haunted, I reckon. Seems a pure-blooded Arab girl was brought over with a shipload of blacks. They say she was the daughter of a chief, and somebody in Africa had reasons for getting rid of her. Even Noyer didn't dare try to sell her. They say he took a fancy for her, and by and by married her. He built a coquina house for her about a mile and a half from the plantation."

"A coquina house! What's that?"

"Coquina? It's a shell deposit they used a lot in the old days for building. Noyer fixed it up in fine style for this Arab girl. She lived there until one night that giant took it into his head, without reason, that he ought to be jealous of her. He didn't wait to find out he was wrong. He cut her throat as she lay in bed. That's the house where this man, Anderson, lives—the man you wanted to send the telegram to."

Miller started. Yet he could not accept the agent's story of this ancient crime in Anderson's house as a credible explanation of his friend's note. Anderson and Molly were both normal and healthy. He had been in more or less constant touch with them since he had first met Anderson in Paris ten years before, when he had been on the threshold of manhood. During that time he had seen no display of abnormality or of any exceptional surrender

to nerves. The question that troubled principally now was why Anderson had ever chosen such a spot.

"You knew, then," he asked the agent, "about Mr. Anderson's living there?"

"Sure. It's natural everybody should get wind of that. You see, his house and the plantation house are the only two on the island, and until this winter they've both stood empty since the Civil War. Oh, yes, everybody heard of it right away."

"Queer they aren't in ruins, too," Miller said.

"No," the agent explained. "Property's still in the hands of Noyer's family, I believe. They've let it all go back to the wilderness except those two houses. Kept them in repair, figuring, I reckon, somebody might be foolish some day and rent them. Sure enough, this winter along comes a man named Morgan who takes the plantation house, and this man, Mr. Anderson, who takes the other. Of the two, give me the big place. It's more open and less grawsome than the coquina house. Yes, people would know about that, naturally. Been saying Captain's Island would grow civilized again, but I don't hear of any parties going down, and I expect both the Morgans and the Andersons have friends in Martinsburg."

Miller smiled.

"The invasion begins. I'm running down in my small boat this afternoon. How far is it?"

"About twenty-five miles altogether, but if you get a strong tide behind you it doesn't take long."

"My boat needs a waterfall."

The agent picked up a paper and turned to the marine page.

"Tide's on the turn now. It runs three to four miles an hour between here and the mouth of the river."

"Then I could make it by night," Miller said. "I suppose I need a pilot?"

"Yes. There's no entrance directly

from the river. You have to take a channel across the marshes."

The agent hesitated.

"They call it the Snake."

He cleared his throat, adding apologetically:

"That's because it twists and turns so."

"But about a pilot?" Miller asked.

"Honestly, I don't know," the agent answered. "Might get one to take you by the island in the daytime, but I doubt if you can persuade any of these ignorant rivermen to guide you into that inlet at night to anchor."

"That's silly," Miller said irritably.

"Lots of silly things there's no accounting for," the agent replied. "And you can't realize the reputation the island's got around this part of the country. And, see here: Don't you be putting me down as foolish, too. I've told you what they say. I don't know anything about spooks—never saw one. All I do say is, there's a kind of a spell on Captain's Island that reaches out for you, and—and sort of scares you. That's all I say—a sort of spell you want to get away from. Maybe you're right, and it's just the climate and that jungle and the loneliness."

"And I," Miller said, "have been picturing it as a popular winter resort."

"You'll have to ask the snakes and the spooks about that," the agent laughed.

He turned to an entering customer.

Miller went back to the *Dart*, telling himself that the problem of Anderson's note was as undecipherable as ever. He would have to wait for an explanation until he had seen Anderson that night. Therefore, he was all the more anxious to start. He had had enough experience with the natives to accept as final the agent's prophecy about the pilots. Tony, who knew so much river lore, however, might furnish a means if he were handled prop-

erly. As soon as he had stepped aboard, he called to the man.

The native's bearded face appeared in the companionway. He climbed to the deck, wiping his hands on a ball of waste.

"Tony," Miller said, "do you know the Snake Channel?"

Tony started. His hands ceased tearing at the waste.

"It's near the mouth of the river," Miller added.

Tony nodded.

"Think you could get us through without piling us on an oyster bank?"

The native waited a moment before nodding again with a jerky motion.

These signs were not lost on Miller.

"I've altered my plans," he said. "Instead of abandoning you and the *Dart* here in a few days, as I had intended, I've decided to go a little farther north by water."

Tony's satisfaction was apparent in a smile.

Miller felt it was important to let that impression, which was more or less true, stand. It would explain his desire to navigate the Snake. Once through the Snake and in the inlet, he would find ways to laugh Tony out of his superstitious fears.

"So we'll cast off," he said, "and go through the Snake this afternoon."

Tony's smile faded. The bearded lips half opened, as though he was about to speak. But his eyes caught the high sun, and evidently he changed his mind, for he went down the ladder, and, after a moment, the engine was indignantly thrashing.

Miller sighed.

Tony reappeared, cast off, took his place at the wheel, and backed the *Dart* into the river.

Miller seated himself in his deck chair. The city, whose warm, hurried life had just seemed to welcome him, let him go now indifferently to a far greater loneliness than that with which

he had thought himself done. He realized this with surprise before three o'clock. The short distance between Captain's Island and the metropolis had deceived him. He had been unable to conceive the desolate nature of that narrow stretch. He had not dreamed of anything like the precipitate loneliness that crowded the last shanty outpost of the great factories.

A little after three the smoke of these factories was a vague haze on the horizon. The high ground on which they stood had fallen abruptly to flat, wet, uninhabitable marshes. These were relieved only by repellent swamps of palmettos or an occasional pine tree, which stretched itself, gaunt and gibbet-like, from the waving grass.

Miller's half-amused reception of the agent's talk had not been a pose. He had no belief in the supernatural, nor would he admit for an instant that its vapory rumors would ever have the power to materialize for him into any startling fact. Yet this landscape could not fail to impress him as a barren, neutral ground between activity and stagnation, between the familiar and the unsounded. It forced him, indeed, to call upon his exceptional will power to fight back a mental inertness, a desire to abandon himself to melancholy. And his will was not altogether victorious. He became ill at ease, restless. He glanced at Tony. The native leaned forward, clutching the wheel with both hands, as though engaged in a physical attempt to aid the swift tide and the engines. His pipe had, for once, gone out, and remained neglected.

Miller began anxiously to look for signs of the Snake Channel. But to either side the dreary marshes swept away apparently unbroken.

At five o'clock, however, Tony turned the *Dari* toward the left bank of the river. Miller could see a narrow opening in the marsh grass through which glassy water flowed reluctantly. Be-

yond it, in the direction of the sea, he made out a line of low trees, probably palmettos and cedars. It stretched northward from the river across the marshes for perhaps five miles. He pointed at the opening.

"The Snake?" he asked.

Tony nodded. He shifted his feet restlessly. After maneuvering with his levers until the engine slowed down, he faced Miller.

"Anchor?"

Miller arose and walked to the break of the deck.

"Certainly not. I said we were going through the Snake to-night."

Tony shuffled nearer. He spread his hands toward the sky.

"You mean," Miller said, "that it will be dark in an hour or so? I know it. What of it?"

Tony opened his lips. He spoke with painful effort.

"Too late to get past. Would have to anchor by Captain's Island."

He pointed at the low, dense mass of trees which Miller had noticed.

"Naturally," Miller answered. "That's my wish—to anchor in Captain's Inlet."

The threatened change in Tony became complete. It startled. He placed his hands tremblingly on the break of the deck at Miller's feet. His cheeks above the heavy beard had grown white. His eyes showed the first glimmer of revolt Miller had ever detected. But, strangest of all, the native, whose habitual silence was broken only by the most imperative demands, burst suddenly into torrential speech.

Miller started back, unwilling to believe, because this man, who on occasion had displayed the most uncalculating physical bravery, was now exposing a shocking cowardice. And why? He scarcely seemed to know himself. The words ran one into the other with the guttural accent of terror. It was something to do with Captain's Island. It

didn't pay to anchor there at night. He backed this opinion with a flood of testimony—creeping, lying tales. Miller knew it while he tried to shut his ears to them.

He raised his hand to stop this cruel exhibition. He stared into the frightened eyes. For only a moment the wills of the two men battled, then the stronger, the more intelligent, conquered. Tony's eyes wavered. His guttural voice ceased.

"Tony," Miller said quietly, "with you or without you, if she can be coaxed through the channel, the *Dart* will anchor in Captain's Inlet to-night. There's the dinghy. Take it, if you wish, and row to Sandport. You can bring it around to-morrow by daylight. I'll have your money ready."

Tony hesitated. After a visible struggle, he turned back to the wheel. The engine gathered speed again. The *Dart*'s nose was pointed for the opening.

"And, Tony," Miller added, "since you seem inclined to stand by the ship, you must understand that this nonsense cannot be repeated."

Tony didn't answer; yet, knowing him, Miller felt satisfied. But he noticed that the broad shoulders shook a little.

The boat was entering the Snake. Miller raised his eyes. Perhaps it was the waning light—for the sun was setting—or some atmospheric trick, but all at once Captain's Island seemed to have come nearer. The dense mass of its foliage cut into a flaming sky. Stealthy shadows slipped from it across the bent marsh grass. Miller had a fancy that it was reaching out slowly and surely. For what?

The agent's talk of a spell came back to him. Was it the spell of the place already reaching out for him? He felt suddenly cold. He shivered. If it was the spell of the place, it had found him, for his customary cheerfulness was

finally throttled by a black, heavy depression. He knew, unless the agent had lied, that monstrous things had happened there. Was it possible that Anderson's letter referred to their fancied, incorporal survivals? The fact that the question persisted, troubled him. Unthinkingly, he accepted the challenge of the island. Closing his fist, he raised it against the line of forest. The absurdity of his gesture failed to impress him. He descended to the forward deck. He stepped close to Tony. He tried to speak naturally.

"Better hurry her, Tony. It mightn't be a bad plan to get settled in Captain's Inlet before dark."

CHAPTER II.

The *Dart* crept on through the Snake, twisting and turning in the narrow channel between the marshes. Miller, contrary to his usual custom, remained forward with Tony, his eyes fixed on the somber island, which little by little they approached.

The sun had set quickly, but its flames still smoldered in the west. Aside from the island, caught in the heart of this barbaric afterglow, nothing served to draw the eye except an occasional melancholy clump of Spanish bayonets or palmettos. The only signs of life came from the dwellers of the marsh—the flapping of a heron, disturbed by their passing, or the far-away, mournful cries of unseen birds.

Miller regretted the thickening dusk. All at once the other's gossip had become comprehensible. Yet he did not speak to Tony. To have done so would have assumed an undesirable quality of sympathy, of confession. He forced himself, against his inclination, to return to his steamer chair on the upper deck. As he climbed the ladder, he saw the native send a startled glance after him.

At last the boat took a sweeping

curve to the east. The Snake widened and straightened, disclosing an unobstructed vista past the northern end of the island to sand dunes, piled against the gloomy ashes of the sunset.

A swifter current caught them. It appeared to hurry the *Dart*, resisting, into the jaws of the inlet.

Miller started up. Tony was straining at the wheel. He seemed to be trying to turn the boat over by the marshes opposite the island, but the current was too strong for him, or the engine too inefficient. In spite of all he could do, the *Dart* kept near the land. Leaning against the rail, Miller watched the struggle and its issue with a feeling of helplessness. Almost before he knew it, they were drawn very near—so near that, even in this rapidly waning light, the dark mass defined itself a little for him.

He saw that the bank at that end was higher than he had anticipated. This appearance of height was increased by a heavy growth of cedars, whose tops had been beaten by the prevailing wind from the dunes and the sea into an unbroken, upward slope. Beneath this soft, thick, and green roof the ancient trunks writhed and twisted like a forest setting for some grim, Scandinavian folk tale.

Behind the cedars, palmettos thrust their tufted tops in insolent contrast; and here and there one of those gibbetlike pines lifted itself, dignified, isolated, suggestive.

That first close inspection made Miller feel that it was a place of shadows, offering, with confident promise, shelter for things that would hide, for things that should be hidden. It carried to him, moreover, a definite menace for the disturber of that to which the island had opened its refuge. To land, to penetrate this jungle, would call for more than physical courage; would, in short, demand a moral resolution, which,

without warning, he found himself wondering if he possessed.

Suddenly the line was broken. An opening nearly a hundred yards wide had been torn through the dense mass. A small pier stretched from it to the channel, and from the shore the clearing sloped gently upward to a colonial dwelling. The building was indistinct in this fading light, but Miller knew it for the plantation house where Noyer had lived and ruled before the war.

It was painted white. The main portion was two stories high, with a sloping attic roof, from the center of which a square cupola arose. High, slender columns supported the roof of a wide veranda. Wings of one story, curved at the ends, stretched from either side.

That houses absorb and retain a personality is scarcely debatable. The passing of these eighty years—the activities and rumored cruelties of the earlier ones, the silence and desertion of the later—had given to this house an air of weary sorrow which reached Miller almost palpably. A single light in the left-hand wing, yellow, glimmering, like a diseased eye, increased this sensation.

He listened intently, but there were no sounds of life from the shore—utter silence, until a bird in the jungle cried out raucously, angrily.

They slipped past. The house was gone. The line appeared to be unbroken again. And the agent had said this was more open, less depressing than the coquina house where Anderson lived.

Miller went down the ladder. He resumed his stand near Tony, and Tony, Miller thought, sent him a glance of comprehension. He cleared his throat a trifle nervously.

“I suppose we can anchor anywhere about here.”

Tony pointed ahead. The shore of the island curved to the south. Opposite it, the sand dunes swept around in an exact parallel. As they swung into

the inlet, the flank of the island slowly exposed itself, scarcely more, however, than a black patch; for the night was on them, and the southern end of the island and of the inlet was lost in shadows.

Tony coaxed and maneuvered until he had brought the *Dart* close to the dunes, as far from the island as possible. When he was satisfied, he dropped the wheel, ran forward, and let the anchor go. There was a splash as the chain rattled through the eye. Before the noise had ceased, the boat turned, listing heavily as it went. Miller, surprised, looked over the rail. The tide was running like a mill race—ugly, black water, dashing by like a mill race, as though to get past Captain's Island and out to the clean, open sea. The boat was quickly around, and straining at her chain, impulsive to follow.

"Get up your riding light," Miller said.

Tony came back, shaking his head. Miller understood.

"Run it up, just the same."

Tony shook his head again, but he went below for the light. He returned after a moment, and ran the lantern to the masthead. Then he went forward, stooped, and examined the anchor chain. Evidently he would take every precaution against being dragged to that sinister shore opposite.

"You're careful to-night, Tony."

The native stiffened. For a moment he listened intently.

"What is it?" Miller asked.

Tony pointed. Miller leaned against the rail, peering and listening, too. A soft, regular splashing came to him. Before long he saw a rowboat slowly emerge from the shadow of the island.

"That you, Andy?" he called.

No answer came, but the boat drew nearer, at last swung under the stern of the *Dart*.

"Andy!" Miller called again.

"Take this line, Jim."

It was Anderson's voice, but it was none the less unfamiliar—restrained almost to the point of monotony, scarcely audible, as though issuing from nearly closed lips.

"Light the cabin lamp," Miller said to Tony.

He bent and took the line. When he had made the rowboat fast, he held out his hand and helped Anderson to the deck. The hand, he noticed, was hard, dry, a little unsteady.

"Andy!" he said. "Welcome!"

Anderson didn't reply immediately.

"Speechless from joy?" Miller laughed after a time.

"Not far from it," Anderson answered. "Thank heavens you're here! When your wire came last night, Molly and I had a real old-fashioned celebration with that demonstrative bottle of wine. You haven't forgotten the fetishes of the Rue d'Assas?"

"And Molly?" Miller asked. "She isn't sick?"

"No—all right. Or as right as can be. That wife of mine— Oh, well, you'll see her, Jim, I hope. You got my letter? We were worried it mightn't reach you."

"I tried to wire."

"Then you know what an uncivilized hole we're in."

He stepped back so that the light from the companionway shone upon him. Miller experienced a sense of shock. Instead of the healthy, pleasant face and the satisfied eyes he remembered, he stared at a lean and haggard countenance out of which eyes full of a dull fear looked suspiciously. Clearly Anderson was the victim of some revolutionary trick of life, or else—it was the only alternative—stood on the crumbling edge of nervous breakdown. Miller hesitated to ask the question that would put the meaning of that extraordinary note beyond all doubt.

"Anyway, I'm here," he said. "Your letter would have brought me farther

than this. But before we grow too serious, inspect my floating palace. It's the low comedian of all these waterways. Picked it up at Rigadoon Beach when the doctor sentenced me."

Anderson put his hand on Miller's arm.

"You must think me a friendly ass, but it confesses my state of mind—that I should forget your illness. You seem yourself again."

"I am," Miller answered. "Never felt better. I wanted one fling with you and Molly before going back to the racket."

The momentary flash of the remembered Anderson snapped out. His eyes sought the deck.

"If you stay, it won't be the kind of fling you expect."

Again Miller avoided the issue.

"Which will you see first," he asked, "the smoke room, the dining room, or the saloon? They're all one. Step this way. Lightly, please. We have no double bottoms."

As Anderson reached the foot of the ladder, his face brightened, but it was with the envy that comes dangerously near offending the tenth commandment.

"What a cheerful time you must have had!" he said. "How Molly would enjoy seeing this!"

The interior of the *Dart* was, in fact, unexpected after a glance at her graceless and battered hull. Its former owner had possessed taste and an acceptable definition of comfort. The walls were painted an ivory tint, which took its meaning from four soft-toned French prints. The lockers, running the length of either side, were covered with tapestry cushions. A folding mahogany table stood between them. Forward, a door opened into a tiny state-room, decorated in the same cheerful fashion, and, opposite, beneath the companion ladder, a low, sliding panel led to the kitchen and engine room.

"Yes," Anderson sighed. "You've

been comfortable here. You're lucky, Jim."

He turned away.

"Lucky and selfish. You ought to share your good things perpetually."

Miller laughed.

"Maybe," he said carelessly, "you and Molly have found a more compelling incubus for me on Captain's Island."

Anderson's shoulders shook. Miller looked at him, alarmed. But he was laughing—a little hysterically, still it was laughter.

"Since I'm the point of the joke," Miller said, "you ought to let me in it."

"I was only thinking," Anderson answered, "that Captain's Island is a rare place to look for such a comfort as a wife ought to be."

Miller plunged.

"Andy, I'm waiting to hear about this island of yours, and—and that puzzling letter. First, something to warm you up—"

He raised his voice.

"Tony!"

Anderson glanced up.

"Tony?"

"My general boat worker."

"Get him North?"

"No—a native."

Anderson watched rigidly while Tony thrust his bearded face through the kitchen doorway and took Miller's orders.

"Now, Andy, sit down and raise the veil."

But Anderson still stared at the sliding door.

"This man of yours—Tony!"

"Don't be afraid to talk. I'd confide my most particular secrets to him."

Anderson shook his head.

"I wouldn't trust these natives too far."

Anger colored his face and voice.

"There's one hanging around the

island. Did you see his filthy tub as you came in?"

"No. Good and bad the world over, Andy."

"Be sure of him. You must be sure," Anderson insisted, with a vibrant earnestness.

"It makes no difference," Miller said. "The door will be closed. Speak low, and he won't hear you. What kind of a mess are you and Molly in down here? Why didn't you bring Molly out with you?"

"At this hour! You'll understand, if you stay. It's not pleasant on the island after dark. I—I hoped you'd get here earlier. Don't think I'm fanciful, Jim."

Tony entered and placed the tray on the table. Miller motioned to the cigars. Anderson reached out and drew his hand back absent-mindedly.

When Tony had returned to the kitchen and had closed the sliding door Miller lighted his own cigar.

"Now, let's have it," he said.

Anderson leaned forward. His attitude was appealing. There was a definite appeal in his eye. It impressed Miller as tragic that such a strong, self-reliant man should assume this pitiful cloak.

CHAPTER III.

Anderson found a beginning difficult. When at last he spoke his voice was low and there were uneven pauses between the words.

"I wanted to come right out and explain the situation," he said. "Then, if you choose, you can pull out of here in the morning. Molly and I talked it over when your letter came. It seemed the only fair thing. But it means telling you, in cold blood, and I swore to Molly I couldn't do that. I said you'd call me a superstitious idiot or suspect me of sunstroke. In either case, you'll have to include Molly in your diagno-

sis, and you know how sensible she is."

"Yes, and how sensible you've always been," Miller said. "You don't mean to say you've let this lonely hole get on your nerves?"

"I pray that's what it is," Anderson replied eagerly—"just nerves. That's why we want to use you—as a sort of test. The truth is, we're under the spell of this place, and things are happening—unnatural things—things that we can't explain in any believable way."

Miller tried to smile.

"Sounds as though you were haunted."

"And that's what it seems like. I didn't want to say it myself. It isn't pleasant to be laughed at, even when the laugh is justified."

For the second time that day Miller promised not to laugh at anything he might be told about Captain's Island. He was conscious, indeed, of a sharp mental struggle before he had subordinated the impressions he had received himself coming through the Snake and into the inlet.

"I agree not to laugh," he said; "but you must understand, in the beginning, that I can't take any supernatural talk very seriously. I have no manner of belief in such rot."

"After all, Jim," Anderson answered. "that's the way I want you to talk. It's what we need—somebody with a powerful will like yours, and a contempt for the uncanny to straighten us out and bring us back to common sense."

"Why the deuce have you stayed on if you've been so unhappy?" Miller asked.

"Because we can't yield to a superstition we've never acknowledged. We can't go back to the world, convinced of such madness. Molly is more determined than I. We've sworn for our peace of mind the rest of our lives to stay on until every hope of a natural

solution is gone. You're just about our last hope."

"This isn't like you," Miller said. "Frankly, Andy, it's folly!"

"Our only excuse for such folly," Anderson answered warmly, "is that we're not the only reasonable people to confess it. There's Morgan who lives in the big house. You must have seen it when you came in. He's more your own sort—absolutely balanced, with a strong will. You'll like him, Jim. He's been our only prop. But little by little I've seen his confidence dwindle, and his uncertainty and worry grow. Then there's Balt, a Federal judge in Martinsburg. He brought us down here in the first place."

"That's how you found it?"

"Yes. Balt was a friend of Molly's father. When we were going through Martinsburg on our way to Cuba, in January, he made us stay over for a few days. He has a fast cruising launch. He knew I was an artist, and he thought I'd enjoy seeing this fascinating combination of jungle, water, and sand. It was a brilliant day, and we came down so fast the island seemed only a step—a charmingly isolated suburb of Martinsburg. Jim, the place seemed to grasp me physically, and to demand, since chance had brought me, that I stay and put on canvas its beauty and the mystery that tantalized even at noon. I felt I had found the inspiration for a new note, for the building of a real reputation. And everything favored the scheme. The coquina house would do. The fact that we would have neighbors in the plantation house settled Molly. We were enthusiastic and happy about it. Then Balt tried to discourage us. He let us see that even he was subject to this—this folly, as you call it."

Miller whistled.

"A judge, eh! He ought to get enough that's beyond the ken of man in

his own courtroom. What did your judge say?"

"To begin with, he told us the amazing history of the island and old Noyer, its original owner."

"That, at least, has corroboration," Miller said, after Anderson had repeated the agent's story.

"But," Anderson continued, "he couldn't define any real objections beyond the island's isolation, its lack of convenient communication, and—of course—we take them so much for granted now—the snakes."

"I've heard they're the chief tenants," Miller said. "They might have been a sound objection to your settling here."

"But we hadn't seen any that day, and we laughed, thinking the judge was trying to stop up some of his other arguments that wouldn't hold water. And it's true. Neither Molly nor I have seen a single snake, but they're there somehow or other—always—in the background. It's the feeling of the place—a feeling of long, slimy snakes, stealthily gliding in a circle from the shadows with unsheathed tongues. Lately we've feared they were growing daring—were getting ready to strike."

He took out his handkerchief and passed it across his face.

"And these other arguments?" Miller asked. "The ones that the judge couldn't define, that wouldn't hold water?"

"Of course, he couldn't convince us with his talk of native and negro superstition while the sun glinted on the inlet and bathed the scene of his atrocious yarns."

"Atrocious, you say; yet you—"

"They must be," Anderson said. "Sitting here, face to face with you, I can say it. They must be—superstitions founded on Noyer's revolting cruelty to his black merchandise, on his terrible fits of rage, on the Arab

girl who was pampered and murdered in our house. Beyond question, the island is avoided, and these stories, rather than the snakes, are responsible. The boy who brought your telegram from Sandport yesterday stumbled in at dusk, in tears. He refused to go back until daylight—lay awake half the night, crying out. These beliefs made it necessary from the first for us to bring our own provisions from Sandport—to drive or walk the three miles to the river end of the island, signal for a boat, and row across."

"Pleasant!" Miller said. "What do the servants think of it?"

"Servants! Haven't had one in the house for two months, except Jake. Same way with Morgan. He's managed to keep his man and a cook. That's all."

"Of course, Jake would be faithful," Miller said.

"Yes, he's faithful, but with a painful struggle. Sometimes I feel I have no right to make him stay here, loathing and fearing the place as he does."

"As you do, too, Andy," Miller said softly. "Tell me what has made you doubt the judge's yarns were atrocious. What kind of spooks am I to lay? What do you think you've seen?"

"We've seen nothing. If one only could see! It's more subtle than that. It began the moment we moved down. We had found we couldn't get a native servant near the place, so we sent North for Mary and Ellen. You know how attached they were to Molly, how long she had had them."

"Yes," Miller replied; "but ignorant women—easily scared by stories."

"They heard no stories," Anderson said. "There was no chance. We met them at the station in Martinsburg and started immediately on Balt's launch, which he had loaned us. He had taken our impedimenta down before, so everything was ready for us. Mary and Ellen were enthusiastic when we

sailed into the inlet. They had never been South before. They were excited by the experience, and completely satisfied. But when we entered the house its damp, chill air repelled us."

"It would," Miller said. "I'm told the entire island is a jungle. Such places don't get the sun, and, remember, your house had stood in that jungle, uninhabited, for decades."

"Yes," Anderson agreed, "I ascribed a great deal to the climate at first, and maybe it's that, but—after a while one wonders."

"First, then, the girls became frightened?"

"I don't know—at first. We all fell silent. We started fires in every room, but it seemed as though no amount of warmth could cut that charnel-house atmosphere. And the day went so quickly! Black night had trapped us before we had time to realize it. I looked at Molly.

"'If the judge could peep in on us now,' I said, 'the laughing wouldn't be all on one side.'

"So we laughed at each other, and were more cheerful after that until dinner time. Then Mary, without warning, burst into tears."

"Homesick, in a strange house," Miller suggested.

"We couldn't find out what it was. She didn't seem to know herself. Ellen, of course, had to see it. Their enthusiasm and satisfaction were dead.

"They wouldn't go upstairs until we did. We had given them each a room, but they said they preferred to share one. They hung back from saying good night to Molly. This all drove our minds from ourselves. We went to bed talking about it, wondering what the upshot would be.

"A wild scream awakened me in the middle of the night. In such a place it was doubly startling. Molly was already up. I threw on a bath robe, and we hurried to Mary and Ellen. Their

light was burning. They lay in bed, trembling and clinging to each other.

"They wouldn't talk at first—wouldn't or couldn't. Finally we got it out of them. They had heard something dreadful happening in the next room. Some one, they swore, had been murdered there. They had heard everything, and Mary had screamed. Jim, I know it sounds absurd, but those girls who had never dreamed of the existence of old Noyer or his Arab woman, described in detail such sounds as might have cursed that house seventy or eighty years ago the night of that vicious and unpunished murder.

"We tried to laugh them out of their fancy. We entered the next room—a large, gloomy apartment on the front, probably—if Balt's story is true—the room in which the woman died. Of course, there was nothing there, but we couldn't get Mary and Ellen to see for themselves. Nor would they stay upstairs. They dressed, and spent the rest of the night in the dining room. And when we came down for breakfast they told us what we had feared—they wouldn't spend another night in that house. They were ready, even, to pay their own fare home. They hated to leave Molly, they said, but they couldn't help themselves. They were afraid. It was then that I sent for Jake. If Jake didn't owe me so much, if he wasn't so persistent in his gratitude and loyalty, he would have followed them long ago."

"Nightmares! Nightmares!" Miller scoffed.

"Jim," Anderson said slowly, "since then Molly and I have had the same nightmares."

Miller glanced up.

"Possibly imagination, after the girls' story."

"No," Anderson answered, with conviction. "We have heard—we still hear—sounds that are not imagination—sounds that suggest a monstrous trag-

edy. And the worst of it is, there is no normal explanation—none, none! Jim, I've tried everything to trace these sounds, to account for them. And they're not all. Aside from this recurrent experience, the house is—is terrifying. It isn't too strong a word. You remember all that stuff we used to laugh at in the reports of the Psychical Research Society—footsteps in empty rooms, doors opening and closing without explanation? Well, Molly and I don't laugh at it now—but we want to laugh. Jim, make us laugh again."

"Of course. Of course, Andy."

"And always at night," Anderson went on, "there's that gruesome feeling of an intangible and appalling presence. In the dark halls and rooms, you know it is there, behind you, but when you turn, there is nothing."

He shuddered. He drank some water.

"In an indefinite way, the atmosphere of that house is the atmosphere of the entire island. I can't explain that to you. It's something one feels, but can't analyze—something you must know and—and loathe yourself before you can understand. As far as I can fix it, it's the feeling of the snakes, of which I spoke, and something besides. It holds a threat of death."

"And the snakes?" Miller asked. "You say they haven't troubled?"

"I said we had seen none."

Anderson paused.

"But," he went on, after a moment, "the other day we found Molly's big Persian cat in the thicket between the shore and the old slave quarters. It had been struck by a rattlesnake."

"Too inquisitive cat!" Miller said. "You know snakes don't care about having their habits questioned closely by other animals."

Anderson shook his head.

"If you had lived here the last two months as we have, you might feel as we do about it—that it's a sort of

warning. You know I said they were growing daring."

"Andy! Andy!" Miller cried. "This won't do!"

"That's what Morgan's always saying," Anderson answered; "but in his quiet way he's on tenterhooks himself. He's resisting the impulse to go, too."

"Has he a wife?" Miller asked.

"A daughter," Anderson said slowly.

"Any company for Molly?"

Anderson turned away. He seemed reluctant to reply.

"No," he said finally; "not even for her father. Jim, I wish you'd try to judge that girl for yourself—if you can, if you see her. You can't tell about her. She's queer, elusive, unnatural. She troubles Morgan. Of course, it's a subject we can't discuss very well."

"Off her head?"

"Judge her for yourself, Jim, if you can. Frankly, she's beyond me."

"Another puzzle! And that's the entire population?"

"Morgan's two brothers from the North have visited him once or twice. They made it almost jolly. But they didn't stay long. Don't blame them."

"And that's all?"

"On the island proper. There's that native of whom I spoke. One shrinks from him instinctively. He's been hanging around ever since we've been here, living in a flat-bottomed oyster boat, anchored near the shore. At night I've thought I've seen him crawling silently around the inlet in his filthy old tub."

"At least, he doesn't seem superstitious," Miller put in dryly.

"Rather a figure to foster superstition. He seems to symbolize the whole thing."

"That's a curious fancy. What has he to say for himself? You've been aboard his boat, of course?"

"Scarcely. Morgan tried that once, out of bravado. He found no one there

—no sign of life. I've attempted, time after time, to get a word with the man. I've hailed him from the shore. But he pays no attention—either isn't to be seen at all, or else stands on his deck, gaunt and lean and hairy, etched against the sunset. You look at him until you hate him, until you fear him."

"I can try my own hand there," Miller said. "Then that's the total of your neighbors?"

"There's a colony of oystermen working the marsh banks to the north of the island. They live in thickets. They have the appearance of savages. Balt said there's a queer secret organization among them."

Miller smoked in silence for some moments, while Anderson watched him with an air of suspense. Miller lowered his cigar and leaned forward.

"This girl, Andy?"

"It's hard to say anything more definite about her, and, if you stay, I'd rather you followed my wishes there. Judge her for yourself, Jim. And—and are you going to stay and help us back to mental health?"

"What do you think?" Miller asked, a little impatiently. "You mustn't grow too fanciful."

"It's asking a great deal," Anderson said, "because, sane and strong-willed as you are, Jim, it isn't impossible you should feel the taint yourself."

"I'm not afraid of that," Miller laughed. "I'll stay, but not in your house at first. I'll live on the boat, here, in the inlet, where I can keep my eye on that fisherman of yours, and get a broad view of the whole island and its mystery. I'll hold myself a little aloof. You see, it would be perfectly natural for you to row out and call on a stranger anchoring here and invading your loneliness; natural for you to bring Molly, say to-morrow; natural for me to return your call, and eventually to visit you at the coquina house overnight, and experience its dreadful

thrills. That's the way we'll let it stand, if you please, for the present. I'm a total stranger."

"Do as you think best," Anderson agreed gratefully.

"Then, that's settled," Miller said. "Now, how about dinner? You'll stay?"

Anderson arose.

"No; Molly and Jake are waiting. I know they're worried, Jim. They won't have any peace until I'm safely back. These woods—we don't like them, even by day."

Miller smiled.

"I'll do my best to purify them of everything but snakes. I can't promise about the snakes."

As he led the way up the ladder, he heard Tony open the sliding door. Glancing back, he saw the native, fear in his face, waiting to follow.

"There is something here that gets the natives," he whispered to Anderson. "Go home, now, and sleep, and tell Molly to sleep. We'll straighten things out in no time."

"You'll do it if it can be done," Anderson said. "If it can be done—"

He grasped the painter and drew his boat forward against the resisting tide. Miller held the line for him while Anderson stepped in.

Anderson clearly shrank from the short journey back to the coquina house. A sense of discomfort swept Miller. He felt the necessity of strengthening his friend with something reassuring, with something even more definite than reassurance.

"And, Andy," he said, leaning over the rail, "if anything comes up—if you need me at any moment, send Jake, or, if there isn't time, call from the shore or fire a gun three times. I should hear you."

"Thanks, Jim. I'll remember," Anderson answered.

He pushed his boat from the side of the *Dart*. The tide caught it and drew

it into the black shadows even before he had seated himself and arranged the oars.

Miller remained leaning over the rail, straining his eyes to find the vanished boat. After a moment he tried to penetrate the darkness for a light, for some sign of that other boat, the boat of the fisherman. He could make out nothing. Yet it must lie somewhere over there, harboring that grim, provocative figure to which Anderson attached such unnatural importance.

As he leaned there, he felt troubled, uncertain. It had been a shock to see a man so exceptionally sane as Anderson suddenly deprived of his healthy outlook on life and death, and struggling in this desperate way to regain it.

He told himself he had no slightest fear of the island or its lonely mysteries. That might, after all, be a satisfactory explanation—the loneliness, the climate, the clinging mass of native superstition, the brooding over the servants' fancies, the consequent growth of sleeplessness, and, finally, when nerves were raw, this first reminder of the snakes. It was enough to work on the strongest minds.

Miller smiled at Anderson's fear that he might become a victim, too. Yet the impression of unhealth the place had carried to him, and which he had fought down before Anderson, had returned. He leaned there, wondering.

He swung around at a sharp noise. Tony was at the anchor chain again.

"Afraid we'll drag?"

The native pointed to the sky.

Only a few stars gleamed momentarily as heavy clouds scudded southward. For the first time, Miller felt the stinging quality of the wind.

"It'll blow hard," he said. "What a night! I'm going below. I'll be hungry by the time you have dinner ready."

He went down the companionway. The other followed him so closely he

could feel his warm breath on the back of his neck.

Tony went in the kitchen and started to get dinner. Miller stretched himself on a locker. He arranged the cushions luxuriously behind his head. He took from the shelf a book which he had found fascinating only last night. He lighted his pipe. He tried to fancy himself supremely comfortable and cozy.

Tony came in after a few moments and commenced to set the table. Miller blew great clouds of smoke ceiling-ward.

"Not so bad down here, Tony?" he said. "Confess, it couldn't look a bit different if we were tied up at the dock in Martinsburg? Well?"

He lowered his book. He glanced up. The pallor that had invaded the native's face at the command to anchor in Captain's Inlet had not retreated. The fear, too, that had burned in his eyes then showed no abatement. It flashed over Miller that there was a resemblance—not physical, but all the more disturbing because it wasn't—between the Anderson who had just come to him with his appeal and the Tony who recently had bent to his command and traversed the Snake. He found himself questioning if a mirror would not have shown an alteration in his own countenance. The thought troubled him. To drive it out he looked around—at the tapestry cushions, at the familiar ivory paneling, at the four French prints. He had lied to Tony. It was not the same. It did not look the same. It did not feel the same.

He reached up and opened the port-hole, to knock the ashes from his pipe. A vicious gust of wind tore the brass frame from his hand and entered the cabin. The lamp flickered. Reaching over to regain the frame, Miller's eye caught Tony. He had dropped his work. He leaned heavily against the

table, his mouth half open, his eyes fixed on the open port.

Quickly, Miller realized that the silent native wanted to talk; wanted to tell him something, strained to go back, doubtless, to those unhealthy rumors whose beginnings he had blurted out at the entrance of the Snake.

Miller's irritation flamed into anger. Decidedly, between Anderson and this superstitious fellow, his own poise would be threatened. Ridiculous! He could not be intimidated by the atmosphere of any place, however lonely, however tarnished by creeping lies. He slammed the frame shut and screwed it tight. He swung on Tony.

"What are you staring at now? Get hold of yourself. Make up your mind to one thing; you'll see no ghosts on Captain's Island while you're with me. Hurry dinner."

It was the first time he had used that tone with the man. He wondered at it, but Tony returned to the kitchen, shrugging his shoulders. Miller, however, noticed that a rule was broken. The kitchen door was left wide.

After dinner he went back to the book which he had thought fascinating last night. Now its cleverness had dwindled. It failed to hold him. Tony, whose invariable custom it had been to retire early to his bunk in the kitchen, sat, wide-eyed, in the doorway. Several times Miller was on the point of commanding him to close the door. In the end he thought better of it. These irritable impulses were foreign to his personality. They might be looked upon as a manifestation of the place, against which he should guard. So when he went to bed, after keeping up his farce of reading for half an hour longer, he tried to throw himself into an attitude of amused comprehension.

"If it will make you feel any better, Tony, I'll leave my door open a crack. Then you won't have all the spooks to yourself."

A sigh answered him. Tony's light went out. The boat was in darkness.

Miller tried to sleep. But in spite of the season, and the closed portholes, a chill, damp air invaded his stateroom. The wind had increased to a gale. It beat furiously against the boat, which rocked in the uneven gusts. The distant pounding of the breakers brought a mournful undertone across the dunes. The stealthy passage of the tide suggested the flight of such creatures as Miller knew must live and torture in Tony's superstitious imagination.

CHAPTER IV.

Convinced that he could not sleep, Miller lay brooding over Anderson's story, sympathizing under the stress of this night more and more with Anderson and Molly. Toward morning, however, he must have dropped off, for when he opened his eyes the low sun was shining through the port. The charnel-house atmosphere had been dissipated. The *Dart* lay on an even keel. Tony was up. The welcome odor of coffee entered the stateroom.

Slipping on his bath robe, Miller hurried to the deck, jumped overboard, and fought that racing tide until it was on the point of vanquishing him.

When he was dressed Tony brought him his coffee. He sat on deck sipping it, calmly appraising his surroundings, almost gleefully aware of the retreat of last night's fancies.

He could see the fisherman's boat now, anchored a third of a mile away, close to the shore of the island. It was, as Anderson had said, low, filthy, ancient; but its deck was empty, its owner nowhere to be seen.

Miller's eyes followed the tangled shore line in the hope of glimpsing the coquina house. But the thicket was unbroken as far as two gigantic mounds of white sand which stretched eastward from near the river end of the island,

and evidently separated the river and the inlet. From the tide, Miller knew there must be an opening to the sea somewhere down there. Probably the inlet made a sweep to the east and ran out between the mounds and the dunes. The tradition that buccaneers had used the inlet was perfectly understandable to Miller. Screened from the marshes by the island, and from the sea by the dunes, with a heavy fall of tide, it had been an ideal spot for the careening of pirate craft.

The sun was higher now in a clear sky behind the dunes. The white grains and the polished sea shells here and there glinted, jewellike, in its rays. On the summits, tufts of long, slender grass waved languidly in a light breeze. It was already warm.

Tony came up and took the cup and saucer. He was about to descend, when he paused, with a long intake of breath. That same pallor came into his face, that same fixed terror into his eyes, as he stared across the dunes.

"What are you gaping at now?" Miller asked good-naturedly.

The lips opened. Tony whispered: "Look! In—in white!"

During that outburst of yesterday there had been, Miller recalled, something about a woman in white, presumably the shade of the Arabian. He smiled.

"Come, Tony! Not by broad daylight. You only make yourself ridiculous."

"Look!" Tony repeated. He pointed.

Miller gazed across the dunes, shading his eyes. There was something there, close to the sea; something white, something that moved—a woman or a girl.

He sprang up. Laughing, he jumped to the lower deck and drew in the dinghy.

"There's one ghost I'll lay for you, Tony."

"Don't go!" the native begged.

Miller stepped into the boat, pushed off, and with a few strong strokes reached the dunes. He was curious. He reacted to an exciting impulse. Who was this early-morning adventurer in white, who moved across an empty shore? It might be the girl of whom Anderson had spoken—that “queer” girl about whom he had maintained so puzzling a reserve.

He hurried along the dunes, no longer able to see the figure in white. But he remembered where it had stood, not more than a quarter of a mile away. He crossed rapidly in that direction, pausing only when the advisability of caution impressed him. It would not do to assume the usual at Captain’s Island. It was far from ordinary that the girl should be there at all, clothed in this fashion. He was by no means sure that he would offer her a welcome encounter. She might try to elude him. Yet he had made a boast of the affair to Tony. He wanted to convince Tony and himself that the normal was not altogether foreign to the place. He planned, therefore, to step from the dunes to the beach almost at her elbow, but at the last dune he paused too long, fascinated by what he saw thus at close range.

She was a young girl, not more than twenty, he thought, although at first he couldn’t see her face. She was not tall, and she was very slender. As she stood, clothed in a long, clinging robe of soft, white stuff, bending forward to the breeze, gazing across the waves, she might have been a figure, animated and released from a Grecian marble. Her hair, unloosed, was yellow, and reached below her waist. The breeze lifted vagrant strands, which the sun caught and turned to gold. And when she turned, as though his presence had been communicated to her in some exceptional manner, he saw that she was beautiful, with an elfin face.

So they stared at each other for a

moment across the sand. His eyes wavered. With a strong effort he forced them back to hers. He was bewildered by her beauty, by her unexpected grace, by her steady regard. The phrases he had formed, his questions, were forgotten. It was as though in that first glance the girl had closed his mind to everything except her physical presence, which, after all, seemed scarcely physical. A wild thought sprang against his reason. Tony’s whisper! His talk of the woman in white! He would prove that, if only to convince Tony. So, sea and sky laughing at him, he stepped forward.

She relaxed her curving pose, moving back until the water was foaming at her feet. Then he saw that her feet were bare.

It had been only a moment, yet he knew he must speak. He succeeded haltingly.

“You’ll forgive the curiosity of a Crusoe. My man said you must be a ghost. I’d like——”

He broke off, because his voice mocked him as though he were addressing emptiness.

Her face had shown no change. He was suddenly aware of a barrier between them. The feeling angered him. He held out his hand. He forced himself to move toward her. Like a flash she turned and ran up the beach.

Afterward, when he reviewed the encounter, he was amazed, worried. He only knew that the voice of custom had been silent, and that he had answered to a new voice which he had not dreamed of questioning. From where had this voice come, and how had it reached him? He tried to tell himself that it was the desire to go back to Tony with his boast fulfilled beyond argument, for otherwise Tony would not have understood, would not have believed. But that was not satisfying. It might have been their isolation on a deserted beach, and the chal-

lence of her flight. Or, since it puzzled him most, that feeling of a barrier could have been responsible. At any rate, the world narrowed for a few moments to the strip of beach and dunes. It contained only himself and this girl, who ran from him as though he had violated a perpetual and prized solitude. He determined to come up with her and dispel her selfish fancy.

"Wait!" he called. "I only want to ask——"

Again that sense of emptiness mocked him. He ran. Although he knew he should be able to catch up with her almost immediately, she gained at first. And against this feeling of a barrier his determination strengthened. He ran stumblingly, his hands held in front of him, a growing stubbornness whipping him on. He went faster. He forgot to call out reassuringly. With a startled glance over her shoulder, she turned in and darted among the dunes. He followed, breathing hard, his mind closed.

He saw her across the slope of a dune, not ten feet away. And now the serene expression of her elfin face altered. There was fear in her eyes. He wondered afterward that he had not spoken to her then. But the barrier was down. Nothing remained but the end which her inexcusable flight had made necessary.

The end came sooner than he had expected. Catlike, he walked around the dune. She started back. He turned as though he would go the other way to head her off. She stopped, at a loss. Suddenly he swung, and, tinglingly aware of the soft flesh beneath the robe, grasped her arms above the elbows. He laughed nervously. He stared at her wide eyes, and at her face, from which the color had fled.

She strained away from him, yet there was no confidence, and little strength, in her effort. He let her go. Covering her face, she sank back

against the slope of the dune, while the sand, whispering, slipped past her. She drew her bare feet beneath her robe. Her hair fell forward, veiling her face and hands.

"How could you do that?" she asked.

Her voice was so low and soft he scarcely heard it. Oddly, the question held no reproach.

He sat down beside her.

"Why did you run?" he asked.

"I—I was frightened."

"That is not the reason," he said conclusively. "You were not frightened at first when you ran up the beach. I saw your face."

She shivered.

"No," she said. "I cannot lie to you."

Then the world rushed back to him. He remembered Tony and the boat a quarter of a mile away, the island, the plantation, Anderson and Molly. How had he ever accomplished this aberrant thing? He dug his fingers in the sand and watched the grains form minute, beautiful patterns. He scarcely dared look at her. He was appalled, ashamed.

"Really, you shouldn't have run like that," he said apologetically. "You know I'm not an ogre."

She turned. Her fear had gone. As she looked at him, surprised, he realized more than ever that she was very lovely.

"But you—why did you follow me?" she asked.

He considered. He had no convincing answer.

"Perhaps it was because I wanted to alter the bad opinion your flight suggested. Frankly, it was an impulse. I can't say where it came from."

"You should not have followed me," she said gravely.

She arose.

"Now you will let me go."

"Wait!"

He laughed lightly.

"Since you recall my ability to catch

you, please don't make me exercise it immediately."

"What do you wish of me?" she asked, with a show of anger.

"Please sit down and tell me of yourself. Can you blame me for being curious?"

Her anger died. She laughed back at him. She sat down.

"Since you want so little," she said.

"Then what were you doing on this deserted strip of sand?"

She flushed.

"I often come—to swim. The ocean is better than the inlet for that."

"Better, perhaps, but not as safe. The undertow—"

"It is safe!" she cried. "The sea and I are friends."

"There is something elusive about you. It is hard to ask ordinary questions. But where have you come from? Where do you live?"

Yet he knew, or thought he knew, when he asked her.

"Must I tell you that, too?"

"It is very important."

"Why?" she asked.

"Can't you guess? I want to see you again."

"No," she said.

"Yes. It is the only possible sequel. And if you make me run after you, you ought to tell me where to run."

She was troubled. She spoke almost inaudibly.

"You must not run after me again."

"Where, then?" he urged.

She hesitated. She pointed across the dunes.

"On Captain's Island?"

"Yes."

"In the plantation house?"

She nodded.

"Then you rowed across the inlet. You didn't see my boat."

"I rowed across the upper end. If I had seen your boat I would have turned back."

"For once," he laughed, "the *Dart's*

insignificance is triumphant. And your father—he encourages these dangerous excursions?"

"They are not dangerous. I tell you the sea and I are friends. Besides—"

She smiled.

"I think you haven't looked at your watch."

He drew out his watch. It was scarcely half past six.

"But if I don't go quickly I might not be able to come back again."

Miller arose. He helped her up.

"Then, of course," he agreed, "the secret must be kept. Only I wish you might stay a little longer. Since you seem inclined to forgive my incomprehensible impulse—my schoolboy pursuit—"

He broke off, a little bewildered.

"There is a good deal I'd like to ask you," he went on. "It has been very unusual."

"Very—unusual," she repeated uncertainly.

He took her hand in farewell.

"At any rate," he said, "I shall see you again."

"Don't see me again!" she begged.

"I shall call at the plantation. You will be there? You will see me?"

She could not meet his eyes.

"Don't see me again."

"But why? I wish it very much. Will you see me when I call?"

"I don't know. I don't know," she whispered.

"You will see me," he said, and released her hand.

She ran lightly away from him. Once she glanced back, then she was lost to sight among the dunes.

CHAPTER V.

Hands in his pockets, Miller gazed across the rolling sands. He moved once or twice, seeking a less obstructed view, hoping to see the girl's graceful figure again. At last he filled his pipe,

and smoked thoughtfully, questioning the whole extraordinary encounter, until a sense of its unreality swept him. But this he fought back. It was not what he wished. Granted that his pursuit had been arbitrary, and inexplicable even to himself, he desired it to remain a thing accomplished, a corner stone. Yet was it possible he had thrown a command in his last words to her, and, looking into her eyes, had read obedience?

Certainly he had dealt with no ghost, but a ghost, he felt, might have puzzled him less than this "queer" girl of whom Anderson had spoken with such reserve.

Queer she undoubtedly was, and he was by no means sure that in some obscure way his own queer attitude toward her might not be laid at her door. But he was convinced that he had shot wide of the mark when he had asked Anderson if she was off her head.

He walked back toward the inlet. All at once he realized he had not asked her her name. The last he knew, but it would have been pleasant to have heard her reply, to have known her first name, to have judged whether it fitted her uncomfortable personality.

Suddenly he laughed. He saw a wet, bedraggled figure skulking among the dunes in his direction.

"Stand up, my valiant Tony!" he called. "Your rescue party's superfluous."

Still he appreciated the man's devotion in swimming from the *Dart* to bring him aid against the unknown. When he padded up, wringing the water from his shirt, Miller tapped his shoulder.

"I assure you, Tony, that ghost is flesh and blood, flesh and——"

The fact needed no iteration. The soft yielding of her arms beneath his grasp had come back to him. The last vestige of unreality fled from the adventure.

He led Tony to the dinghy, whistling cheerily. He breakfasted later, with a huge appetite. He realized he was glad Captain's Island was what it was, rather than what he had fancied it before receiving Anderson's letter.

His happy humor lasted all morning. Had he tried he could not have disguised its cause, for all morning the strange girl, strangely met, lingered in his mind, and tantalized. At times he even forgot his set purpose of watching the fisherman's tub, which, at least when his eyes were on it, showed no signs of habitation.

After luncheon he anxiously awaited Molly and Anderson, but it was four o'clock before he saw a rowboat put out from shore. Even at that distance he recognized his friends and the man, Jake, at the oars. He stood at the rail until Tony had grasped the painter and helped them on board.

Molly's appearance shocked Miller more than Anderson's had done the day before. She was scarcely thirty, and he had always known her as a level-headed, light-hearted woman, unacquainted with life's darker aspects, and determined, as far as possible, to hold them at arm's length. Yet to-day she looked old. There were gray lines in her hair. Her manner was nervous. She appeared too slender for her clothes.

The same constraint that had come to him at his first glimpse of Anderson spoiled his meeting with this other old friend. He tried to throw the feeling off. But Jake, when he spoke to him, added to it. In response to his cheery greetings, Jake whispered:

"Thank God, you're here, Mr. Miller! Make them go away. There's death on the island. You feel it. If we don't leave, it's going to find some of us."

Miller couldn't smile in the face of this tragic conviction.

"Don't tell me you're getting old and fanciful, Jake."

He turned away brusquely. He led Anderson and Molly below to display his comforts. But when, with the air of a museum guide, he pointed out the four French prints, Molly sank on one of the tapestry cushions, hid her face, and began to cry. Anderson put his hand on her shoulder, while Miller looked on helplessly, his morning's cheerfulness evaporating.

Anderson cleared his throat.

"I say, Molly——"

She checked her outburst.

"Don't laugh at me, Jim. Wait until you've been in our house—until you've slept there just one night!"

"I'll angle for an invitation in a few days."

"That's wiser, I suppose," Anderson said. "But return our call to-morrow."

Molly sighed.

"If we could only have Jim in the house! Some one normal, with a will, and no nerves to speak of!"

"We'll let Jim do as he thinks best," Anderson answered.

"Molly," Miller said, "did either Andy or you know you had nerves before you came to Captain's Island? When it hits back at you this way stubbornness is a vice."

"You're the last one to say that," she answered. "You, of all people! You would have stayed!"

"I have no belief in the supernatural."

"Neither have we," she said. "Or we didn't have. One is sure of nothing here. Wait until you've stayed a few days, then repeat that with conviction."

"I'll try and remember this is medicine, so you must swallow it like good children—I find the place attractive, cheerful."

"As we did," Anderson said, "when we saw it at first on a bright day like this."

"You forget," Miller replied, "I came in at dusk last night, and it stormed."

"And last night!" Molly cried. "You felt nothing last night? You were satisfied? You were glad to be here?"

Miller stared back without answering. His morning's cheerfulness was completely routed.

"You were not," she said, with conviction, "and soon even the sweetest days will be colored for you like that."

"I wonder," he said softly.

He suggested that they have their tea on deck, but Molly was anxious to remain in the saloon. There, she explained, she saw for the first time in two months no reminders of Captain's Island.

Miller fostered her illusion by leading the conversation to friends in New York, to happy experiences they had shared there.

Afterward they prepared to leave, with a reluctance that touched him.

When they had reached the deck, Miller glanced at Tony and Jake forward. He realized immediately his mistake in leaving the two alone together. They sat there, staring at the island. Their faces were pale. When he called sharply, Jake arose and stepped into the boat with the air of a somnambulist, while Tony indifferently, almost clumsily, approached the task of loosing the painter.

After Molly had entered the rowboat Miller yielded to his curiosity. He overcame his embarrassment. He drew Anderson to the opposite rail.

"There's some truth," he confessed, "in what Molly said down there. I did experience some discomfort last night during the storm, but, of course, it was the loneliness, the oppressive atmosphere, this vicious tide."

"I was afraid you might feel it," Anderson answered, "although I'd hoped you'd keep above it."

"Nothing has developed since we talked yesterday?" Miller asked.

"Nothing—the night at the coquina

house was more than usually disturbed. That's all."

"Well—let's see—that girl of whom you spoke—you called her 'queer.'"

Anderson glanced up, interested. Miller lowered his voice to a halting whisper.

"Isn't there something more you can tell me about her?"

"You haven't seen her?" Anderson asked quickly.

Miller couldn't go the whole way. Either a sense of discomfort caused by his attitude toward the girl, or a desire to isolate the knowledge of the adventure to its two protagonists, made him glide over Anderson's question.

"I'm only more curious since I've seen the place. You can't blame me. Such a girl as you describe, wandering about this lonely island! Since you think it best, I'll wait and see for myself. But her father—Morgan—he'll run out and do the honors?"

"Of course," Anderson said, "unless that girl—"

"Always that girl!" Miller said irritably. "Why do you make such an enigma of her?"

"Because," Anderson answered simply, "that is what she is—an enigma, a mystery; and, after all, I couldn't tell you much beyond that."

CHAPTER VI.

It was clear and still that night. Although he was not entirely free from the oppressive, indefinable sensations of the previous evening, Miller slept better. Tony, on his part, behaved in the same disturbing manner, sitting silent and motionless in the kitchen doorway until Miller went to bed, then extinguishing his lamp with evident reluctance.

The daylight, however, brought Miller's cheerfulness back to him. He was early on deck, scanning the dunes expectantly; but the girl did not come

to the beach that morning. Miller was sorry. He grew discontented.

A small gasoline launch rounded the end of the island at eight o'clock. Miller reawakened to a sense of interest as it chugged noisily in the direction of the *Dart*. It probably held Morgan. By deft questioning he might learn something of the girl's personality from her father. Why not, indeed, say to Morgan: "I met your daughter on the beach yesterday." But he remembered he shared the secret of those early-morning excursions with her. Moreover, his effort with Anderson had convinced him that he could not speak casually of her.

Morgan was a small man, past fifty, with a stout, pleasant face and a ready smile. He stepped aboard, introducing himself easily.

"Please be frank if you don't care to be disturbed. I thought I'd run over and see. I live in the house at the end of the island. My name's Morgan."

"I'm glad you've come," Miller answered warmly. "I hoped some one from that delightful house would."

"I suppose you're cruising up the coast?" Morgan said.

"Yes—anchored here night before last. I find it so attractive I'm in no hurry to go on."

Morgan laughed.

"When the impulse comes, think of us, and resist it. A boat in the inlet is an event. Yours is the first in three months."

Miller pointed at the apparently deserted fisherman's craft. Morgan shrugged his shoulders. A shadow crossed his face.

"No company. A sour native. You see the Andersons and my household are the whole community. Have you met the Andersons?"

"They rowed out yesterday."

"Now that you know us all you must let us see a lot of you."

"I want to," Miller said. "I'm anx-

ious to look at that old place of yours. It must have a history."

"Too much history," Morgan answered dryly. "Still, it doesn't do to run down one's own possessions—particularly when economy chains one to them. Come when you wish. Naturally, you're never likely to find me far away."

Morgan remained, chatting, for only a few minutes. Miller pressed him to stay, for the little man amused him, with his genial air and a dry humor; Morgan, however, refused, saying he had promised to go to Sandport with Anderson that morning.

As he watched the launch disappear around the bend, Miller lost patience with himself. Why had he found it impossible to speak of the girl to her father? That afternoon, at least, he would take himself in hand. He would open a campaign. He would call on the Andersons early, and afterward return Morgan's call. He had told the girl to see him at the plantation house, and he recalled the shrinking obedience in her eyes. If he did not see her he would throw off this unaccustomed embarrassment. He would force himself to speak of her to Morgan.

As soon as he had lunched he told Tony to row him ashore. They landed a quarter of a mile below the fisherman's tub. He told Tony to return to the *Dart*. He said he would hail him when he wished to leave the island. Then he took the path which Anderson had indicated.

Stunted cedars and oaks met in a thick roof overhead, and an undergrowth of scrub palmettos and creeping vines was tangled waist high between the trunks. The thought of snakes was inevitable. An army of them might have lurked unseen within a foot of where he walked. He stepped carefully, looking at the ground, keeping his ears open.

Before he had gone half a mile the

path widened into a small clearing from the rear of which the coquina house rose with gray, uncompromising solidity. The trees cast heavy shadows across its square front, and over the roof of the tiny stable to its left. Miller paused. The agent had been right. This was lonelier, more inclosed, than Morgan's place.

Molly had evidently been on the lookout, for she ran eagerly down the veranda steps to meet him.

"Jim! I'm so glad you've come!" she called.

"Where's Andy?" he asked, taking her hand.

"Had to go to Martinsburg," she answered, "simply had to. An important letter from his brokers. He had to see a lawyer right away and sign some papers. You can imagine how he hated it. If he hadn't known you were coming—"

"But he'll get back on the little boat this afternoon."

"Unless this business positively chains him. In that case, he thought you would change your plans and stay here with Jake and me."

"Of course I'd stay. That would be necessary."

"We'll know a little after six," she said. "Mr. Morgan went as far as Sandport with him, to order some things for us both. I've been expecting him to come by."

She laughed uncomfortably.

"You see, Jim, I've been stark alone in his ghastly place since luncheon."

"Jake?" he asked.

"He started for a walk."

"Here! Without company! I gathered yesterday—"

"Jake," she said, "is trying to ripen an acquaintance with the Morgans' cook. You're right; nothing less compelling would draw him so far afield alone on this island. And it's such a bright day I didn't think I'd mind his going. I urged him to go. A little

relaxation—a little something cheering to think about—you don't know what that means to him, Jim. He ought to be back soon."

Miller turned toward the veranda, but Molly seemed to prefer the clearing. She made excuses for lingering there, pointing out the small view of the inlet which Jake had achieved by cutting away a few of the thickest trees, and describing the canvases which Anderson had planned but had been unable to carry through.

"Why, when the ax was working," Miller asked, "didn't you tear out that mass of undergrowth which threatens to swallow the house from the rear?"

"Jake's been afraid to go in," she answered. "He says he knows it's full of snakes. Looks as though it might be, doesn't it? We haven't dared take the responsibility of forcing him to work there against his own judgment."

"Mayn't I see the house?" he asked. "I acknowledge you and Andy have some reason. Its exterior has a frowning, inhospitable air."

She walked slowly to the veranda. She held the screen door open, motioning him to enter.

He stepped into a large, square, windowless hall. Even with the door open it was difficult to see at first, and he was chilled by the same revolting atmosphere that had crept into his stateroom two nights before.

He shivered.

"You ought to keep a light and a fire burning here."

"It's warm enough outside, isn't it? Whole house is like this. We keep the doors and windows wide, but the heat and light appear to prefer the open."

"Sensible elements," Miller muttered.

The entire building housed this air of chill decay, and although the rooms were large, and comfortably furnished, Miller was restless in all of them. Molly's listening attitude troubled him. He

wandered from parlor to library to dining room, and even to the kitchen. All bore testimony to Molly's devotion and determination. Molly, Miller made up his mind, must be rewarded. No matter what happened, he would see her and Anderson through to the recapture of the mental peace for which they were suffering on here.

"Smoke, Jim," Molly whispered when they were back in the hall.

"Why do we whisper?" Miller asked.

"Then you do feel something?" Molly demanded.

He would not listen to this momentary doubt. Pushing the screen door open, he stepped into the sunlight of the clearing. The doubt became nothing.

"Of course not," he said. "What do you think?"

"Then don't," Molly begged. "You mustn't. But you didn't go upstairs. Will you?"

"Not now," Miller answered. "I don't want to discount my first dreadful night in one of those bedrooms. When I do stay you mustn't fail to entertain me with your choicest spirits."

"Perhaps there'll be none for you," Molly said wistfully. "That would mean just nerves for Andy and me."

"I'll prove it," he laughed.

He sat down on the veranda and chatted pleasantly until Molly smiled and laughed with him.

Morgan appeared about half past four on his way home from Sandport. Miller hailed him. Molly had just brought out the tea things, and Morgan looked at them longingly.

"May I?"

Molly beckoned.

"A party!" she called.

"That collection of huts," Morgan said, as he came up and sat down, "seemed such a metropolis I hated to leave it, so I lingered, ordering much more than I really needed. If Mr.

Miller stays on I think I'll give a party myself in a day or two."

Miller laughed.

"Then there'll be one on the *Dart*."

"We'll capture the air of a real winter resort yet," Morgan said.

He picked up the cup of tea which Molly had poured, and looked around with an air of contentment.

"If Andy were only back to enjoy this!" Molly sighed. "Did he say anything more?"

"He expected to catch the boat down to Sandport."

"I hope nothing keeps him. You know I'm getting worried. I can't imagine where Jake is. I think he walked over to flirt with your cook."

Morgan's eyes twinkled.

"That," he said, "adds to the air of a true winter resort."

"But it isn't like him," she said uneasily. "He doesn't know about you two. He wouldn't be likely to leave me alone so long."

"Time is no match for amorous skirmishing," Miller said.

Yet, watching Molly, he saw her anxiety grow, needlessly, he thought. When, therefore, Morgan arose after an hour, he asked if he might not accompany him.

"I had promised myself to call on you this afternoon," he explained, "and I will hunt up Jake and hurry him back."

"Company through that piece of woods," Morgan said, "is always a blessing."

Miller turned to Molly.

"If I shouldn't see him I'll report here immediately, if I may."

"If you would—" she said, relieved.

He joined Morgan at the foot of the steps. They crossed the clearing and walked down the path to the shore where he had landed.

"I'm glad I've a guide," Miller said.

Morgan laughed.

"I'm glad to have some one to guide.

Wait until you've seen the path from the shore to the quarters. It would make a Stanley long for darkest Africa."

"I've noticed," Miller said, with a smile, "that you dwellers in this place answer to its loneliness surprisingly."

"I've prided myself on my resistance," Morgan answered, "but the Andersons and I have had a long winter of it. I—I think the place has gotten a little on our nerves. Don't you judge any of us too harshly, young man, until you've been here a reasonable length of time yourself. Then, perhaps, you'll get our standpoint. For instance, while I'm not the least superstitious, the path we are going to take from the shore to the old quarters has an unpleasant effect on us all. It comes down to this: We prefer to walk it by day. Why? I don't know. I can only repeat that I have no belief in the abnormal."

They had reached the shore. Morgan pointed to an opening in the jungle.

"There's the path. Maybe you'll see what I mean."

Immediately they had entered the forest, Miller did, indeed, see. He understood, too, after a moment, why the agent had failed to reach the quarters. The trees and underbrush were so thick that he had an impression of walking in a low, narrow tunnel. He had another fancy that the sharp palmetto scrub along the edges was a warning chevaux-de-frise before a citadel impossible of assault.

It was necessary to go in single file, so Morgan stepped ahead. He no longer spoke, and, in the half light of that thicket, breathing the heavy air of vegetable decay, Miller found his own silence compelled.

They continued for five minutes, during which Miller combatted and tried to analyze this atmosphere, this deadening impulse to silence. He had made up his mind to break the spell, to speak,

when Morgan suddenly stopped, with a gasping intake of breath.

Miller saw his companion's shoulders grow rigid, saw him slowly turn, and reveal a pallid face and startled eyes.

Miller broke the silence now. His own heart was jumping.

"What is it? What did you see?"

Morgan didn't answer, but over his shoulder Miller saw, and he knew that Anderson's fear had been justified, that Jake's prophecy had been fulfilled, for a man's outstretched body was half hidden by the warning chevaux-de-frise. One booted leg lay eloquently across the narrow, ugly path.

CHAPTER VII.

Miller had no doubts from the first. He called, with a queer catch in his voice:

"Jake!"

But Jake did not answer. The tortured posture cried out the reason.

Miller put his hand unsteadily on Morgan's shoulder.

"Go ahead," he said hoarsely. "Let's see. Let's do—"

"Do!" Morgan echoed. "There's nothing to do. He's dead. Here—"

His voice broke off. He stepped forward haltingly. They reached the body and stared down at it with eyes that sought hopelessly.

There was no doubt as to the cause of death. The left trouser leg was drawn up. Two clean holes showed above the ankle. It was easy to reconstruct the tragedy.

Jake had heard enough about rattlesnakes since he had been on Captain's Island to snatch at his only chance. So, instead of attempting to run to the coquina house or the plantation, he had evidently sat down in this jungle which had so justly terrified him and done his best to fasten a tourniquet above the wound. His torn handkerchief and a broken stick showed how hard he had

tried. He had never risen again. Perhaps it was too late when his repeated experiments had failed, or, perhaps, his terror had held him prisoner. At any rate, there they found him, doubtless within a few feet of where the snake had struck.

Anderson's words of two nights ago when he had spoken of his fancy of the snakes rushed back to Miller.

"Lately we've feared they were growing daring, were getting ready to strike."

And there also came back to Miller Anderson's fear that the death of Molly's pet had been a warning from the snakes.

A snake had struck, and death had followed, yet, Miller told himself, there could be no possible connection between that tragedy and the alleged supernatural manifestations which had so torn the nerves of his friends. Morgan's first words, however, reached him with a sense of shock.

"In this path! By heavens, it isn't safe! It was here, just about here, that Mrs. Anderson's cat was struck the other day. We didn't think enough of that. We haven't been careful enough."

Morgan controlled himself with an effort.

"Poor devil! And this will hit the Andersons hard—all of us—"

As he stood, looking down at Jake, Miller thought he noticed something peculiar. He didn't care to appear fanciful nor did he wish to give Morgan the impression that his own nerves were running away with him. Moreover, he made up his mind he would have plenty of time to convince himself when Jake had been carried to the house. He spoke of that to Morgan.

"Yes, yes!" Morgan agreed.

He glanced at his watch.

"I wish Anderson was back. Maybe we'd better wait until then."

"Yes," Miller said; "and is there anything we ought to do—some formality?"

I don't know much about such things, but it seems to me——”

“You're right. It's a coroner's case,” Morgan answered. “We must avoid getting tangled up in any unfamiliar red tape.”

Miller nodded.

“We're practically certain to run against a country official who'll probably use all the ceremony possible to impress us with his importance. But what can we do? I suppose Sandport is the——”

“It's only a collection of fishermen's huts,” Morgan answered; “but I believe the coroner for this coast section has his headquarters there. I guess it's best to notify him.”

He turned away.

“This is hard to grasp.”

“It has to be grasped,” Miller said firmly. “It's getting late. What we have to do should be done at once.”

“You're right,” Morgan answered. “It's the safest scheme. I'll send my man to Sandport to report the case, and bring back the coroner. If he hurries, they ought to return a little after dark. Then he can authorize the removal. Besides, Anderson ought to be back by that time.”

“If he only comes!” Miller muttered. “There's a possibility he won't, you know. Anyhow, go ahead. I'll stay here with Jake until the errand's done, until we've satisfied all the pitiful formalities.”

He paused. He bit his lip.

“But there's Mrs. Anderson. Confound it! Why isn't Anderson here? She must be told. If neither Jake nor I show up as I arranged with her, she'll be frantic with anxiety. If you don't mind, you'd better tell your man to stop and give her the facts.”

“It won't do,” Morgan said. “One of us must take that task, unpleasant as it is. I'll try to do it myself. I'll hurry on to the plantation and get my man off,

then I'll go to the coquina house and do the best I can.”

Morgan started up the path, but after he had taken a few steps he turned back.

“You don't mind staying here? It won't be long.”

Miller shook his head, and Morgan went on. The forest closed behind him and hid his hurrying figure.

Miller lighted his pipe, but the smoke seemed to thicken the heavy atmosphere. Instead of soothing, it irritated his nerves. After a moment he let the pipe go out. So this was the end of his joyous and determined plans to call at the plantation and force, if possible, another interview with the “queer” girl! He frowned. It seemed that there was always something arising to limit his knowledge of her to that mystifying encounter on the beach.

In a few minutes Morgan appeared with his man. He had evidently explained the situation, for the fellow's face was white and frightened, and he went by almost at a run, with averted head.

“I'll be back as soon as I can,” Morgan said, as he went on to the shore and his disquieting task at the coquina house.

Alone again, Miller settled himself to wait and watch. The light was already failing in that thick vegetation. For some moments he paced up and down, glancing at Jake, dead in this unspeakable way. But that peculiar impression he had received troubled him. He made up his mind, coroner or no coroner, to satisfy himself immediately. He approached the body on tiptoe. He knelt beside it. He leaned over. He even raised one of the wrists to examine the under side. His impression had not been pure fancy. The skin of the wrists appeared to have been bruised. He could detect what might have been abrasions. But it was all very little. As he arose and pondered,

the picture Anderson had drawn of the tongue-tied, powerful fisherman, outlined against the colored sky, came into his mind and lingered. Yet he had not even seen the man himself, and that picture was unquestionably the expression of the hatred Anderson had formed for him. Anyway, these slight marks might merely be testimony of some escapade, some accident, several days old; for that matter, mute reminders of Jake's struggles to fasten the tourniquet above the wound. But the feeling of the place crept into Miller's material brain. While the light continued to fail, he resumed his pacing.

Morgan was back in half an hour. He was breathing hard, as though he had come quickly through the darkening path. He carried Anderson's shotgun. He handed it to Miller.

"I thought it might be some company," he explained, "because I——"

"And Mrs. Anderson?" Miller asked.

Morgan waved his hand in a helpless gesture.

"If her nerves hadn't been in such a state, anyway!" he said. "I did the best I could, but it was hard—hard. I offered to stay with her, but she preferred to be alone until her husband came. She said it would only be a few minutes. If he's coming, it will."

"The boat might be late," Miller said.

"We'll hope that's it. You're sure you don't mind waiting here for the coroner, because I ought to be at the plantation. You see——"

He paused. Miller wondered if it was the girl who was calling him back. Morgan cleared his throat and verified his guess.

"My daughter is alone there, except for the cook. I am not in the habit—I suppose I ought to go back."

"Certainly," Miller said. "I'm right as can be here until the others arrive."

"Come for me, if you need me," Morgan directed. "And tell the Ander-

sons they'd better run on over and spend the night at the plantation. It won't be very pleasant for them in the coquina house after this. If they've any scruples about leaving, tell them to keep my man to help in any way he can."

Miller thanked him absent-mindedly. Since Morgan had introduced the subject himself here was an exceptional chance to speak of the girl, to lift, perhaps, the veil from her uncommon and fascinating personality. He crushed down the desire to speak. He couldn't do it under these circumstances. So, reluctantly, he saw Morgan go.

It was nearly dark now. He was glad Morgan had brought the gun. He liked the feel of the sleek barrels, as he carried it cradled under his arm.

The dusk deepened. Infernally the minutes lengthened. The night had an oily quality. He could almost feel it slipping down thickly, chokingly. Pretty soon he couldn't see the path. Jake's body, which had grown dimmer and dimmer, was no longer before his eyes. The branches were so thick that he couldn't be sure the stars were shining. Once or twice he stumbled, and he stood still, not daring to move for fear of leaving the path, to flounder helplessly in that thicket whose revolting life had already done for one of them.

He heard rustling sounds increasing about him. He was practically certain that they were leaves whispering in the breeze, yet that feeling of the snakes, of which Anderson had spoken, came to him in all its force. It was easy to fancy these rustling sounds were made by snakes circling him and slowly closing their circle. It was difficult for him to argue reasonably as he stood by black night in the heavy, repellent atmosphere of that forest, in a place he knew was avoided for two things, the supernatural and poisonous snakes. Jake's invisible body testified how de-

servedly. Those sly noises, such as snakes might make, grew everywhere about him. And he was defenseless, to all purposes a blind man, unable to avoid the creeping horror.

He realized now the state of mind into which the island had thrown Anderson and Molly. He held his nerves in leash by a severe effort of the will. He lost all track of time. It seemed to him that midnight must have come and gone before he saw a lantern waving through the jungle.

"Here they are," he thought. "I'm not sorry this is ended."

But it was Molly, bravely strangling her terror, coming through the forest alone.

"Molly!" he called. "What's the matter?"

She started to run. She had almost reached him, when he saw her go down. He heard the tinkling of the lantern chimney as it shattered. He put out his hands against the darkness rushing in again. He stumbled toward her. He found her. He got his arms around her and lifted her up. She was half laughing, half crying—laughing hysterically from her accident and her relief at finding him, and crying because of her grief and her fear.

Anderson, she said, must have missed his boat, for he had not returned. Morgan's man had come back from Sandport alone. The coroner had refused to follow until morning. He had made no comprehensible excuse. Evidently he shared the general, ignorant fear of Captain's Island. Even duty had failed to drag him there after dark.

Miller groaned.

"Where is Morgan's man?" he asked. Molly shivered.

"The coroner must have frightened him. Or else he had some experience on the road from the end of the island of which he won't speak. When he got to the coquina house he refused to leave even to return to the plantation. In-

stead, he's sitting, cowed and shaking, over a blazing fire he's built in our kitchen. Jim, this is dreadful! I can't realize. Where—"

But Miller reached out and found her arm. He grasped it.

"No, Molly, that would be foolish. It is dreadful, as you say. But we must face the facts, and be sensible. You and Andy must not let this weigh on you. If you can't rise above it, you'll have to leave Captain's Island."

"Feeling as we do! We can't."

"Then," he said determinedly, "you cannot brood over Jake."

He felt her arm tremble.

"When it's our fault!"

"That's nonsense! Now, listen, Molly. You must go right back to the coquina house. It's hard luck you broke the lantern, but you can follow the path."

The muscles of her arm tautened. She drew closer to him.

"And spend the night there alone, except for that frightened man! Jim, anyway, I came with the lantern, but I can't—I can't go through that path alone now, without light. Don't ask it."

Miller was in a quandary. He shrank from the only way out.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"It was nine o'clock when I left the house."

Six or seven hours to daylight! He knew there was no chance of relief from Morgan. When his man failed to return to the plantation he would naturally conclude that everything had been attended to, and that the Andersons had acted on his suggestion and kept him for the night. There was no other course. Miller decided, indefensible as it was, that it would be wiser to leave Jake to the things that prowl by night than to keep Molly during those long hours in that piece of forest. When he proposed it, however,

Molly refused even to consider the plan.

"Jake's been faithful to Andy and me for a good many years. If we had let him go back to New York, instead of forcing him to stay here against his will, he would be alive now. No, Jim, we can be faithful to Jake for a few hours, no matter what it costs. I'll stay, Jim. I'll watch with you. Don't say anything more."

Miller knew that argument was useless. So they stayed and suffered through the night. More than once Miller was tempted to fire his gun in the hope that Morgan might hear, and come to them. It wasn't merely that they could see nothing, that Jake's body lay so near, even that those stealthy noises such as snakes might make caused their flesh to creep. It was something else; something which, Molly said, you felt in that piece of forest more than anywhere else on the island—felt and loathed and couldn't analyze.

CHAPTER VIII.

They suffered through those hours because they were together, yet when the dawn came they looked at each other as though they had been strangers. Molly, haggard and shaking, went down the path then on her way to the coquina house. Miller watched on alone in the sickly, early light. He pulled himself together with a struggle. It was easier now to find comfort in logic, to assure himself that his state of mind had been caused by the night and the loneliness, aided by the state of mind Molly and Anderson had impressed upon him.

"First thing I know," he said to himself, "they'll have me as much under the spell as they are themselves."

He could smile a little at that thought even now.

The night had chilled him. He paced up and down vigorously while the light

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strengthened. Here and there a sunbeam broke through and flashed across the foliage. He grew ashamed of his uncomfortable emotions of the dark hours.

It was still early when he saw Morgan coming down the path from the plantation. Morgan stopped, surprised and anxious.

"Why are you still here? The coroner didn't come. And Anderson?"

Miller explained the situation.

"And I stayed at the house and slept peacefully," Morgan said regretfully. "Why didn't you run up and get me to help out? I thought when my man didn't return—"

"What was the use of disturbing you?" Miller asked.

"Only," Morgan answered, "because two might be better than one for an all-night watch here—particularly under the circumstances. Some action ought to be taken against that coroner. It was his business to answer the call."

Miller laughed a little.

"After spending the night alone in this piece of woods, I'm not so sure there isn't something to be said in his defense. It's odd how a little loneliness, a little darkness, and the thought of death will make the poise of the strongest of us topple."

"It's this rotten patch of woods," Morgan muttered. "I'm proud of my poise, but I wonder if I would have pulled through such a night as fresh as you."

"Surely," Miller said. "One suffers temporarily, then the reaction comes, and you almost want to try it again to prove what a fool you've been."

But as he spoke, Miller knew he did not want to try it again.

"I was on my way to the coquina house," Morgan said. "But you'd better let me relieve you until the others come."

"Thanks," Miller answered. "I suppose I ought to report to my man. He

was expecting me on the boat for dinner last night. I've no doubt he thinks the spooks have carried me off and turned me into a spook myself."

He handed Morgan the gun, and went down the path, keeping his eyes open for signs of snakes. That was one element of danger on the island whose existence he was willing to admit.

He hailed the *Dart* from the shore, but the only sign of Tony was the dinghy drawn up on the sand. He went on to the coquina house. He found Tony in the clearing, talking, with scared face, to Morgan's man.

Tony ran to meet him. He had passed a sleepless night. He had come to the coquina house to learn the fate of his master. There he had heard the story of Jake's death.

"And the coroner?" Miller asked. "Any word from him?"

"He's in the house," Morgan's man answered, "talking to Mrs. Anderson."

As Miller approached the steps, the coroner came out. He was a lanky, loud-voiced native, wearing a rusty, slouch hat, and a frock coat which had the appearance of being nearly as old as himself. Miller, as soon as he saw him, was glad that Morgan and he had decided not to violate any of the formal procedure in such cases.

Miller explained who he was, and told about the finding of the body. The coroner was evidently in a hurry. He led the way to the shore and entered the path. Miller mentioned the marks he had noticed on Jake's wrists, but the coroner seemed scarcely to hear. He was glancing quickly into the thicket on either side as he went deeper into the piece of forest.

"Don't know why anybody wants to hang out in this hole, anyway," he muttered.

He disclosed the same hurry, in his attention to the necessary formalities, to the authorization for the removal of the body.

"But those marks?" Miller asked, a little puzzled at the man's attitude.

"What marks?" the coroner asked sharply.

"On the wrists. I spoke of them."

"Don't see any marks."

The abrasions had, in fact, disappeared overnight. The coroner remained unimpressed.

Miller was at a loss. He wondered if it could have been pure fancy. But he would not acknowledge that.

"I tell you there were marks."

"Then where are they now?" the coroner demanded.

"See here," Miller said, "there are a lot of uncivilized oystermen working the banks to the north of the island, aren't there? And this fisherman in the inlet. He might be questioned."

The coroner swung on him angrily.

"Who are you, to say who's civilized and ain't. And, what's more, if you think you're fitter to run my job than me, just say so, and that's all the good it'll do you! Suppose there were any marks? Might have scratched himself on the palmettos."

The coroner's one idea seemed to be to get away from the island, so Miller insisted no further. There was, indeed, nothing else he could say. He endeavored to thrust that phase of the affair from his mind.

Before leaving, the coroner said the law was clear. The burial should take place by sundown. There was no clergyman in Sandport, but that could not be helped. The coroner's duty was to interpret the law, and see that it was carried out. Morgan, therefore, sent his man across the river to get the local undertaker.

The grave was dug on the edge of the clearing by the coquina house. There was really little choice—the open spaces on the island were so few. After that, nothing remained save the difficult task of waiting for Anderson.

Molly stayed in the house. She had

asked to be left alone, and Miller had decided it was best to humor her. Worn out by her night of watching, she might find rest.

Miller and Morgan sat on the veranda, talking in low tones. Tony and Morgan's man wandered about the clearing, restless, as though expectant each moment of something unforeseen.

Morgan went home at luncheon time and took his man. Miller had no appetite. Moreover, he felt it his duty to remain where he was. He called Tony to him. During the morning, the native had grown momentarily more morose, more nervous. Miller directed him to return to the *Dart*, get his luncheon, and remain there afterward until he hailed him.

Morgan was back long before Anderson had put in an appearance. In fact, it was late in the afternoon when Anderson walked into the clearing from the direction of Sandport. They were spared the pain of announcing the catastrophe to him. Sandport, he said, was talking of nothing else. The boy who had rowed him across the river had told him everything.

"I was afraid something of the sort was coming," he said. "It's been in the air."

Miller put his hand on the other's shoulder, and led him in the house.

"In the air, Jim! We'd had our warning."

"Don't tell me, Andy, that you suspect any connection between the fancies you've had here and this accident."

"I do tell you that," Anderson said fiercely. "As I've said all along, it's the feeling of the place. And you call them fancies! Prove it. That's what we're begging of you, Jim."

"Certainly I'll prove it," Miller said. "The bite of a poisonous snake needs no proof. What can be mysterious in that?"

But as though in answer to his ques-

tion, the marks he had noticed on Jake's wrists came back to his mind.

Anderson went upstairs, shaking his head. He came down very soon with Molly.

"I can't thank you for what you did last night," Anderson said. "Why—why did I have to be away?"

"You couldn't have done a great deal of good, Andy—except taking care of Molly. There was nothing else any of us could do."

"Taking care of Jake in that piece of woods!" Anderson whispered. "Oh, that was a good deal. Jim—a good deal!"

They went outside. There was no longer any excuse for delay. The limit of time appointed by the coroner was at hand. It would soon be dark.

Molly whispered something to Anderson, who shook his head.

"I haven't the courage," he said.

She turned to Miller, holding out a pocket prayer book.

"There's no clergyman," she explained simply. "It's too brutal without something."

Miller cleared his throat.

"I'm scarcely fit, but if no one else will——"

She sighed. She looked at Morgan. She held the book out to him tentatively, appealingly.

Morgan stepped forward. He took the book, opened it, and fumbled with the pages until he had found the place.

"If it will make you feel better," he said, in a low voice.

"Oh, thank you!" she whispered.

Morgan walked to the grave over which the gnarled branches of two stunted oak trees drooped. The others gathered near him. The sun was about to set. The coquina house threw a heavy shadow over the little company, and across the freshly turned earth and the yawning, expectant pit.

As Morgan commenced to read the

sonorous and memorable words, the sun disappeared and the dusk entered the island greedily.

Miller, who was standing next to Morgan, let his eyes wander about the gloomy setting for this task which had involved them so unexpectedly. All at once his eyes became stationary. They had shown him something moving on the other side of the clearing, just within the entrance of the path to the shore. It was something white. In this obscure atmosphere it seemed almost immaterial. Yet he saw it move almost wholly hidden by the trees.

For the moment Miller's mind was swept from the service which Morgan was reading slowly, almost inaudibly now, for it came to him that the half-seen thing in white, flitting among the trees, was the elfin girl.

The reading stopped abruptly. Miller glanced at Morgan. The hand with the prayer book had dropped. An expression of pain had driven the passive sorrow from Morgan's face as he, too, stared across the murky clearing. At last his eyes went back to the book, and he resumed his reading, but his voice was lower than before, and it trembled.

Miller gazed at the forest again. He started. The girl was still there, but she appeared to be off the path and moving through the underbrush, which he would have sworn was impenetrable. He told himself that some turn of the path or the failing light created this illusion. In order to convince himself he had to recall the morning on the beach when he had felt the soft flesh of her arms yield beneath his grasp. When he looked again she was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

Afterward they gathered in the living room of the coquina house for a moment. Morgan, before leaving, urged Molly and Anderson to return to the plantation with him, at least for a few

days. They were grateful, but they preferred for the present to remain alone where they were.

"We have to get our bearings again," Anderson explained.

So Morgan left.

"At any rate, I'll stay with you tonight," Miller suggested.

"It's better not," Anderson answered. "Molly and I must fight things out."

"That's what Jim said last night," Molly said. "I thought it would be impossible, then."

"It's the turning point," Anderson went on. "If we can't rise above this thing, we're beaten. I—I think we can fight this better alone, so for a day or two, Jim—— There's no use interfering with your plan of campaign."

Miller nodded. Anderson followed him to the clearing.

"In a day or two," he said, as he pressed Miller's hand, "I hope we'll be normal again—as nearly normal as we can be after this. At least I think you'll find us livable, and we can talk to some purpose. Good night!"

"Hail me, if you want me," Miller said. "I'll look in for just a minute tomorrow afternoon, to make sure you're all right."

He hurried to the shore and called for Tony.

It was good to get back to the *Dart* again and to his lonely meal in her familiar and comfortable cabin. But he found changes on the *Dart*, too. Tony's face was paler than ever, and his eyes appeared larger and wider. He had the air of facing an elusive but unavoidable fate. Curiously, this complete surrender of the native to abject fear cheered Miller. He found it possible to laugh.

"Forget the spooks and avoid the snakes, Tony, and you'll be all right," he said.

Tony turned away, unconvinced. Miller himself, when he had gone to

bed and lay listening to the whispers of the tide, recalled those other whispers he had fancied in the forest last night, recalled, also, the whispered conviction of Jake that death was waiting on the island for them.

At last he slept, and the next morning was so brilliant it was impossible not to respond to it. He scanned the dunes anxiously for the return of the girl who had become for him the real and peremptory mystery of the island. There was no sign. So in the middle of the afternoon he yielded to his overpowering curiosity, and directed Tony to row him ashore.

They landed at the same point, a little below the fisherman's anchorage.

"I probably shan't be very long," he said. "It's scarcely worth while for you to row back."

Tony's face clouded. He pushed away and lay on his oars offshore.

Miller went to the coquina house as he had agreed with Anderson. He had intended to remain for only a few moments, but now they urged him to stay a little longer. The night and the morning had been more difficult than they had anticipated, so he remained with them until, glancing at his watch, he was surprised to find it past five o'clock.

"I'm going over to Morgan's," he said, "and to-morrow I'm coming here to spend the night, if you will have me. I don't see any use in waiting longer. That broad view I was going to get from the *Dart* has failed to develop. Everything that has happened has been at close range."

"It's at close range here, Jim," Anderson said. "At close range, yet impossibly far. Come ahead."

Miller found Tony still resting on his oars offshore. He beckoned. Tony, evidently relieved at seeing him again, rowed quickly in.

"I'm going to walk to the plantation, Tony. It may be nearly dark before I

get back. Perhaps your temperament would suffer less if you came with me."

Tony shook his head.

"Not in that woods again."

"Nonsense, Tony! I must. Will you come with me? Or maybe you'd rather rout out that fisherman for company."

He glanced at the filthy tub. During the moment he had had his back turned, the fisherman had come on deck. Miller saw him for the first time. He stood by the rail, outlined against the sky and the yellow dunes. Boots, soiled jeans, and a blue shirt, open at the throat, clothed his great figure. Miller received an impression of steadfast, unreasoning power. For a moment, forgetful of Anderson's experience, he put his hand to his mouth and shouted:

"Hal-loo, over there!"

The figure remained motionless. The eyes, fixed on the shore line, did not waver.

"Hal-loo!" Miller called again. And again he shouted. He turned angrily to Tony.

"I've half a mind to row out and open his ears. What do you make of him?"

Tony gave it up.

"It's Captain's Island," he said.

"To-morrow," Miller decided, "we'll try to find out what it is. Now, are you coming with me, or do you prefer the neighborhood of that sphinx?"

Tony glanced longingly at the remote *Dart*.

"No," Miller said. "I won't be gone long enough to make it worth while. If you went back to the boat, it would be a nuisance to get you. Better come with me."

He turned inland. Tony, after a moment's troubled hesitation, followed quickly.

Before entering the forest, Miller looked back. The grim figure had not moved. The eyes were still fixed. Miller almost doubted if the man had seen them.

CHAPTER X.

Miller followed the narrow path among the shadows—that tunnellike path whose first invasion had led to the discovery of Jake's body. He walked rapidly, because in spite of himself he was anxious to get through. Tony followed at his heels, breathing gaspingly.

It was all familiar enough until they came to the disturbed undergrowth where Jake had been found. Miller glanced at the trampled palmettos with a sense of discomfort, and increased his pace a little. He began to look anxiously for the first sign of the plantation.

The character of the path did not alter until they saw that first outpost—the jagged, gray wall of a collapsed building. After a few steps, there were more of these cheerless ruins, then the outlines of one or two other structures in better preservation. Miller guessed that they were the remains of the old slave quarters.

The path turned between two of the walls into a long avenue, lined with live oaks, which led to the rear of the plantation house.

Miller stepped through, and, breathing more freely, looked around him. The crumbling quarters curved to either side in a wide semicircle whose ends had been swallowed by the hungry forest. Only two or three of the buildings, which had probably been repaired, possessed roofs.

Miller felt the romantic call of eighty years. He wanted to stop and examine these significant survivals of a unique community—these prisons—these torture chambers, if half that had been handed down about Noyer was true. But he resisted. It would soon be dark. As it was, his call must be hurried. So he told Tony to wait for him in the avenue.

"Perhaps you'll find one of the servants to chat with," he said.

But, as he hurried down the avenue and around the house to the pillared veranda, he saw no servants himself. Morgan opened the door, greeting him warmly. He led him into a comfortable library, which occupied the entire left-hand wing. High cases with ancient, black-bound volumes circled the room.

Miller glanced at them interestedly.

"Looks as though they might have been the original library collected by Noyer," he said.

"I dare say they are," Morgan answered. "It's all old before-the-war stuff—mostly government reports, dry and valueless. One of my brothers, who is something of a bookworm, has run through them. He advised selling the lot by the bale for kindling. By the way, I hope you'll stay long enough to meet my brothers. They've immolated themselves once or twice by leaving real winter resorts to visit me. I hope they'll be here over this coming Sunday, on their way North. You might enjoy them."

He rang a bell. In a few minutes, a manservant entered, bearing a tray with cigars and bottles. Morgan made a good deal of a ceremony of the refreshments. Half an hour or more had passed before he arose, to conduct his guest through the house. During that time, as though by mutual consent, neither he nor Miller had mentioned Jake. Evidently every one on the island agreed with Miller that it was essential the tragedy should not be brooded upon by minds already sufficiently troubled.

Miller found the interior of the plantation house more fascinating than that first view had prophesied. The rooms were low-ceilinged but large. The woodwork was rough-hewn. Old-fashioned furniture cluttered the floors. The clothing of the two men was all that brought the mind back from the days of Noyer to the present.

At last, Morgan led Miller up a steep

ladder to the cupola he had noticed from the water.

Here, in the small, square, unfinished room, Morgan pointed out rusty iron staples driven into the oak beams. Depending from them were wrist and leg irons. Overhead was a row of empty hooks.

"For thongs and lashes," Morgan explained. "It seems Noyer was a disciplinarian. This cheerful apartment was designed for the house servants. In one of the barns there is a far more elaborate outfit, evidently for the field hands."

"Romantic!" Miller said. "Scarcely pleasant; but, by Jove, the whole place is romantic!"

"And what else you've had a chance to see," Morgan answered quietly. "As I've told you, I pride myself on my resistance, but the island does seem to give out an air. How would you describe it? Baneful! You've seen how superstition fattens on it. That shouldn't be, but I'm fighting it all the time, not only with my servants. My brothers, even, when they're here."

The proper moment had come. Miller caught his breath, and plunged boldly:

"And your daughter? Is she superstitious?"

Morgan turned. It was growing dark even in this high room. Miller could not read the other's face—could not be sure it confessed any emotion stronger than surprise.

Morgan spoke with a little difficulty. His voice was hard:

"My daughter! How have you—What do you know of her?"

Miller felt himself placed in the wrong. He was conscious of the hot blood in his cheeks. After all, perhaps, he had been tactless, for Anderson had told him that the girl troubled her father, and he had seen sufficient evidence of that himself.

"The Andersons," he said, "mentioned that you had a daughter."

His choice lay between that and an avowal of his encounter with the girl. He did not care to surrender that memory or her secret. At the moment he found he couldn't.

Morgan started down the ladder.

"My daughter," he said coldly, "is not to be judged ordinarily. She is—peculiar. She keeps a good deal to herself."

They descended to the library in silence. Miller resented the constraint that had arisen between them at the mention of this girl, in whom he felt so strong an interest. When he took his leave, however, Morgan resumed his cordial tone.

"It's pretty dark," he said. "I hadn't realized it was so late. You have had experience of that path. Perhaps you wouldn't find it pleasant walking, particularly after your vigil of the other night. Let me run you out in my launch."

Miller laughed a little.

"No. I suppose I should be glad it's dark, so I can go through those woods, grinning at the feeling with which they oppressed me the other night. But, of course, that's nonsense. The path's really all right. Besides, my man is waiting for me around the house, and we have the dinghy on the shore. I can't inconvenience you and myself for atmosphere."

Morgan laughed back at him.

"After all, that's the talk! But mind you don't fancy things in the dark. I want you to come again."

"When you've lunched or dined on the *Dart*," Miller answered.

"Gladly. How about a lantern?"

"There's one in the dinghy. I think I can manage that far."

He started around the house.

"Good night!" Morgan called after him.

It was really night in the avenue.

Miller walked cautiously to avoid stumbling.

He was disappointed more than he would have thought possible. Primarily, he had come to see the girl. She had not appeared. He had misread the fancied obedience in her eyes.

He paused and lighted his pipe. After the match expired it was darker than before. He had not realized it was so late. He smiled at the thought of Tony's terror of the darkness in this place. But where was the man? A slight uneasiness drove the smile away. He called:

"Tony!"

He waited, listening. The night was very still.

His uneasiness increased. Perhaps, though, the native had gone back to the dinghy. Yet, Miller felt, he would not have taken that path at dusk alone without some irresistible reason.

He went on. He knew he must be near the end of the avenue, that those dark masses directly ahead were the ruined slave quarters. He wondered why the night was so still. There should be insects, birds, animals, but he heard nothing save the slight scuffling of his feet among dead leaves.

Abruptly he stopped. Miller was not easily startled, yet now his throat tightened. Something was moving ahead—a blacker shadow in the black shadow of a crumbling wall. It stepped out toward him.

"Who's there?" he muttered.

But now he guessed, and he was exultant. She came to him quickly. Her hand was on his arm. He heard her heavy breathing. The girl was frightened. He fought back a quick impulse to put his arms around her, to draw her close. He knew it was unjustifiable. For a moment it was incomprehensible to him. He strangled it.

"I told myself you would see me," he said. "I asked you to see me."

"I have obeyed."

She caught her breath.

"Listen—"

"What is your name?" he asked. "This time you will tell me your name."

"Listen!" she began again.

"Won't you tell me your name?"

She burst out impatiently:

"I have no name for you."

She reached up. She pulled at the lapel of his coat.

"Listen to me—"

Again, as on the beach, a sense of social isolation set him beyond the standards he knew. The logic of reason no longer dovetailed. The impulse grew too strong. His arms were around her. His lips tried to find hers. But he could not find her lips at first.

She spoke hurriedly, with an odd catch in her voice:

"This is madness! You cannot do that."

"But I can," he said defiantly.

He drew her head back. He kissed her mouth. Without warning she relaxed.

"You have taken too much," she said, in a hard voice. "Now, go!"

"Yes," he answered. "I shall go, but to-morrow on the beach—"

He released her, and walked toward the ruins. He was aware of no shame. Instead, a steely triumph filled his heart. He was for the moment a man strange to himself.

He had reached the edge of the underbrush, when she caught him and grasped his arm. She was trembling.

"No. Even now you must not go that way."

"Why?"

"Listen! The night is very still."

"Yes. Why have I done this? Is it love?"

"Don't say that. You must not go this way. Come back."

"I shall go this way."

Her voice rose.

"Not to-night. The woods are not safe to-night."

"Not safe?"

She whispered:

"The throats of the snakes—their fangs are out."

"Wh-what do you mean?"

"I know," she cried. "You shall not go this way to-night."

Suddenly he stiffened. A choked and horrible cry arose from the path ahead of them—the cry of a man in agony. It seemed to break into a thousand sounds and fill the woods.

She shrank back. Then she recovered, and tried to catch at his arm. But he realized. He threw off her hand and plunged blindly down the path. He shouted:

"Tony!"

He heard her faintly:

"Come back! Come back!"

But he stumbled on in the direction of the cry. He could see nothing. He kept to the path only by instinct, running, thrusting aside the branches and fronds that reached out to hold him back. At last he heard Tony's gasping breath. The man was just ahead. He was running, too, but slowly, heavily, as one who struggles from the paralyzing bonds of fear.

"Tony! It was you! What—"

The man staggered forward. Miller took his arm and hurried him.

"Were you— Were you—"

But he scarcely dared finish the question. Perhaps Jake at first had run, too. Perhaps Tony, as he ran, was aware of the pain of two tiny punctures, of the slow mounting of the poison, of the imminence of death on the island he had feared. The weight of his responsibility in urging the man here against his will crushed Miller. He forced the question out:

"Tony! Tony! Were you struck?"

They swayed from the forest to the beach. Far away, the riding light of the *Dart* burned steadily. The peaceful water mirrored the stars.

Miller swung Tony around.

"That place is full of snakes," he said thickly. "Tell me—"

He shook the man.

"Tell me! Tell me!"

Tony did not answer. Miller had a cold fear that he could not. He tightened his grasp.

"What happened? Pull yourself together, man!"

It was a long time before Tony spoke. When he did finally the words came with difficulty, disjointed, almost unintelligible.

"The avenue—something moved. It was dark—frightened—in the path—I got off—"

"Yes! Yes!"

"I don't know. I don't know."

"What happened in the path?"

"Don't know. I couldn't go on."

The man's voice rose to a cry.

"I couldn't move—"

"Nothing touched you? Nothing held you?"

"No. I was alone, and I couldn't move—couldn't see. But I could hear. I heard the rattle."

He paused, gasping for breath.

"I heard it crawling—crawling. It rattled twice."

"But you screamed. How—"

"I don't know. It hurt, but I shouted. I heard you coming. I could move. I ran."

Miller let him go. He walked to the boat and lighted the lantern, trying to tell himself it was stark fear that had held the man captive.

Tony pushed off, stepped in, and took the oars. He rowed unevenly. The boat made slow progress.

Miller raised the lantern to examine the native's face. But his eyes did not reach the face. They were arrested by the knotted hands on the oars. He was unwilling to credit what he saw there. The manner of Jake's death on that same path came back and chilled him. For there were abrasions on Tony's wrists, too, and the man could

not tell how they had come there. He was sure of only this: no one had touched him. He dropped the oars.

"I can't row, Mr. Miller. My wrists hurt."

He thrust his wrists in the salt water. He carried them to his face. He pressed them against his eyes. All at once he commenced to sob painfully, grossly.

Lowering the lantern, Miller waited for this shocking breakdown to rack itself out. He could not doubt what Tony's wrists had shown him. For the first time he surrendered to a sense of insufficiency, and, for the moment, of utter helplessness.

CHAPTER XI.

When they reached the *Dart*, Miller lighted the saloon lamp himself. Sitting on a locker, he directed Tony to come to him and to place his hands, palms up, on the polished mahogany table. Then he leaned forward to examine the wrists more carefully. Immediately he started back with an exclamation. The abrasions were disappearing. Even in this brilliant light he had had to look closely to detect that which fifteen minutes back had struck him like a blow in the uncertain glimmer of a lantern.

He questioned Tony. He went over the entire experience once more, but Tony could tell him nothing further. It was all vague in his mind. The thing that was clearest, that persisted, whose memory still terrified, was the fact that he had stood in the darkness, off the path, unable to move, held apparently by an immaterial but plenary force, while the snake had approached.

When Miller had finished, Tony bent his head.

"Now," he asked, in that thick voice which always gave the impression of a thing disused, "can't we go from Captain's Island?"

Miller thought for a moment, knowing he would stay, yet striving to be honest with himself. He admitted that he craved cheerful surroundings and experiences ranging within his own comprehension. He did not deny that a feeling of inadequacy to combat the atmosphere of Captain's Island had grown, had to-night assumed disconcerting proportions. But he was aware of no bending of his will. He understood more clearly than ever why Anderson and Molly had stayed on at the coquina house in the face of nervous and physical breakdown. Any other course would have confessed their weakness, would have earned his contempt. He found himself looking forward impatiently to to-morrow night, which he would spend there, perhaps in the room where Noyer had committed the murder on which so much of the island's superstition was based. In other words, he wanted to bring matters to a focus in order to persuade Molly, Anderson, Tony, and himself that they were the victims of nerves, or of some subtle material fact to which at present no clew appeared. For he would not harbor the possibility of the supernatural's convincing him at the end.

Underneath this healthy, combative instinct, moreover, lay a stronger force which held him to the place—one whose birth and growth and expression troubled him scarcely less than the graver problem. When, yielding incredibly to his impulse, he had held the girl, according to his will and against hers, in his arms; when, her resistance swept aside, he had placed his lips on her elfin ones, he had accepted from Captain's Island a personal problem on whose solution, he realized, his happiness depended precariously. Molly and the others eliminated, he could not leave the inlet now. So he faced Tony with a certain pity, be-

cause he understood the man's devotion.

"No, Tony, we cannot go from Captain's Island yet. I shall stay until all the cards are on the table."

Under his breath, Tony muttered one word:

"Death!"

"What's that?" Miller demanded sharply.

"Can't fight what you can't see. Captain's Island's full of it. It's always meant death. The other night—"

"Your stories!" Miller said. "All right, Tony. After your experience this evening, on top of Jake's death, I can't keep you. I can't expect to convince you by laughing at your stories again. In the morning you can go to Sandport, and, understand, I don't blame you. We part amicably."

Tony opened his arms in a gesture of despair. He went back to the kitchen.

"That means, Tony?" Miller called.

An angry rattling of pans came to him. But he knew what it meant. If they got through here with whole skins he would take the fellow North with him.

He slept very little that night. The wearier his brain grew with the puzzle the wider awake it held him. He placed the mystery in the scales with logic and common sense, but the scales would not balance. The few facts that presented themselves only increased the fantasy of the unknown. From the cases of Jake and Tony an alliance appeared to exist between the island's two radical attributes—its commonly accepted supernatural atmosphere and its poisonous snakes. Both of these unaccountable adventures, one of which had ended fatally, had occurred in the same place—that piece of forest between the shore of the inlet and the ruins. What was the connection between the violent and fatal force that lurked there and the wearing manifestations of the coquina house, and, for that matter, with

the oppressive air one breathed after dark at Morgan's—even here on the *Dart*?

When, for relief from these questions to which no answer would come, he turned to his own problem, the girl, he only found more to trouble, more to mystify. From the first, her presence had led him to answer to unexpected, and, he felt, inexplicable, impulses. And to-night she had come to him with a veiled warning that the piece of woods was unsafe. Had she actually known anything, or was her foreknowledge psychic? For she had given him an impression that that word would fit her better than any he knew. One fact lingered in his memory with triumphant clearness. He did not regret the question he had asked in the black shadows of the ruins. He was eager for the dawn to give him an opportunity to answer it in her presence.

When the dawn came, however, it did not bring its usual release from the fancies of the night. He rose, tired, depressed, irritable. His plunge in the swift waters of the inlet failed to arouse him. As he stood on deck afterward, scanning the tangled shore of the island distastefully, almost with hatred, that significant sentence Molly had uttered so confidently down there in the saloon came back to him:

"By and by even the sweetest days will be colored for you like that."

He swung about impatiently. His eyes searched the dunes, which were touched with a delicate mauve by the dawn. He felt that the girl would come this morning. Uncomfortable as she was, what had happened last night would trouble her, would bring her to the sands. Moreover, he had told her to come, he remembered, and at the time had not questioned her obedience.

His restlessness increased until he rowed to the dunes. He wandered among them while his certainty fell to a hope, and his hope began to dwindle.

At last he saw her, far up the curving beach. She walked slowly. Her head was bowed. She wore a black gown, which made her figure seem very slender, rather pitiful.

He hurried to meet her, but, instead of the exultation and the steely triumph of last night, he experienced a growth of his depression until it became sorrow. He wondered if this could be accounted for by her black dress and her downcast eyes.

He took her hand, which she permitted to rest passively in his, and led her to the first dune. There, for some moments, they sat in silence, their backs against the sand, gazing out to sea where the sun rose in an opal mist. When he spoke, his voice was lifeless.

"There is so much to say—so much to ask. I am glad you have come."

She did not meet his eyes.

"You shall not ask me to come again."

"Yes," he answered, "because—it is very curious. You would not tell me your first name. I do not know that, but I know I love you."

"Hush!" she whispered. "You must not say that."

"Even," he asked, "if you——"

Now she looked into his eyes.

"Not even then."

"Yet you have come as I asked."

"To tell you that."

"You have told me, and it alters nothing. There is something here—something I can't explain, but it shall not intervene. In the end, it shall be as I wish."

"I don't say those things—not even you."

He looked at her dully. Where had his courage and his will of the other morning, of last night, fled? Impatient with himself, he burst out:

"What is all this mystery?"

She was a little surprised.

"Mystery?"

"To begin with, about you?"

Her lips tightened.

"There is no mystery about me that you haven't made yourself. You kissed me against my will."

"It was brutal," he said, "but I am glad, for it made me know that I love you. At least, it explains nothing. Yes, there is mystery—mystery about you which——"

He turned, and for the second time shook his fist toward Captain's Island.

"And mystery there. Perhaps you can lighten it, for it shall be lightened. Last night there was a loathsome, death-dealing puzzle on that island, in that piece of forest. I don't understand it. Tony, who was caught in its mazes, doesn't, either."

"Yes," she said, "that piece of woods is often unsafe. If I can help it, I shall not go there again, nor must you."

"You see!" he cried. "There is mystery, and you must tell me what you know of it."

"I? Nothing."

"Nothing! Then why do you say it is dangerous? Why did you warn me last night? Why did you call me back? Why did you say that about the snakes—that their fangs were out?"

"Because I knew the path wasn't safe last night."

"And how—how did you know?"

She seemed to be trying to find words that would satisfy him. At last she shook her head, smiling wistfully.

"It is hard to tell you that. I only felt. Since I have been on the island I have felt these things about it. I can't tell you how. I wish I could. I—it's only that while I waited for you in the ruins it came to me that the forest was full of snakes and—and horrors, and that you must not go."

"That explains nothing," he said, disappointed.

She turned away.

"I am sorry. You will think I am—queer."

"Queer!" he repeated. "You want me to believe there is a bond between you and those horrors?"

"I did not say that."

"If that is all you can tell me, it is absurd."

"It is all I can tell you."

"Remember," he urged, "I love you, and, oh, my dear, you, I think——"

She put her hand in his. He stared at the quick moisture in her eyes.

"I have never known love," she said; "but now, perhaps, you have made me feel that. We must never speak of it again. We must never see each other again."

He drew her to him.

"Never!" he mocked. "You can say that now? There's one mystery I can dissipate. I will speak to your father. I will tell him I love you."

Pushing him back, she sprang to her feet.

"No. You will promise me not to do that."

"Why? It is so natural. Can there be nothing normal here?"

"I have troubled him enough," she said. "He is sweet and kind, and it would trouble him if you should speak of me."

"Why does he dislike one to speak of you?" Miller asked. "Why are you kept so much to yourself?"

"I am not kept," she answered. "I keep myself apart. People make me unhappy. Why must you make me unhappy, too? Why do you torture me with questions I don't know how to answer, that I can't answer? I have told you what I could. Don't ask any more."

"I want to ask you one thing. Did your father come here because of you?"

"No; but he has stayed because of me."

"If you refuse to tell me why," he said, "I shall go to him. I shall ask him, no matter whom it troubles."

"You will end by hating me," she answered, "yet I have done nothing

wrong. Perhaps it is better, although he——"

She hesitated.

"He could tell you about me no more than I have told you, than you have seen yourself; and I could never come here again in the early morning."

"But you said—— Then you will come, after all?"

"When you have gone from Captain's Island," she answered.

He rose and grasped her hands.

"Understand, I shall not leave until I have solved the puzzle of that dangerous forest, of the coquina house—until I can walk the whole ghastly island without the uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Then I shall go, and I shall take you with me."

"No, no!" she said harshly; "or, perhaps, you will never leave Captain's Island. I know it. You—even you can't do that. I have told you that I feel these things. It is not safe to fight."

"I shall stay."

She strove for some form of persuasion.

"If my father should leave? He has thought of it. He does not like it. If he should take me away, would you give it up, and leave with us?"

He smiled.

"In that case, I think pride would go by the board."

"Then——" she began, and stopped.

The chugging of a gasoline engine reached them from the inlet.

"It is he," she said. "He may go to your boat, for I know he likes you. Hurry back. Don't tell him you have seen me. No one must see me here."

"Except me, and you will come to me here again?" he bargained.

The exhaust of the engine was nearer. She looked wildly around her. Swiftly she stooped and touched her lips to his hand, then she turned and ran up the beach, glancing back at him.

CHAPTER XII.

Miller walked across the dunes, elated at first by the fugitive caress, but after a moment his depression returned, heavier than before. He had hoped the interview would lead to some solution of Tony's adventure, to the unveiling of the entire affair. Yet all it had brought him on that side was the girl's avowal that she possessed an instinct which warned her when the lurking danger gathered itself menacingly.

He stepped into the dinghy and pushed off. Before he had reached the boat, Morgan came opposite him.

"Want to fish?" Morgan called. "I'm going to try my luck at the lower end of the inlet."

"I haven't breakfasted," Miller answered. "Bring your boat over."

Morgan stopped his engine, pulled at the tiller, and drifted close. Miller studied him reflectively. Why was it that the pleasant little man surrounded his daughter with such cold reserve? Some unhappy family chapter, perhaps? That would also explain her repeated suggestions that nothing could come of their love. Or was the cause to be traced wholly to the girl herself? At any rate, this one subject, as the constraint in the cupola yesterday reminded him, altered Morgan's genial personality completely. Certainly he was good-humored enough now!

"I see you got back all right last evening. Didn't see any woman in white?"

"That's what I wished to speak to you about," Miller answered. "No orthodox ghosts, but something more puzzling."

Morgan was curious. He asked meaningly:

"In that piece of woods?"

Miller nodded, and told him of Tony's experience. As he spoke, the good humor faded from Morgan's face. He listened dejectedly.

"What next?" he exclaimed, when Miller had finished. "Thank heavens this wasn't another coroner's case! Who'll be the third? See here, Miller, I was really anxious to run you out in my launch last night. I didn't press the point, because I didn't want to appear ridiculous. But I don't feel right about that piece of woods. We've had warning enough now. Even before anything happened, as I told you, the Andersons and I preferred to walk it by day. Now, here's the cat bitten there, and Jake, and this unaccountable affair of last night. There's no answer. What, in the name of Heaven, is wrong?"

"I am going to find out what's wrong," Miller answered grimly. "I am going to satisfy myself about that piece of woods before I get through with it."

"You're young. Frankly, I'm afraid of it," Morgan answered.

He sighed.

"If this sort of thing keeps up I suppose, sooner or later, I'll have to get out. And the plantation seemed just what we wanted. It's lonely enough now. Why don't you come over and spend the night to-night? We can have a game of chess, and I'll promise to get you to bed early."

"I'm sorry," Miller said. "The Andersons have asked me to have dinner and stay with them. Another time."

"I wish you would," Morgan urged.

He laughed uncomfortably.

"Here I am crying for company! Well, one can't always analyze. There is just an unpleasant feeling about the house after dark."

He started his engine again and swung off.

"Sorry you won't try your luck with the fishes."

After breakfast, Miller stretched himself in his steamer chair. But he could not read. His dejection annoyed him all the more because it was so at

variance with his natural character. Yet, try as he might, he could not throw it off.

Morgan went by toward noon, displaying a string of fish.

"Why don't you fish, Tony?" Miller asked. "I expect to spend the night on the island with the Andersons. Since you feel as you do, there's no necessity of your coming with me. Row me ashore after luncheon, and take the rest of the day and the night to yourself."

Tony shook his head. His attitude was intensely disapproving, but through devotion, or the fear of being left alone on the *Dart*, it was clear that he would share the adventure. Miller did not attempt to reason with him now. Tony had too much on his side.

Shortly after luncheon he went down to his stateroom, threw a few things in a bag, and directed Tony to place it in the dinghy. He hesitated for a moment, then took a revolver from a dresser, saw that it was loaded, and slipped it in his pocket.

"Row over to the sphinx's temple," he said, when Tony had cast off: "You'll agree we can deal with flesh and blood there, and I promised yesterday to make him a polite call. We owe it to him and to ourselves."

When they were close he hailed the tub, but the fisherman gave no sign. They circled the hull. Its few portholes were covered with dirty sacking, so that they could see nothing of the interior.

"Closer!" Miller said resolutely. "I'm going on board."

He climbed over the broken rail. He examined the deck. It was empty. There was only one hatch. Miller faced that. His hand on the revolver in his pocket, he called:

"Hello, below there!"

Aware of something like the reasonless hatred Anderson had described, he

kicked and pounded on the hatch. He called again and again.

"If I were certain he's there I'd break the thing in," he said to Tony. "There's something out of the way here."

He lowered himself to the dinghy in a bad temper, and directed Tony to continue to the shore.

"Draw the dinghy above high-water level, then keep your eye on that boat while I look over the scene of your affair."

Tony shook his head.

"It's day," Miller said. "The snakes are drowsy in sunny places."

He went up the path, carefully examining the underbrush on either side. About halfway to the slave quarters, at the spot where Morgan and he had found Jake's body, he saw several freshly broken palmetto fronds. That undoubtedly was where Tony had wandered from the path, where he had been held helpless by some compelling, intangible force while the snake had crept near. But there was nothing else; nothing the whole length of the path to give a clew to the nature of this force, nothing, if one excepted the hot, damp air that made breathing almost painful.

In this heavy atmosphere Miller's depression grew. His feeling of helplessness kept pace with it. His nerves jangled. Turning, he hurried back to the shore of the inlet.

"Not a thing, not a thing!" he said irritably, in reply to Tony's questioning look.

He pointed at the fisherman's boat.

"And that fellow——"

Tony shook his head.

The native at his heels, Miller hurried to the coquina house. Anderson and Molly met him at the steps.

"Jim!" Molly called. "What's the matter?"

"Enough!" he answered. He told them of Tony's experience.

"And there's more," he said. "Al-

together, it's put me out of humor with myself. My nerves seem to be on edge this afternoon."

"You, Jim!" Molly said. "I prayed it wouldn't get you."

Miller made an impatient gesture.

"Nothing has me, but I've ceased blaming you for staying here. One can't be beaten by such madness."

With an effort he forced himself to speak of the girl.

"Andy, there's one thing—that girl."

Anderson's glance questioned him.

"Yes," Miller said, "I've seen her. I want to know all you can tell me about her."

"You don't think she had anything to do with last night?" Molly asked.

"I can't think that."

"She is so strange!" Molly sighed.

"I asked you on the *Dart*, Andy, when you spoke of her as so strange, if she was off her head. She is queer, I grant you that, perhaps, consciously so. That's a question. Actually she is as sane as you or I. Now what can you tell me about her?"

"Very little," Anderson replied, "that can be put into words. Molly, you——"

"It's so indefinite—the feeling you have about her," Molly said. "We've never seen her much—scarcely at all lately. Occasionally we've spied her running or walking through the forest—always with that curious, detached expression on her pretty face. But what to me has seemed hardest to account for is the way she makes you feel when she looks at you out of those big, deep eyes, the way she seems to hold you aloof. But I have never thought she was crazy."

"I'd stake my life she isn't," Anderson said. "The girl suffers, and I believe it's this island that makes her suffer. Perhaps it affects her even more than it does us. She may be more receptive."

"I've thought of that," Miller answered. "Have you never asked Mor-

gan about her? I tried yesterday, and he froze solid."

"He always does," Molly said. "I wanted to be friendly with her, but she wouldn't let me. She made me feel I can't tell you how ill at ease. Then she ran away. I spoke to her father. He let me see it made him very unhappy to talk about her."

"But why?" Miller cried.

"Because," Anderson answered, "I think Morgan fears it may be the other thing, or at any rate imagines we suspect it. That would hurt him, anger him."

"And that's all you can tell me of her!" Miller said. "It's the way everything appears in this place—elusive, just out of reach. If we could only get our hands on one fact to start a theory that would hold water!"

"I hate to see you this way, Jim," Molly said gloomily.

"Don't worry. I'll get that fact if it's to be had. Meantime, we must deal with something we can't define, something apparently impossible. But we can't sit back in our ignorance, and say that, and risk its running over us. No matter how preposterous it seems to our common sense, we must take the island at its face value. In the first place, I understand you have to hail a boat every time you go to Sandport. There is no boat at the southern end of the island, opposite Sandport?"

Anderson shook his head.

"There ought to be one," Miller went on. "I'll send Tony to Sandport to hire a rowboat. We can keep it tied on this side."

Molly nodded approvingly, but Anderson wanted reasons.

"This business of Tony's," Miller answered, "has taught me a lesson. I've concluded that stubbornness is a poor relation of discretion. It's brought you nothing but the loss of—well, your peace of mind. It's nearly cost me Tony. I acknowledge nothing except

that there appears to have been an incomprehensible and fatal force at large in that piece of forest last night, and the night Jake died. Because we haven't been able to get a physical clew to it we can't afford to sit back and say it doesn't exist. It's there. It's dangerous. Suppose it should spread to this house? You haven't been able to get any physical clew to the apparently supernatural manifestations of this house, either, have you? Suppose the force should grow stronger, and sweep the island? It would come from that direction. You could not get to the *Dart*, but if you had any warning you might escape to a boat, and Sandport."

"It looks like surrender," Anderson said helplessly.

"Nonsense! I'm no more friendly to the supernatural than I was in Martinsburg. We're fighting an unseen enemy, that's all. We must skirmish against the only line he indicates to us."

He called Tony, gave him some money, and sent him to Sandport to hire the boat. For the sake of the others he forced his depression down. He called out with an attempt at cheerfulness:

"Out of our minds with it! It will be dark soon enough. Andy, bring some kind of a table out here, and a pack of cards. We'll try a little three-handed action, and to-night you'll open that demonstrative bottle of wine—two if we want them. The supernatural's as friendly to cheerfulness as the devil to a clergyman."

"What a blessed change!" Molly said.

"We've done what we could for the present. I repeat I'm not friendly to phantoms. My hands itch to get at their throats."

CHAPTER XIII.

Anderson brought the table and the cards. It was difficult, at first, but finally they grew interested in the game. Before they realized he had had time

to complete his errand, Tony was back. He explained briefly that he had hired a good boat, and described its location at the river end of the island.

They resumed their game. It held them until the sun had set, until the dejection that came with the twilight drove their minds from the cards.

"I must think of dinner," Molly sighed, listlessly scoring a hand.

"Tell Tony what to do, and look upon it as done," Miller suggested. "Or, better yet, why not all of us pitch in and get dinner? It will be good fun. Tony can clean up afterward while we finish this rubber."

Molly and Anderson agreed uninterestedly. Tony, who had been sitting on the steps, arose, and, as a matter of course, entered the house with them.

They kept close to each other in the cold, dark interior until Anderson had struck a match and lighted the dining-room lamp.

While Tony made a light in the kitchen, Miller brought the lamps from the parlor and the library, and placed them with the one already in the dining room. They left no shadowed corners there. He called to Molly and Anderson, who were in the kitchen:

"Where's the spirit substantial enough to face this battery of kerosene?"

Tony looked at him disapprovingly. Miller laughed.

"Set the table, Tony, then fill that fireplace as full of wood as you can, and set it blazing. Do you mind, Molly, my taking your castle thus by storm?"

"Mind!" she called. "If you had been here every night!"

Miller wandered back to the kitchen. The size of the room made it appear bare, unfurnished, in spite of the old-fashioned stove, the iron pump and sink, the table, and the two or three chairs scattered about. There were two windows in the rear wall. One of them was open. Walking over to it, Miller

gazed out for a moment, then slammed it shut and locked it.

"I don't see," he said to Anderson, "why you didn't have this brushwood cleared out. It's against this back wall. It's a definite menace. Give me an ax, and I'll start on it myself in the morning. If the wind's right, we might set fire to it."

He paused.

"For that matter," he resumed thoughtfully, "we might fire that unholy piece of woods."

"Too dry," Anderson said. "There's been no rain here in more than a month. The whole island might go."

"What of it? Small loss!" Miller muttered.

He took off his coat. He rolled up his sleeves.

"Molly, pin an apron on me. I'm to be queen of the kitchen while Andy there does alchemy with bottles. Those chops won't take long. Hurry your magic, Andy."

As she leaned over the stove a little color came to Molly's face. The sizzling of the meat, and the clinking of glass from the table, where Anderson was trying to discount the lack of ice, combined, with Miller's constant chatter, to raise their spirits.

"It's like a studio feast in the Rue d'Assass," Molly said.

"Remember," Miller said, "the night I came in from St. Cloud with the new bull pup? We called him Buffalo Bill, because his chief aim was the breaking of china and glass."

So they went on, reminiscing almost contentedly until dinner was ready, and they had carried the steaming dishes into the dining room. Tony spoiled their illusion. He leaned against the mantel, uncomfortably near the fire he had built, staring at the open door to the hall. There was a tortured expression on his face.

"See here, Tony——" Miller began. But he recalled what the man had

suffered last night. He went on more kindly:

"Sit in the kitchen doorway, if you wish. Now, Molly, Andy, we'll drink to good health, peaceful minds, and victory."

The meal went better than they had hoped. They toasted themselves, with a semblance of laughter. They drank enthusiastically to the carefree party they would have, if nothing happened, in the most crowded, most brilliant restaurant in New York. Afterward they arranged the table in front of the fireplace and returned to their game.

After a few hands, however, Anderson looked around.

"May in the South!" he said significantly. "All the windows closed, and a blazing fire! Is any one too warm?"

They glanced at each other. Molly shivered.

"Good heavens, Andy!" Miller said, with an effort. "I don't know whether the blue ribbon belongs to you or Tony. Morgan's the only man on the island you can talk to without hearing the rustle of spirit wings, and even he's tainted. It's your cut. Deal, Molly."

They played late. Long after the cards had ceased to interest them they went on, cutting, dealing, bidding, making beginner's mistakes.

Tony, on his chair in the kitchen doorway, had fallen asleep. The fire had died down. One of the lamps was out of oil. Its wick spluttered as the flame, little by little, expired.

Miller glanced at his watch. After eleven! He threw down his cards and arose.

"Molly!" he called sharply. "Keep your eyes from that door! There's no use going on with this farce of cards. Reminds me of one stormy night my nurse filled my infant mind with ban-shees."

He gripped the back of his chair.

"Children, I'm ready for whatever horrors the coquina house can afford."

While Molly arose reluctantly, Anderson remained in his chair, staring at the smoldering logs.

"Jim," Molly pleaded, "don't hear anything to-night. Don't let your mind be filled with awful things. If only you could come down in the morning and look us in the eyes and say you had slept well."

"I'll do that," he answered, "or if I'm disturbed, I'll disturb back as hard as I can."

Anderson looked up, shaking his head.

"I've tried it. There's nothing we can disturb. Perhaps to-night—There are nights when one sleeps peacefully."

"If there weren't!" Molly breathed.

"But you can't tell," Anderson went on. "One waits."

"Doubtless a newcomer won't fail of entertainment," Miller said.

He walked over and shook Tony, who sprang to his feet.

"Start your fire again," he suggested, "and draw that sofa over. You'll be all right here. He can keep one of these good lamps, Molly?"

She nodded.

"Then, Andy, please take the other and show me to my room."

Anderson obeyed slowly. With lagging steps he led them to the hall. The hall was cold after the heated dining room. Anderson started up the steps. Molly followed him. Miller went last, curbing a strong desire to glance over his shoulder. At the landing he did look back. Tony had come to the door, where he stood staring after them hungrily.

The stairs swung back from the landing to a square hallway, out of which four doors opened. Anderson walked to the one in the farther right-hand corner. He put his hand on the knob, waited a moment, then pushed

the door open and stepped in. Molly, grasping his arm, followed him. Miller entered after her.

Anderson set the lamp on a bureau which stood between the two windows in the front wall. While he lighted a sconce of candles there, Miller glanced around the apartment where he was to spend the night, in an effort to prove to his friends that the supernatural is wholly subjective, and chiefly neurasthenic. As he looked, he felt none too confident. The room was huge and dingy. It had an outworn air, the air of a thing past use, a thing dead and decayed. A massive walnut bedstead stood beneath a canopy opposite the bureau. There was a fireplace set in the wall to its right. A washstand had been placed to its left, and carved chairs stood on either side at the head of the bed. The wall paper, ancient, and stained broadly, had a pattern of tarnished bronze arabesques on a green background. Miller fancied it gave out an odor, acrid and unhealthy. In two or three places it had fallen away from the ceiling molding, and hung in pallid tatters. The room chilled him. He turned to the others. Molly had her hand on her husband's arm. Anderson, ready to go, had taken up the lamp. The lamp shook.

"At least," Miller said, "the summer heat can't be blamed for the state of one's nerves on Captain's Island."

He glanced around again.

"Once this must have been very comfortable—for its period, even luxurious. Evidently, Noyer humored the fair lady. I assume you've honored me. This is the room in which he cut her throat?"

"I don't know," Anderson said. "This is the largest room. It is a little harder to sleep here. It's where the girls said they heard—"

"Jim, I begged Andy not to. There's a smaller room in the back, if you'd rather."

"I choose to sleep here, and remember I'm grown up," Miller laughed.

His laughter stopped abruptly. In that room it had a hollow sound. It startled them all.

"You see!" Molly said.

Miller tried to hide his own shock.

"Merely disuse," he answered. "The room is unaccustomed to good spirits."

He laughed again challengingly.

"To-morrow I'll show you how to get rid of the bad ones. I'll build a fire here and smoke them out. If that doesn't work, I'll send up to Martinsburg for a vacuum cleaner. From the advertisements, the tiniest, most immaterial wraith wouldn't have a ghost of a chance."

"No, Jim," Molly whispered. "Don't!"

She had assumed that air of strained expectancy. Leaning a little forward, her head to one side, she listened.

Anderson touched her timidly.

"Come, Molly! Let's give Jim an opportunity to put his will on the firing line."

"It's been there all along," Miller answered.

Molly turned at the threshold.

"We're just opposite. We'll leave our door open a crack."

"Mine, too," Miller said. "It's a custom Tony's foisted upon me on the *Dart*. Good night, and go to sleep. Let them perform exclusively for me this once."

As their steps died away across the wide hall the smile Miller had forced to his lips vanished. He turned slowly, and, alone, faced the decayed room, again conscious of that disagreeable odor that seemed to come from the wall paper.

CHAPTER XIV.

One thing admitted no question. This cold was unnatural, unless the state of one's mind could affect the body so materially.

He strode to one of the windows. He flung it open. Leaning across the sill, he took deep breaths of the outside air. That, too, was cold, and a biting wind stole down from the north.

He drew his coat tighter. He tried to realize that a few hours ago he had perspired and gasped for breath in the dangerous forest. He looked at the sullen sky. A dim and formless moon was suspended above the dunes. It showed him a tiny patch of the inlet, but the water did not sparkle. From far across the inlet and the sands came the muffled pounding of the breakers.

Shivering, he faced the room again. The tarnished arabesques of the wall paper caught his eye. He leaned against the bureau with a sense of loathing. For in the flickering light of the candles the arabesques seemed to writhe and twine—like awakening snakes.

He slammed the window shut. The candles burned steadily. The arabesques were still. He crossed the room, and, conquering his distaste, ran his fingers over the surface of the paper. It felt cold and damp. He confessed to no feeling of shame in doing this. As he had told Anderson, he acknowledged nothing, but he was prepared to let common sense go by the board, and to take experiences here at their face value until their causes materialized.

At present, this attitude was, in a measure, defensive. At his first entrance in the room he had been aware of a stealthy sense of antagonism. He had felt that he could not find sleep between its tarnished, stained, and damp walls. Now he combated a strong desire to step out of it, to leave the house, to seek whatever there might be of contest in the open. Yet, he remembered, the only open spaces on the island were the clearings here and at the plantation house. Any struggle against the mysteries of Captain's Island must probably take place beneath a roof of ugly memories or in the forest, where an un-

accountable force unleashed death on its helpless victims.

He turned from the wall. He opened the window again. Although the arabesques resumed their creeping illusion, he strangled his revulsion. He placed his revolver beneath the pillow. When he was half undressed he blew out the candles. He climbed into the great bed. He surrendered himself to its soft, dank embrace.

He had only half undressed because he wished to be prepared for any eventuality. He had been sincere in telling Molly that if he was disturbed he would disturb back. Moreover, he anticipated four or five hours of wakefulness until daylight. Four or five hours of waiting. That was what Anderson had said. That was why he was so restless, why his depression had become reasonless, overwhelming. He waited. Yet for what? Anderson, it was clear, had meant, apparently, supernatural manifestations, which came with the night and ceased at dawn. In an undefined way Miller knew that he waited for more than that—anticipated, in fact, some exceptional adventure that would begin in this house and would end Heaven knew where.

He strove uselessly to drive the premonition from his mind. Premonitions, he had always said, were an invention to annoy weak-minded people needlessly. He smiled. Had it come to the point where he was to be so classified? As a matter of fact, it should be simple to go to sleep here. Determined to try, he rolled over.

He could not find a comfortable position. Always he combated a tingling desire to hurl the covers back and leap from the chilling depths of this huge bed. And when he closed his eyes the illusion of the arabesques writhed vaguely across the darkness—a circle of snakes, closing in with unsheathed tongues, ready to strike. He

wished now that Anderson had never spoken of that fancy.

A sly whispering filled the room—or a hissing? It grew. It died away. It began again. Miller clenched his fists, and forced himself to listen calmly, appraisingly. At last he relaxed. That, at least, was normally explained. The rising wind was setting the cedars in motion. Thus, he told himself, are supernatural stories born and nourished. If he had been so easily moved, what could be expected of ignorant natives like Tony? No doubt it was the type of phenomena to which Anderson and Molly had bared their nerves.

He turned, and tried again to sleep, but it was impossible. He had no idea how much time had passed. He had been foolish to blow out the candles. He might have looked at his watch—

All at once he was aware of another noise—a noise he could not mistake. Some one was walking softly, either in the hall, or—it was possible, the footsteps were so nearly inaudible—in his own room, within a few feet of his bed.

He flung back the covers. He sat upright. He listened intently, wishing to be sure, unwilling to make a ridiculous mistake. But there was no doubt. Some one was in his room, approaching the bed.

"Who's there?" he muttered.

No answer came. For a moment the sound ceased. Then he heard it again, retreating. Outside, the whispering of the wind increased. A casement rattled in a sharper gust.

He reasoned. Could these evident footsteps be the pallid tatters of the wall paper flapping in the wind? He remembered they were near the ceiling, while this sound had come from the floor. It appeared now to be in the hall. Then Anderson, Molly, or Tony—Yet none of them would have entered his room in that stealthy fash-

ion, or, entering, would have refused to answer.

Slipping out of bed, he tiptoed to the door. As he had agreed with Molly, he had left it open only a crack. Now it stood wide. The wind, he argued, might be responsible. Yet he hurriedly pushed it to. He felt a physical aversion for the black void of the hall where the footsteps strayed.

"Andy!" he said, under his breath. "Tony!"

No one answered. The house was silent now except for the rattling of the casements.

He returned to the bed, arguing that the footsteps had been imagination or some trickery of the wind, but he could not convince himself.

Little by little, as though the footsteps had started the train, his mind began to play with the thought of a woman's violent death in this room. He knew practically nothing beyond the bare fact. After pampering her, Anderson and the agent had said, Noyer had killed her, had cut her throat, and that had almost certainly happened in this room, perhaps in this bed, with the arabesques writhing in the candle-light.

He pictured the lawless slaver coming swiftly down that path through the dangerous forest; tramping up the stairs; furiously bursting through that door, which he had just now found mysteriously open; leaning over the bed; killing there that which, in his uncouth way, he had loved. Had she struggled in the bed? Had she had time to cry out before the great hands had tortured her throat and the knife had flashed?

The theory that the essence of tragedy lingers at the place of its making had never impressed Miller. He did not yield to it now. Yet in spite of his mental struggles, these fancies, these questions persisted. Even the thought of the girl was powerless to guide his

imagination to solider ground, although he realized that his future in relation to hers depended on his conquest of a subtle force to which his present experience might, indeed, be traced. He found himself listening for the footsteps again. Were they what Molly awaited when she held her head on one side in an attitude of strained expectancy?

The footsteps did not return, but soon another sound stole into his consciousness—a slow, even, heavy dripping. This time there was no doubt. The sound was in his room, within hand's reach, close to the head of the bed, as though—

He shuddered. He sat upright. The quick motion set the arabesques writhing behind his eyelids. He brushed his hand across his face. He made an effort to regain his sense of proportion. He would find out what that sound was. No matter how much courage it took to reach for his slippers beneath the bed, in the vicinity of that sodden, suggestive dripping, he would get up. He would light the candles.

His unwilling fingers found the slippers. He stepped to the floor. He pushed through the inky blackness to the bureau.

The dripping sound followed him. He paused, the match in his hand, wondering if Noyer had heard something like that—had heard, and fled from his lifeless, disfigured victim.

Then what he had half expected rang through the echoing house—the cry of a woman, full of terror, strangled, suddenly broken off.

CHAPTER XV.

Although he shivered with cold, Miller felt the perspiration spring out on his forehead. He struck the match, and held it to the candles. The arabesques appeared to twist and twine more violently. The odor from the pa-

per seemed more pungent, in spite of the open window. The dripping ceased. He glanced at the floor near the head of the bed, but he saw nothing. It was several minutes before he realized it was Molly who had screamed.

He threw on his clothes, picked up a candle, snatched his revolver from beneath the pillow, and stepped to the hall.

Molly's cry had not been repeated, but something was moving at the foot of the stairs, and he could hear thick breathing. He paused before the door, open a little, as Molly had promised. He was afraid to knock, afraid to ask. Finally he forced the words:

"Andy! Molly called—"

Molly's voice, still a little choked, came to him:

"There's something in this room!"

Miller pushed the door open.

"Wait!" Anderson commanded, in a level, lifeless voice. "There's danger! I said the circle was closing! It is closing!"

Miller paused on the threshold. Molly sat up in bed, a dressing gown thrown over her shoulders. Anderson leaned on his elbow.

"Don't come in, Jim!" he said. "Listen!"

Miller looked around the room. He spoke reassuringly:

"There's no one—nothing!"

"Listen!" Anderson repeated.

Miller heard nothing, so after a moment he stepped into the room. Then he heard—a sound like shot shaken in a crimpler.

"They're daring," Anderson said dreamily. "I knew they were growing daring. I was afraid they were getting ready—"

"Andy!" Miller cried. "Pull yourself together!"

He held his revolver in front of him and stooped. He looked under the bed, in the four corners. He could see nothing, but the rattle was repeated.

"You two get out of here!" he whispered. "It's safe to step down on this side. But hurry! Get to the hall!"

When they had obeyed him he arose, followed them, and closed the door. The rattling came again, apparently from just within the room, yet Miller had seen no snake.

Shaking his head, he led them down the stairs. He found Tony, lying on the steps, halfway up. The man raised his bearded face to the candle, mouthing horribly.

"I tried to come," he muttered, "I tried—"

"You're not hurt?" Miller asked sharply.

Tony shook his head. He crept backward down the stairs, his face turned to the light.

The dining-room fire smoldered. As he entered, Miller felt a cold breath on his cheek. He hurried through to the kitchen. After a moment he called:

"Tony! Did you open this window?"

He came back.

"One of those windows—you saw me close it and lock it! You must have opened it, Tony!"

Vehemently the native shook his head.

"Did you hear anything come through here?"

"All night," Tony answered, pointing to the hall door, "something moving—walking out there!"

"And the window in your bedroom," Miller said to Anderson, "that was open, too; but it's high, and on the side."

"Jim, remember you didn't see anything," Anderson said softly.

"I'm going through this house from top to bottom," Miller said determinedly. "I shan't sleep again until I know. Make yourselves as comfortable as possible here. Molly, fill that lamp. Let's start this fire up."

He stopped and threw a log on the andirons.

"Did you hear?" Molly asked, under her breath.

Still stooping, Miller turned to her. She had assumed again that tense, listening pose.

"What?" he asked.

She put her finger on her lips.

"Outside! Wait! It may come again!"

Taut and expectant, they waited for several minutes, hearing only the crackling of the fresh log and the moaning of the wind in the chimney. Then Molly raised her hand. A quavering voice reached them very faintly.

Miller sprang to his feet.

"Stay here!" he said.

He ran to the hall, drawing his revolver from his pocket.

"Jim!" Molly cried. "Where are you going?"

"Don't come, Andy," he called, "unless I shout!"

He flung the front door open and ran into the clearing.

Momentarily the moon swayed free of its enveloping clouds. Abruptly the tiny section of the inlet flashed back its light. There, in a frame of trees, with a background of black and ragged dunes, stood the fisherman on the deck of his rotten tub—gigantic, statuesque.

Immediately the clouds snatched the moon back to their obscure embrace. The picture snapped out.

The wind strained and tore past Miller. He could scarcely keep his eyes open to its fury. But he started across the clearing toward the path, for he fancied, even in this darkness, there was something there at the edge of the clearing. He raised his revolver. He crept forward, muttering to the night:

"Come out! Whoever you are, don't try to run back! Come out! Come out!"

A figure threw itself against him and raised warm hands to his face. His arm, with the revolver, dropped.

"You——" he began.

"I have been at the edge of the forest," the girl said.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"To tell you to go back. Last night—remember! To-night you must run this way. The island is not safe!"

"Why?" he said. "I shall not run!"

"Yes. You must run to the river. You cannot go back this way. You cannot get to the inlet. I didn't think I could get through, but I got through to tell you that. Run to the river. It may be safe there."

"For God's sake," he begged, "tell me what it is!"

"The island is full of death to-night!"

"Then go to the house. Take the Andersons to the river. There's a boat there."

"Come with me!"

"No! I shall stay and fight this death! I have to know what it is! Don't be afraid for me!"

He could feel her trembling beneath her heavy black cloak. She dragged at his arm.

"No, no! I love you! I will leave the island with you!"

By sheer strength she pulled him a step or two backward.

"You have lied to me!" she said fiercely. "If you loved me you couldn't question now!"

Suddenly her face was etched against the darkness. A blue gleam seemed to play over it, to disclose its tortured, passionate terror. And, as she pulled at his arm, the light reached her wrists. Her wrists were torn and bleeding.

Miller grasped them with a cry, and turned. Above the dangerous forest floated a pallid, unnatural light. It was blue. It wavered. It increased. It seemed to fill the sky.

The girl sank to the ground. He tried to raise her, but she drew back.

"It is too late!" she said in a dead voice. "You wouldn't listen! There is no hope now!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Miller slipped his revolver in his pocket and caught the girl up in his arms. As he carried her toward the steps their shadows were flung by the blue light in grotesque distortions across the surface of the coquina house.

He thought she had fainted, but when at the door he stooped and kissed her lips, she responded with a quick abandonment.

Anderson was waiting fretfully in the hall. He threw the door open. Molly was at his back. Tony stood hesitant, just within the dining room.

"Who—" Anderson began. "The girl! Where—"

"She came with a warning," Miller answered.

Molly cried out:

"What is that light, Jim?"

Anderson ran down the steps.

"The woods have been fired between here and the plantation!"

"No, Andy," Miller called after him, "the light is above the trees! It is not fire!"

He carried the girl to a chair in the dining room.

"Take care of her, Molly. I—"

He broke off. Molly looked at him, guessing the truth. Anderson returned quickly.

"That ghastly light," he said, "it isn't fire!"

Miller pointed at the girl's torn wrists. She quivered before his gesture, and tried to hide her hands.

"The wrists again!" Molly whispered.

Tony shrank against the mantel.

"Tell me," Miller demanded, "how were your wrists injured?"

She thrust her wrists behind her back.

"Answer me!" he said, almost roughly. "Was it coming through that piece of woods?"

She pressed her lips tightly together. There was no color in her face.

"The one physical clew!" Miller cried. "Answer me! Answer me! Do you know how your wrists were torn?"

After a moment she nodded slowly.

"Then tell us! So much depends on that! Tell us!"

She hung her head. She would not answer.

"Tell us!" he begged. "Or, after all, are you leagued with the infernal place against us—against me?"

When at last she answered the words came with a dreadful slowness, as though their passage tortured her throat:

"No! But I can't tell you that! It would be easier to die than to tell you that!"

Her head fell forward. She would not expose her hands, so, although she tried to turn away, the others could see the tears fill her eyes and overflow and drop to her cloak.

Miller stepped aside.

"Molly!" he said softly.

While Molly went to her he drew Anderson to the window. Many shadows thrown by the blue light danced in the clearing.

"There's nothing for it, Andy," he said, in an undertone. "I'm going—there!"

"Jim! After all that's happened in those woods?"

"Yes. One is not safe here, for that matter. She said so. But the truth is there to-night for the taking."

He glanced at the girl.

"I have to have the truth. I must clear this up, no matter what the risk. But don't worry. If one takes the initiative—you see that's not been done on Captain's Island yet. I shall do it!"

"Then, of course," Anderson said, "I shall come with you."

Miller shook his head.

"Molly!" he reminded, "and the girl! I don't have to tell you, Andy—

from the first day. You can see for yourself they can't be left. Tony's in a flunk—worthless. One of us must go, one must stay. I have more at stake. If I don't come back, take them to the boat. Get to Sandport. But I'm not a fool. I'll go carefully—slowly. I've had enough warning. I don't expect to be ambushed by any one—anything."

He threw off Anderson's detaining hand.

"Don't let's have a scene. Don't alarm them. Let me get off quietly. I've a gun for snakes or whatever isn't bullet proof, and the other thing—what I've heard here—has only hurt my nerves and my pride. It's all right, Andy. That light shines on the key to the whole mystery."

He tiptoed across the floor, but when he reached the hall he heard the girl trying to rise.

"Where is he going? Don't let him go! He must not go! Let me up!"

She screamed:

"Don't let him go!"

Miller threw the screen door open. He sprang into the clearing. He ran swiftly across it.

The wind had risen to a gale. The trees moaned and thrashed in the angry gusts. But the wind, Miller noticed, detached no flames from the blue light. The whole mass, which was not as large or as high as he had thought at first, swayed bodily in a narrow arc.

When he reached the path that led to the shore where he had left his boat, he was a little sheltered from the wind, and the light, he found, did not penetrate to him.

He went slowly, his hand on the revolver in his pocket. He went silently, recalling that the girl had said the path to the inlet was closed to him. His care and stealth availed, for he reached the shore without experience.

He paused there for a moment, leaning against the wind, which now swept

unimpeded across the water. He faced the entrance to the path through the dangerous forest, where Jake had died, where Tony last night had been bound by the invisible force. The blue light was strong enough here to show him that entrance—a black cavern, flanked by trees that twisted and strained as though in agony of warning.

He shrank from stepping between these Dantesque sentinels through that somber portal. His mind went to the lantern which he knew lay in the boat, only a few feet away. But he had come so far by stealth and silence. Stealthily and silently he must go on. He realized it was his wisest campaign against that which conspired death beyond the frantic trees.

With an effort he stepped forward. Little by little he conquered his revulsion. He entered the path. Again the light failed to reach him. The darkness was like a cloak. It suffocated. In spite of the keen wind tearing past him he could scarcely breathe.

He had no illusions. He knew he was in danger—a danger all the more to be feared because it was uncharted. He slipped his revolver from his pocket. His other hand he carried outstretched before him. Painfully he crept up the path, momentarily expectant of the enemy's first move.

His half-serious remark to Anderson about firing this piece of woods came back to him. A match dropped in the dry underbrush, at the will of this wind, would surrender the forest to a swift destruction. Let the enemy make its first move, let him feel the symptoms of an overpowering lassitude, and he would drop that match, he would yield the woods to that cleansing conflagration.

But the enemy was wary. Its attack did not come. Almost gasping for breath, he went on, pushing back the darkness with his outstretched hand, as a swimmer cleaves the water.

He knew he must have come half-way. He realized he must be in the vicinity of the place where Jake and Tony had been caught, yet he continued unimpeded.

Just beyond, however, he felt a return of the impression that had unnerved him in the coquina house, that Anderson had described as always lurking there in the dark halls. He knew he was not alone in the forest. There was some presence behind him in the path. He had heard no sound save the tearing of the wind, but he was sure. His retreat had been cut off.

He took his match box from his pocket. If he should feel anything ahead of him, if he found himself hemmed in, he would fire the woods. There would be light enough then to disclose the nature of the attack.

But while the sense of a presence in the rear persisted, he received no warning from the front. He knew the ruins must be near. In the semicircle of the slave quarters he would feel safer. He would be able to see the light from there, to study it, perhaps to detect its source. Only a few steps more!

He stumbled. The underbrush snatched at his legs. He was off the path. He stopped abruptly, his throat contracting, on the point of striking his match. But a saving thought came to him. He turned to the right. The blue light played faintly there. He understood. He had reached the end of the path. Instead of turning with it through the ruins, he had plunged straight ahead into the thicket.

Carefully picking his way, he regained the path, and ran between the ruins into the semicircle. He had passed unmolested through the dangerous forest. He looked around. The light flickered now above the double row of trees that lined the avenue. It had grown very faint. While he looked at it, puzzled, at a loss, it faded out. The wind seemed to gather greater

strength, as though the passing of the light had unleashed its last restraint.

Miller was bewildered. Had his initiative, indeed, made itself felt, and driven the solution beyond his reach? A reaction swept him. At the moment when he had fancied his hand at the throat of the mystery he was suddenly left as helpless as ever. In a burst of irritation he questioned if he, as well as the Andersons, was not the victim of some gigantic hoax. He brushed the question aside. There had been no trickery about the girl's emotion or her fear for him.

He thought of going on to the plantation house, of arousing Morgan, of telling him of the injury to the girl's wrists, of her terror, and of her warning; yet that might involve her in difficulties he could not foresee. Should he, then, retrace his steps through the forest, and return, empty-handed, to the coquina house?

In the first place, he did not want to go back through the forest before daylight. He had keyed himself to the strain of traversing it when he had expected to achieve a solution of the mystery. Now the strain was broken. And he recalled the sense of a presence behind him in the path. He was aware of that sense again, so strongly that he glanced over his shoulder. He could see nothing. The darkness was absolute.

The idea came to him that some clew might hide within these ugly ruins. He had never had an opportunity to explore them, yet they must have sheltered the worst horrors of Noyer's reign, and they bounded that piece of forest. He stepped forward. This definite objective tautened his courage. He walked faster. He had almost reached the door of the nearest of the quarters when the light flashed again. Only this time it was white and overwhelming. He felt himself consumed in its vicious

flames. Immediately it snapped out. His consciousness went out with it.

CHAPTER XVII.

He lay apparently for a long time while his memory stirred and his mind reluctantly resumed its functions.

He recalled the beginning of the night at the coquina house, the sounds and feelings that had disturbed him there, the cry from outside, the filmlike picture of the silent fisherman, erect against the dunes, the warning of the girl, the blue light, her terror, his journey through the woods, his determination to seek a clew in the ruins.

Where was he now? He lay in utter darkness. The rushing of the wind was as fierce as ever.

Then, gently at first, he heard a sound from the black cloak of the night—the sound he had heard in Anderson's bedroom, the sound that had shared so often in the island's manifestations. It was not far away—only six or seven feet, he thought—and straight ahead! After a moment the rattle came again. This time it was answered from the rear. It was taken up on either side. It rose. It died away. Its volume grew again. An acrid, loathsome odor reached his nostrils. He lay within a circle of snakes, and, although from the lack of pressure, he knew he was not bound, he was powerless to move.

He choked back the cry that tore at his throat. His mind was clearer now. He forced it to work logically. If he was not bound, why was it impossible for him to move? He recalled the white light. An explanation of his helplessness ran hotly to his brain. Meantime, the revolting prophecy of the rattling continued. While he fancied the deadly circle was closing, he set his will to work. He succeeded in twitching the fingers of one hand. Actually, it was not much more than a minute after his return to consciousness when he drew

his knees up and raised himself to a sitting posture.

He patted the ground at his side. It was hard, like packed earth. Certainly he was not in the forest. Then—

Fighting the racking pains that ran through his head and body, he reached in his pocket for his revolver and his match box. The revolver was gone. He had been carrying it when the white light had flashed. Of course it had fallen from his hand. The match box, however, was there. He took out a match, and scraped it. In answer to the slight noise the rattling rose excitedly.

The match blinded him at first, but before it was half burned out his eyes accustomed themselves to its light. He glanced quickly around. He saw no snakes.

He was in the center of a small, bare room, whose floor, as he had thought, was of packed earth. The flame played on rough gray walls. It failed to disclose the top of a peaked roof. He noticed a line of brushwood, perhaps two feet high, which ran around all four walls. Unquestionably the snakes lurked behind that screen. Why did they not come out to converge on him? When would they come out?

Just before the match expired he saw a closed oak door in the wall to his left.

He knew now that he was in one of the slave quarters which he had started to explore—probably in one of those which yesterday he had noticed had been repaired. But how had he come there? And why was he left surrounded by snakes which did not attack? Now that he felt himself placed at the heart of the mystery he could not stop to reason. His danger was too apparent. He must reach the oak door. He must escape from the circle.

With painful effort he raised himself to his knees. He was by no means

sure he could stand upright, yet he must try. He must get to the door.

He paused on his knees. Something moved at the door. It must have been opened a little, for a streak of yellow light cut across the left-hand wall. He waited, breathing heavily. It was as though his return to consciousness, and his determination to escape, had been known, and that this sickly light was a warning that the door was watched, that escape was impossible.

The streak grew. It reached the farther wall. The door was thrown wide. Framed on the threshold Miller saw the great figure of the fisherman.

For a moment he stood there, staring at Miller in the light of the lantern he held. His eyes had the same fixed look Miller had remarked before. His lips were pressed tightly together.

So Anderson's instinct had been right! The fisherman was at the bottom of it. Probably he had done for Jake! But Tony! Tony had seen no one!

Miller was unwilling to believe. The absence of motive, the wanton cruelty, these elaborate preparations! A mad thought came to him. Could there be any connection between this figure and the giant slaver, long since dead? He spoke with difficulty:

"What—does all this mean? Will you help me out of here?"

The fisherman's stare did not waver.

"These snakes!" Miller whispered.

The fisherman's face showed no change. It was such a face as one might fancy beneath the mask of an executioner.

Miller struggled to his feet. He swayed. He attempted to step forward.

Now the fisherman moved. He whipped a cord from his pocket and threw his great bulk toward Miller.

Miller raised his fists. He tried to hold the figure off, but his strength was nothing against this giant. He went to

the floor. A knee was on his chest. Like a child he was rolled from side to side, while the cord was fastened around his arms and legs.

"What are you going to do?" Miller gasped.

The fisherman arose and walked to the wall. He kicked a portion of the brushwood away, disclosing a square pine box. He turned to the corner. He lifted a long, slender pole which stood there. Miller saw that a cord ran down the pole and made a loop at the lower end.

The fisherman returned to the box, and, using the end of the pole, raised the lid. An angry rattling came from the box. The fisherman thrust the pole inside.

"What are you going to do?" Miller repeated.

The fisherman did not turn. Carefully, systematically, he moved the end of the pole with the loop backward and forward in the box. One hand clutched the cord near the top of the pole, after a moment drew it tight, then slowly raised the pole until the end with the loop was above the edge of the box.

The flat head of a snake was caught in the loop. Its beadlike eyes gleamed in the lantern light. They found Miller's eyes and rested there. The forked tongue darted in and out of the revolting and venomous mouth.

Miller strained at his bonds. He could not move his hands or his feet the fraction of an inch.

"Let me up! What are you going to do?" he asked, with dry lips.

The fisherman continued to raise the pole until the snake's circular, shining body curled and flapped about his legs. Miller watched, fascinated. While the body thrashed, the head, caught in the loop, remained still. The evil eyes did not leave his.

The fisherman turned and stepped toward Miller. He lowered the pole until the snake's body was beating the

floor with soft, abhorrent strokes, until the head almost rested on the packed earth.

With a deliberate slowness the fisherman brought the snake closer to Miller. It tried to get its head free to coil. When this sly, snaillike march was arrested close to Miller's bound and helpless body, the fisherman would slip the loop and spring back. Then the snake would coil. In its anger it would strike at what was nearest.

Inch by inch this slow death, whose every step he could foresee, approached. The tiny eyes held him. It seemed impossible that the reasonless fury behind them could project to him the supreme unconsciousness. He shuddered.

"Man! You can't do this!"

He wet his lips.

"Or—then—faster! Faster!"

For the first time the masklike face of the fisherman altered. The tight lips parted. They stretched in a distorted smile. He took another step forward. The snake was very near.

The evil of the smile aroused Miller. He forced his eyes from the snake's. The girl, whom he would never see again, if this torturing execution was carried out, flashed through his mind. He saw her as she had been that first morning on the beach, in her white robe, bent to the wind, gazing out to sea. He remembered her just now in the coquina house, hiding her bleeding wrists, crying out that they must not let him go. She had known, then, that he would risk death. Did she know it would come to him here and in this fashion? Hope was born. He could not analyze her attitude, her refusal to tell what she knew of these horrors of the island, of her own connection with them; but she could not, after that warning, after that abandonment on the steps, let him end like this. She must have conquered whatever forces had held her from speaking. She must have indicated to Anderson, Tony, and Molly what he

faced. If she had done that, those friends, he knew, would not take the road to the river and the boat. And the fisherman probably did not guess that she had been to the coquina house. So he smiled back, and he cried out at the top of his lungs:

"Andy! Tony!"

If they came, even after the snake had struck, there might be time for a tourniquet, for some antidote. At least he would have a chance.

The travesty of a smile left the fisherman's face. He paused. He glanced toward the half-open door. Miller looked, too, expectantly, and he saw Morgan run in. There was no humor in the genial little man's face now. He stopped dead, and drew back. His lips twitched nervously.

"Morgan!" Miller cried.

Morgan spoke with a distinct effort. There was a note of helplessness in his voice.

"You, Miller, trapped! My heavens! How did this happen?"

"Don't ask questions," Miller said. "Thank the Lord you're here! Get me up! Get me away from that snake!"

Morgan stared at him. The fisherman kept his eyes on the little man. At last, Morgan pressed his hands together, then spread them in a wide gesture.

"I can do nothing, Miller. This is pretty tough!"

"What do you mean?" Miller cried.

Morgan hung his head.

"Just that. I'm helpless to save you! If you'd only come to spend the night with me, as I asked, you'd be safe in bed now!"

"You mean—" Miller gasped. "It's impossible!"

"I can't tell you what I mean," Morgan answered.

"Tell me!" Miller begged.

Morgan turned away.

"No—not even to dead men!"

The fisherman still watched. At last Morgan made a quick gesture. The

fisherman's fingers twitched at the cord which imprisoned the snake's head. Then his hand grew rigid.

"Better not!"

Morgan and the fisherman swung around at the quiet command which Miller had hoped for, had almost felt sure would come.

"Andy!" he said, with a trembling laugh, "don't shout 'Hands up!' until you've put a charge of shot in that snake!"

Anderson stepped inside.

"Cover them, Tony!" he said.

Tony entered, raising his revolver. Anderson lowered his shotgun and fired.

Miller saw a piece of flaming wadding from the shell bury itself in the brushwood, but his relief at watching the snake's body torn by the shot drove everything else for the moment from his mind.

The fisherman tossed the pole and the shattered snake behind him. He turned, as though for guidance, to Morgan; but Morgan, his face twisted again, faced the revolver with which Tony threatened him.

"Don't lose sight of that fisherman, Andy!" Miller said. "Keep an eye on him while you cut this rope."

Anderson stooped and cut the cord. He helped Miller to his feet.

"Morgan," Anderson said, "what does this mean?"

"He's been asking that," Morgan answered. "Well, find out if you can. I can't tell you!"

"I've found out one thing—how Jake died! It's murder, Morgan!"

"You try to connect me with that!"

"I'll try! And this attempt——"

"Fortunately, he wasn't hurt," Morgan answered.

"My story," Miller said, "and the evidence of these snakes collected here will hurt!"

"Evidence! There goes that evidence!"

He pointed to the brushwood in the corner, where the flaming wadding from Anderson's gun had fallen. The brushwood was beginning to blaze. Miller tried to stamp it out, but the twigs were like tinder. They crackled in the fire that quickly swept the length of the wall. The rattling of the snakes, just now menacing, arose in a staccato appeal. In a moment the fire would be at the door.

"Take these two out, and keep them covered," Miller said. "Don't let them get away. We'll reach the bottom of this business now."

He followed the others into the gale-swept semicircle. The fire was through the doorway, almost at his heels. It licked its way in the dry grass along the wall toward the opening between the quarters. There the wind would catch it finally and deliver to its hungry tongues the evil piece of woods.

As the flames rose, the trees of the avenue sprang into Gargantuan twisted motion. Through their straining branches the rear of the plantation house gleamed white. The flames also showed Miller the backs of Molly and the girl, seated on a fallen log at the side of the avenue. The girl's head was hidden on Molly's shoulder. He looked away. The difficulty of the situation stifled him. Her father involved in this brutal scandal! Undoubtedly she had saved his life, yet what was her own share?

He swung on Morgan angrily.

"Answer my questions! Explain this business!"

"I can explain nothing," Morgan answered. "As far as I am concerned, there's nothing to explain, beyond the fact that I found you in the hands of that giant, and told you the obvious thing that I couldn't handle him and get you away. What do I know? These natives! Their purposes are beyond me. You people seemed determined to incriminate me somehow or other.

That's nonsense! Let's be sensible, and go to the house and have a drink while Rome burns."

Miller grasped Morgan's arm. He shook it savagely.

"You say I'm too determined. Understand, I'm determined to find out what it is you won't tell even to dead men. Why you've played this Judas part, why you've put the Andersons on the rack, why you killed Jake, why you tried to kill Tony and me! And I'll find out! There isn't a rat hole in that house of yours I won't search for a reason. And your daughter! Look at her sitting there—"

Morgan turned wildly.

"My daughter!"

"She warned me," Miller said. "She saved my life. Even if your fisherman is a sphinx, do you think she'll keep silent now?"

Morgan's jaw dropped. An animal-like cry left his mouth. As Tony, momentarily surprised, lowered his revolver, Morgan ran to the corner of the building, sprang across the flames now blazing there, and leaped into the tangled undergrowth.

Tony raised his arm. He aimed at the broad back. Miller struck the gun up.

"No, Tony! It isn't necessary!"

For, as Morgan had jumped, the wind had seized the flames, and had leaped, shrieking, with them into the forest after his retreating figure. The thicket crackled like a scattered skirmish line. The fire licked along the trunks to the waving treetops. The glare became blinding.

Miller turned gravely to Anderson.

"That thicket will hold him back like a thousand hands. Perhaps it's better than he deserved. You and Tony take that tongue-tied fellow to the plantation house. I'll bring Molly and the girl."

He walked slowly, reluctantly, to the fallen log, where the two sat, with their

backs still turned. He touched the girl's bowed head. He spoke gently: "Your—your father got away."

Her head went a little lower. He had to stoop to catch her answer:

"He is not my father."

She said no more. He did not have the heart to question her then.

CHAPTER XVIII

They entered the plantation house by the kitchen. They saw no one. A lamp, turned low, burned in the library—that same dim eye that had regarded Miller the night he had sailed into the inlet. They left Molly and the girl there, and debated in the hall what disposition to make of their prisoner. Miller suggested the cupola.

"Noyer rigged it up," he said, "as a corrective for his house servants. We can't lock him in, but it has wrist and leg irons. I dare say we would be justified."

It was the best expedient. With the revolver at his back, the silent fisherman climbed willingly enough.

Miller set his lantern on the floor of the cupola. He raised one of the irons by its chain. He started. He stopped swiftly. He held the iron close to the light, and examined it.

"Andy!" he cried. "Look here!"

The edge of the iron was wet. Miller ran his finger around it. When he held his finger up it was stained red.

"They had her here," he said. "chained in this place! She must have known what was on foot, and refused to share in it. Their only excuse for such barbarity would be to keep her from coming to us. Her wrists are small. You can see. She managed to pull them through and escape. My heavens, Andy! The humiliation! If he wasn't her father, he had a father's place. No wonder she wouldn't tell us how her wrists were hurt!"

He raised his eyes to the fisherman.

"You silent devil! I'll find a way to make you speak when I get you in a courtroom!"

Anderson picked up another set of irons.

"We're justified. Anything is justified," he said, "only I wish it was Morgan we had."

The fisherman made no effort at resistance. He stood stoically while they placed the irons around his wrists and ankles, and screwed the bolts tight.

"They fit him well enough," Miller said. "No chance of his slipping out of them."

He brought his face close to the fisherman's. He stared into the unwinking eyes.

"Do you realize you're likely to swing for this business?"

But the masklike face did not alter. The huge shoulders did not tremble.

"It's no use," Miller said. "He won't talk."

Anderson started down the ladder, but Miller's eyes were attracted to the floor. After a moment he called Anderson back.

"What do you suppose this powder is, Andy?"

He pointed to a few yellow grains directly beneath the trap in the roof of the cupola. The chain which held the fisherman to the wall clanked. Miller looked up. The man's face had at last altered. Its quality of a mask had been destroyed by a positive emotion, and that emotion was fear.

"It means something!" Miller cried triumphantly. "By Jove! I believe I can guess what!"

While Anderson and Tony pressed close, and the fisherman, his face blank again, looked on, Miller bent down and scraped the grains into a little heap.

"Looks like sand," Anderson said.

"I've seen such sand before," Miller answered, "on the Fourth of July, for instance."

He took his match box, struck a

match, and touched it to the powder. The yellow grains hissed. They sprang into a brilliant blue flame. The flame died, leaving a tiny mass of carbon on the floor.

"The blue light!" Anderson cried.

"Andy! Tony! Lift me up here."

They raised him to the trap in the roof. He pushed it back and put his head and shoulders through. After a moment he lowered a long, rusty iron rod, to whose end was fastened an old-fashioned brazier protected by wire netting.

"Look at this relic," Miller said when he was on the floor again, "something from Noyer's days."

He held the brazier so he could glance in its top.

"From the amount of carbon here it was kept well filled to-night. It was a signal, Andy. For what? For those wild oystermen——"

He nodded at the fisherman.

"Probably friends and accomplices of his."

He grew thoughtful.

"The girl knows, but I hate to put her on the stand now."

"I think she knows everything," Anderson replied.

"I'm not so sure of that," Miller said, "but she knows why this light was burned. Anyhow, we've done all we can here. Go on down. We haven't been through the servants' rooms yet. There's Morgan's man and his cook. If they're still here, we may get something out of them."

They found, however, only the woman. Evidently terrified by the fire, she had buried her head beneath the covers, and lay there, shivering, and, when they shook her and questioned her, almost incoherent.

Miller, disappointed, stared from the window. The entire sky in the southwest appeared to be in flames. But he fancied the fire would burn itself out in the marshes—that the coquina house

would be spared. He hoped for that. In the light of what they already knew they might find something there of value. He was almost afraid now that the fire would destroy too much. He turned back to the woman impatiently.

"At least you ought to be able to tell us where the man is—Morgan's man."

"I don't know," she answered.

"He has the next room. Didn't you hear him go out?"

"Yes—about eleven o'clock. I don't know where."

"Look here," Miller said, "is he anything to you? Are you——"

"He's my husband," she answered.

"And he didn't tell you where he was going?"

"No. I'm afraid. I'm—— Why do you ask me? I'm the one that wants to know."

"Nothing to be had here," Miller said. "We'd better scatter. I told Morgan I'd search every rat hole in the place, and he let me see plainly enough he didn't like the idea. It's worth a chance. We may turn up something. We'll meet in the library."

When Miller entered the library, empty-handed, an hour later, he found Anderson and Tony already there. They, too, had been unsuccessful.

"We thought we'd wait until you came before beginning on this room," Anderson said.

Miller glanced around. The girl lay on the sofa, her face to the wall. She had not looked up at his entrance. Molly sat near her, in an easy-chair.

"Is she asleep?" Miller asked Molly in a whisper.

Molly shook her head.

Miller approached the sofa. He hesitated before the apparently lifeless figure. After a moment he turned to the others.

"Let's see what's in this room first," he said, "then——"

He broke off, staring at the high bookshelves, piled with musty, black-bound volumes.

"These old books!" he cried. "These dry, valueless reports, as Morgan called them! This room was where Morgan spent most of his time. We can only try."

He walked to the shelves, and commenced pulling down the books, handing them to Tony and Anderson, who placed them on the floor. There was nothing behind them but smooth, unpapered walls, and an accumulation of dust.

Facing failure here, too, he hurried to his task. He picked up several volumes at once, and carelessly passed them to the others. His carelessness grew with his disappointment. A book fell to the floor from a pile he was handing to Anderson. He heard something click on the boards. He glanced down. The light of the lamp was caught there, and flashed up into his eyes.

Miller stooped quickly. Anderson and Tony were already on their knees before the open book. Molly leaned forward with an exclamation.

The book was very thick. A hole had been scooped in its pages in such a manner that it would leave no trace when the book was closed. Curled in this nest lay a string of perfectly matched diamonds.

Anderson picked it up. As it uncurled, its myriad facets caught the light, and sparkled. It seemed almost conscious of this superb exposition of its value.

"It's worth thousands!" Anderson gasped. "I wouldn't dare say how much."

But Miller was not gazing with the others at the necklace. His eyes were drawn by the girl, who had stared uneasily, and had buried her head deeper in her arms. He turned slowly back to the others.

"It's worth your peace of mind," he said. "It's the whole answer."

CHAPTER XIX.

Molly came forward and knelt with them over the volumes, from which an academic odor of stale leather arose.

"Yes," Miller said, "We must run through every one of these books."

For long periods they worked without reward, but occasionally a book would disclose a cunningly scooped nest sheltering some costly setting of rich stones. When the last one had been examined, they arranged their discoveries on the table. Morgan, doubtless, had often set them so to gloat over them late at night, when he had fancied himself secure, while the Andersons, perhaps, were battling against the manifestations of the coquina house.

There were thirty pieces in all, of various worth.

"I don't know much about such things," Anderson said. "Molly, what do you think?"

"Two hundred thousand, at the very least," she answered, a little awed by the display.

Miller leaned against the mantel, staring at the glittering row.

"You can figure the duty on this stuff," he said, "and probably it's only one side of the scheme. Andy! Andy! We ought to have seen it all from the beginning!"

Molly looked at him inquiringly.

"I don't see how. Morgan was the last man to suspect of anything like this."

"Yes, but Andy himself told me enough the night I got here to have put the whole thing in our hands if we had only reasoned. I don't know what there is about a suspicion of the supernatural that knocks one's reason into a cocked hat. You go against it with a certain mathematical contempt, as I started down here. That's it. You face the

supernatural with a chip on your shoulder. Your fight is likely to be negative. Your first concern is to prove that a fact is not supernatural, rather than to find out why it seems supernatural. It's the doubt of the unexplored that subconsciously affects the soundest of us. We've been told so often of the existence of forces that play across the barrier of death that we are afraid, almost unknown to our reasoning selves, of the possibility of conviction. For that matter, the climate of this place and its lonely, depressing atmosphere are enough to foster superstition. That required no trickery. That was all in his favor. And your talk of what you had suffered here, Tony's overwhelming belief and fear, and Morgan's carefully planned allusions—creeping allusions from the sanest, the most material of types—all that was enough to make one doubt, even though he told himself, as I did, that there was no doubt."

"We tried, Jim," Anderson answered. "We turned every stone. His scheme was too carefully planned, too subtle for us."

"Yes, and as Molly says, it was not easy to suspect Morgan. He was too convincing a fellow victim. Then, when we did turn from the unknown, it was only to the unseen, to those oystermen that we knew were not far off in the marshes, and the possibility of some connection between the fisherman and them."

"But how, Jim," Molly asked, "could you have foreseen anything like this?"

"Andy told me the history of Noyer and his island," he answered. "Since the days of the buccaneers, when they dared bring their ships in here to careen them, it has offered a refuge for lawlessness. He also spoke of that fisherman's tub, moving silently through the water at night. That meant a new, expensive engine in a worthless boat; and no one was allowed on that boat. Noyer could smuggle slaves in here

unmolested after the law had made it a deadly crime, because, as Andy explained, the island was completely isolated. He was king of it, and of this inlet, and of this lonely coast. Is the island any less isolated now than it was then? Isn't the dweller in this plantation house as much of a king now as Noyer was before the war—provided, of course, that the coquina house doesn't shelter strangers? Morgan had heard the history of the place, and, since he was out for that sort of thing, it suggested the ideal opportunity—everything. There is only a third-rate revenue officer in Martinsburg, and this coast has seen no smuggling since before the war. The island has been uninhabited since then. Now a respectable Northern family makes a winter home of it. There wasn't the slightest ground for suspicion. It was ideal, except for you and Molly. Your renting of the coquina house was the fly in the ointment. And you must confess it was hard on Morgan when both places had stood empty for fifty years. You can imagine his fury. He had to get you out of that house and off the island."

"Yes," Anderson agreed, "from his point of view we had to go. He had to have a clear field. But, Jim, you heard yourself there in the coquina house!"

"Yes; but inevitably that was the lever he'd use—the supernatural, for which the island was notorious, with its rotten loneliness to back it, and the decayed, unhealthy atmosphere of the coquina house. You see, he had time, after he heard you were coming, to arrange the trickery of your house to his fancy. He did it cleverly. Since you discovered nothing, we'll have to grant him that."

He glanced at the girl.

"Perhaps we can be guided to the tools. But I think probably in that thicket back of the kitchen—"

He stepped to the table and fingered the jewelry.

"He *had* to take chances. He was ready to go to any length. There's more profit in this stuff, you know, than there ever was in flesh and blood. And I wouldn't be surprised if there was larger merchandise—furs, for instance. He was the man to do it on a huge scale, to squeeze the last drop from his opportunity."

"Then where—" Anderson began.

"Certainly not in the house. It has no cellar, and he had to keep it free for your friendly visits. I'm afraid we'll never see that evidence. It was probably stored in the slave quarters, in the ones he had repaired. The fire—"

He broke off, looking at Tony. Understanding flashed from the native's eyes. He wanted to speak.

"What is it, Tony?"

The native's lips parted. He pointed toward the ruined slave quarters.

"It was kept there," he said.

"How can you be sure of that?" Miller asked.

"I saw it. I didn't know then."

"Tony! You idiot! And you never spoke! When?"

"Th—the night I was caught in the woods. I don't know how that happened, but—"

Miller glanced significantly at Anderson.

"He was caught, as he calls it, after he had seen enough to give the whole game away. But why didn't he know? Why did he see no one? Tony, why didn't you tell me you had discovered the loot?"

"I only saw big packing cases. I guessed it was furniture they hadn't unpacked. I didn't think any more about it till now."

"Tell us how it happened. Talk, now. Make yourself talk."

The native swayed from foot to foot,

embarrassed, unaccustomed and unhappy in the center of the stage.

"I was waiting for you at the end of the avenue. It was light then. I wasn't afraid. I reckoned I'd stand outside and peek through the window—they tell such stories about the quarters, you know. And it was daylight. I sort of dared myself. I went over. The window was broken. An old rag hung over it. I pushed it away. There were these packing cases. There was writing on them. I was going to read that, but somebody was coming out of the kitchen and down the avenue."

He stopped and wet his lips.

"Go on," Miller urged.

"That's all. That's all I saw."

"All you saw! But how did you get there in the woods, practically unconscious, unable to move?"

"I told you," he answered. "A little after that it got dark, and I was frightened. I started down the path to the boat. I don't know."

"But what happened before that—after you had looked in the window? Who was it disturbed you by coming out of the kitchen?"

"The woman—the cook."

"Did she speak to you?"

"Yes."

"Well—what?"

"She told me Mr. Morgan had said I was to have a jolt of whisky."

Miller grasped Anderson's arm.

"That's it! Of course he had been watched. And you drank it! Did you drink it all?"

"Oh, I ain't thought much of that. Maybe half. I'm not much of a whisky drinker."

"Half of it, you see! It worked slowly. He wasn't drugged blind. Probably he lost himself for only a few minutes. They caught him in the woods, and bound him, in case he should come out of it before the snake had finished him. He began to come out. That wouldn't have made any

difference, but they heard the girl and me talking by the ruins. They didn't know how much she was telling me. It was probably Morgan's man and the fisherman. They may have been unarmed. Perhaps they thought I might charge down the path prepared for them. They didn't dare risk it. It was easier to throw Morgan down, and let their share in the smuggling come out, than to face a murder charge. So they flung his cords off. It was the looped snake he heard rattling. That's why Morgan rushed out to the boat the next morning—to find out what I knew. He saw he was safe."

He smiled mirthlessly.

"By and by, Tony, you'll be ashamed to look a ghost in the face. You ought to be ready now to go to Sandport. Are you?"

The man nodded sheepishly.

"That's right," Anderson said. "This was evidently to be a big haul. The authorities ought to be warned. They might catch the man, and possibly those alleged brothers in the river or the marshes."

"Take Morgan's launch," Miller directed, "and swing around to the beach where we left the dinghy. The fire's gone to the right. You ought to find the path open to the river end of the island. Take the boat you hired this afternoon and rouse Sandport. Tell them to send a fast launch to Martinsburg with the news, and to do what they can themselves."

When Tony had gone, still shame-faced, but reluctant in spite of it, Miller walked over to the girl. He touched her shoulder hesitatingly.

"I am sorry," he said, "but you see what we know already."

She turned. Her eyes were red from weeping. Her lips drooped.

"You were there last night," he said softly. "You warned me not to go through the path, therefore you knew what they were doing with Tony."

She did not answer. He spread his arms helplessly.

"I don't want to believe these things."

She spoke. Her voice was scarcely more than a whisper:

"I wasn't waiting—to warn you, at first."

He sat on the edge of the sofa.

"Then you didn't know it was to be done?"

"No. I knew other things, but I didn't know that. While I waited I saw him stumble down the path. I saw them follow swiftly, with the snake in a loop. It came to me all at once how the other man had died."

"You must have known those snakes were kept there."

"They told me the fisherman caught them to sell their skins in Martinsburg. They are valuable. I believed that. I wanted to save the man, but you were the only one to whom I could turn, and that meant probably killing him—my uncle. But when you came I only thought of saving you. I knew if you went down that path, and discovered them, they would try to kill you, too."

"Yes," Miller said, "they would have done that if they could. It would have been necessary."

"But murder!" Anderson said. "These cunning preparations for death, always ready, always waiting!"

"Essential, from Morgan's point of view," Miller said. "He regretted it, but it was that, or get out and let the whole scheme go to blazes. Until he drove you off the island he had to be prepared. He couldn't keep your household from his, under the circumstances of your loneliness and propinquity without arousing suspicion at the start. Therefore, if any of you stumbled on the evidence, that would ruin him and send the lot of them to jail. Your silence had to be assured. He had used one of the island's curses, its superstition, to help the climate drive you out. For death, if it was necessary, he

chose the other, its poisonous snakes. If any one was found dead of snake bite in such a place, why should he or any man be suspected? He didn't miss the value of a single card, but I'll do him the credit of saying he hoped he wouldn't have to play that one. But you wouldn't be driven out. Then the other day Jake saw too much, and his friends, the cook and the man, clinked glasses with him."

"Horrible!" Molly said, "and if she hadn't told us, guided us, you, too, Jim—"

"Yes," he answered softly. "I know."

He turned back to the girl.

"But when you came to the beach the next morning you evaded my questions. You told me things that were not quite true."

She sat up. The color came back to her face.

"You can't misunderstand that now—the struggle, the dreadful uncertainty of the road I ought to follow! I hoped to persuade you to leave the island, for I knew you would try to find out, and sooner or later they would kill you. I tried to make myself tell you everything, but I couldn't—I couldn't! He was my uncle—the only father I have ever known. I was given to him, a baby, when my mother died. And I loved him. We were happy until this trouble in New York."

She stopped and looked down.

"He hinted at some money trouble," Miller urged gently.

"Yes. He had a good jewelry business. Then the government fined him heavily for evading customs duties. He paid the fine, but it drove him into bankruptcy. He swore he would get even with the government. It became a passion."

"Then you knew his plan when you came here?"

"No! Oh, no! Don't think I'm that bad!"

Molly seated herself beside her on the sofa and took her hand. The girl glanced at her gratefully, wonderingly.

"I knew nothing at first. He made excuses for introducing those two men as his brothers to the Andersons. One had been his partner. The other was in the same business. He told me things that weren't true about the Andersons. That was why I wouldn't be friendly, even at first, why I held them away. Sooner or later I had to discover everything. That day came. I suffered alone. I tried to find the right thing to do. You don't know the unhappiness of that time. What was I to do? There was no one to whom I could go, and I had no money. I couldn't leave the island, and I couldn't betray him. One doesn't find it easy to betray a father. It was the same thing. So I went to him and begged him to give it up. I couldn't move him. In the end he made me promise."

"I see," Miller said. "That was why you told me he had stayed because of you."

"Yes, because I had promised not to betray him. Do you blame me for that?"

"I blame you for nothing," he said softly, "unless it is that you tried to hold me away from you, too."

"I had to, yet I failed. I wanted no friends here, and you see I was right. You see how it has worked out."

"Why were you treated so brutally to-night?" Molly asked.

"Because I knew the boat was coming to-night. It was to be the biggest stroke. I tried to make him promise there would be no murder. He wouldn't promise. He said he would send the man to the coquina house at midnight. He said he would try to keep you interested there, so you wouldn't hear anything outside and be tempted to meddle. But he swore if you did meddle you would have to pay his price. Then I told him I couldn't let it go

on. I couldn't risk it. I took back my promise. I said I would warn you. I started to run out of the house."

She raised her torn wrists to her face.

"He lost his temper. It was terrible! He——"

After a moment she continued:

"But I got free. Without their knowing it, I went to the edge of the clearing at the coquina house. I made up my mind to stay there all night, and if you heard anything, if you ran out, to keep you from coming this way, where the danger was. Then some one called from the boat and you came. When the blue light burned I knew it was too late. I knew you would take your life in your hands to find out what the blue light was."

"We know it was a signal," Anderson began, "but——"

Miller raised his hand.

"Understand," he said to the girl, "I appreciate—I know the strain. I hate to put you on the rack, but the fisherman—I've tried. He won't talk."

"No," she said. "He wouldn't, anyway. But he is dumb."

"Dumb!"

"Yes. That was why they used him. Because of that, he has been an outcast. He hates normal men. The rest were my uncle's own people. He could trust them. Well—my uncle is dead. Oh, I know! If you wish, I think I have a way of making the fisherman speak, and, since there is much that I can't tell you——"

"How?" Miller asked.

"It isn't—I don't like—I've succeeded with him easily before. When we first came, my uncle asked me to do it. I thought it was fun then, but later I understood why it was."

She hesitated. She sighed.

"It makes no difference," she said. "I'll do what you wish. Where is he?"

"In the cupola. Will you come?"

She arose, stood unsteadily for a mo-

ment, then walked across the floor. Miller took the lamp. He helped her up the stairs. Anderson and Molly followed.

Miller placed the lamp on the floor. The fisherman's eyes blinked at first, but as they grew accustomed to the light, his face resumed its statuesque expression.

The girl faced him. She looked in his eyes. She spoke to him quietly, soothingly. Her voice went on with a droning quality. Suddenly Miller understood. He understood, too, the barrier she had tried to raise between them when he had startled her that first morning on the beach. He could define now the sense of unreasoning contest that had swept him when she had suggested his inability to hold her, to find her lips. It was her trick, natural or acquired, that she had used to save herself the torture of seeming friendship with the Andersons, that she had flung with all her will to avoid an acquaintanceship and its possible complications with him, the newcomer. But his own will had been too strong. It had always accepted the challenge.

"Where did you learn that?" he whispered.

She motioned him to be quiet. After a few moments she began to question. The right arm of the fisherman slowly rose at her command, while the fingers flashed the shorthand of the dumb.

In a dreamy voice, as though she were almost hypnotic herself, she translated these signals. They told how the goods had been shipped by Morgan's accomplice in Europe to one of the Bahama Islands; how the brothers had gone there in their small schooner with a Jamaican crew, received the goods, stowed them away in a miscellaneous cargo, and cleared for Martinsburg; how it had always been arranged for the schooner to reach the inlet bar in the middle of the night, when the fisherman would slip out in his silent tug

and take off the boxes; how the blue signal light was burned to give the schooner her course for the mouth of the river and to guide the fisherman to the entrance of the risky channel across the inlet bar.

To-night, she translated, the storm had alarmed the fisherman. He had not dared wait for the light. He had taken his chances and come on in. One of the brothers had come with him. He supposed he had taken alarm and had escaped with the boat. As for himself, the blue light had shown him Miller on the shore, hesitating before the entrance to the dangerous forest. He had followed him, and, when Miller was about to enter the forbidden quarters, had struck him on the temple from behind. Locking him in the building with the snakes, he had delayed the necessary execution while he had tried unsuccessfully to find Morgan.

She turned to them wearily.

"There is nothing else, is there?"

Miller shook his head. He walked to the rear window of the cupola. The flames had done their work quickly. Only a red glow hung somberly over a blackened desert. It failed to reach the clouds where the skirmishers of the dawn with quiet confidence fought it back.

"There's nothing else," he said. "Bring him out of it."

He went down the ladder, beckoning to Molly and Anderson. When they were in the lower hall, he took their hands.

"Would you mind?" he asked. "Will you take her home with you, shelter her until she can forget this nightmare through which she's lived in pleasant dreams? You're my best friends—until she can tell whether—for me—it's real."

"Jim!" Molly cried. "You know!"

Anderson laughed softly.

"To think, after all, it was on Captain's Island!"

They heard her descending the ladder. Molly went to meet her at the foot of the stairs. Miller led Anderson to the veranda.

CHAPTER XX.

They sat on the steps, watching the sky lighten for the birth of day, fresh, smiling, full of the health of youth. They roused themselves only when they heard the chugging of the gasoline launch. Then they walked to the pier and met the deputy sheriff and the rough native posse Tony had brought from Sandport.

They answered the necessary questions. They told all they knew. They gave the sheriff the address of the hotel to which they would go in Martinsburg.

The sheriff left two of his party to take the fisherman to Sandport. He set out with the rest in the gasoline launch to explore the marsh channels to the north of the island.

"We've done all we can," Miller said. "Tony, get to the dinghy and row out to the *Dart*. Coax her engine, and bring her around here. Andy, if she holds together she'll have us in Martinsburg this afternoon. Bright lights and the racket of life, and a real life ahead, if—"

He turned toward the house. Anderson put his arm around him.

"I don't think there are any 'ifs,' Jim."

Miller laughed a little.

"It's out of the way, Andy; it's hard to believe. She wouldn't yield that

symbol of friendship and affection. I don't know her first name."

"You might find it convenient," Anderson said gravely. "I would ask her."

"Yes," Miller agreed.

He entered the plantation house, walked across the hall, and opened the library door. The girl sat in an easy-chair turned toward the rear window. She gazed thoughtfully, sorrowfully over the black waste of the forest.

Molly had been sitting near her, but at Miller's entrance she arose and hurried past him. Miller heard her join Anderson on the porch. He closed the door softly. He walked toward the girl. She looked up, a little frightened, uncertain. He stood before her. He was ill at ease.

"You have never told me your first name," he said. "I understand why, but now—couldn't you?"

Her eyes were wide. The lines that had come into her face overnight softened. Her lips parted.

"You can ask that now? You care to know, after everything that has happened?"

"Yes, I care very much—all the more because of what has happened."

Her eyes were moist. She stammered a little.

"You're not just being kind? Oh, you wouldn't do that!"

"Only very selfishly," he answered.

"Then—" she said.

She reached up and drew his head close to her lips. Her lips moved.

He smiled, and turned toward her lips.

THE STRATEGY OF BILL SWEENEY

BIG BILL SWEENEY, catcher for the New York Americans, has figured out how to catch Ty Cobb stealing second. He confided it to Billy Murray, who is a member of Congress and a wild-eyed baseball fan.

"The only way to catch Cobb when he starts to steal second," said Sweeny, "is to make a bluff of throwing to second, and then to hold the ball until he rounds third and comes up to the home plate."

Two Strong Havanas

By Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of "Cap'n Eri," "The Rise of Roscoe Paine," Etc.

These Cape Cod folks had forgotten the war in Cuba till some personal and highly blameworthy incidents were recalled; whereupon a beautiful romance is threatened with disaster

BALAAM GRIGGS, of East Harness, seated in his antique buggy, the top of which had a habit of folding backward at inopportune times unless, as in the present case, secured by string, was driving his antique horse out of the village of Wellmouth. The knot of loungers on the billiard-room steps watched him as he passed, watched and commented.

"It's a ghost," mused one, loudly and with decision. "Somebody's left the cemetery gate open. Don't tell me that thing's alive. I know better."

"It's the *Flyin' Dutchman*," shouted another, who had spent his youth on salt water. "It's been cruisin' like that for years and years, and can't ever make port."

"Hush!" ordered a third. "Don't talk so foolish. It's Rip van Winkle just woke up."

Others of the group suggested that the equipage and its driver were training for the "Antiques and Horribles" parade on the coming Fourth of July. To all this ribaldry Mr. Griggs made no answer, nor did he appear to pay the slightest attention. He clucked to the old horse, and the buggy rattled and squeaked around the corner and into the road leading to Ostable, the county seat. The loungers were disappointed; they had hoped for an attempt at retort.

But Balaam was in no mood for retort. Neither was he in the mood to be troubled by little things, like the remarks of billiard-room loafers. His troubles were greater; he saw himself in a fair way to lose a large sum of money, twenty thousand dollars at least, and the loss of a quarter was sufficient to make Balaam Griggs mournful. Money was all that he really cared for in this world, and he cared a great deal for that.

He had stopped at his lawyer's in Wellmouth on a matter of business, and the business—the details involved by the foreclosure of a mortgage—had been eminently satisfactory. The property which was now his, and upon which he had loaned a less practical fellow townsman a small sum, was worth a great deal more than the amount of the mortgage. If this had been all—even though the unpractical one had been left absolutely penniless—Mr. Griggs would have been quite happy. But it was not all. The words of his stepdaughter, Mary Barstow, his second wife's child by her first husband, were still ringing in his ears.

"I shall do as I want to," she had declared. "I am old enough to know my own mind. I don't say that I shall marry Irving, but if I wish to I shall say it—and do it—so there!"

"Now, Mary," Balaam had protested,

"don't talk that way. Don't be silly. Here you be, settled in a comfortable home, and—"

"Comfortable!"

"Yes, comfortable. What's the matter with it? Tell me, now! What's the matter with it?"

Miss Barstow looked about the "comfortable" dining room of the "comfortable home," and sighed.

"I can't tell you—now," she said.

"I guess you can't!" triumphantly; "I guess you can't!"

"No, I can't. It would take me a week even to begin, and I've got my breakfast dishes to wash. You'd better go along to Ostable. If you wait any longer the buggy will fall apart or poor Major will die of old age."

"Major" was the horse. The reference to his age nettled Mr. Griggs still more. However, he swallowed his resentment and tried to restrain his temper. He even managed an attempt at a smile.

"Major's all right," he said; "and so's the buggy. I know what I'm about, I do. I could afford a new team all right, but I don't believe in puttin' on airs. Long's I know I can afford 'em, that's enough. Now you be a good girl and don't get the marryin' notion into your head. Marryin's all foolishness."

"Yes? I suppose that's why you tried it the second time."

Balaam's smile turned upside down.

"I—I've found it out since," he snapped. "Now, that's enough of this. You tell Irve Clifford to go about his business. You mind me; d'you hear?"

Mary made no answer. She went on collecting the dishes on the table.

"D'you hear?" repeated Mr. Griggs angrily.

"I hear. And so do the neighbors, I should imagine."

"Darn the neighbors! That's what I say about them."

His stepdaughter paused at the kitchen door. "Yes," she said sweetly;

and added: "I wonder if you ever heard what they say about you."

She went into the kitchen, and Balaam, after vainly trying to think of an answer, started on his drive.

The satisfactory nature of his visit to the lawyer's cheered him momentarily, but now, as he urged old Major along the narrow wood road between Wellmouth and Ostable, his spirits sank again. It seemed impossible. Was this independent, obstinate young woman the meek, self-sacrificing girl who had kept house for him ever since her mother died?

Major stumbled, a common practice of his, and Mr. Griggs looked up and pulled at the reins. Then he became aware that some one was approaching along the lonely road, a young man, on foot. Balaam looked at the young man, and the latter looked at him.

Major and the pedestrian drew nearer to each other. Suddenly the young man stopped.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, in a tone which indicated great surprise. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with a smooth-shaven face, small eyes, and reddish hair. He was badly in need of a barber's services, his clothes were soiled and shabby, and he wore a battered derby hat tilted over one ear. He was a rather seedy specimen, but he carried himself with a swagger, and his tightly buttoned jacket gave him something of a military air.

"Hello!" he exclaimed again.

"Hello, yourself!" grunted Balaam, regarding him with suspicion. It was a little late in the season for tramps, but this was a bad spot in which to meet a tramp. Mr. Griggs chirruped to Major, who, seizing the opportunity, had apparently decided to take a nap.

"Well, I'll be—hanged!" observed the young man, with enthusiasm. "It is you! Uncle Bale, how are you?"

Balaam gasped and leaned forward. Major, obedient to the slackening of the

reins, willingly settled back into his nap again.

"Uncle Bale!" gasped Mr. Griggs. "Uncle—why! Who? My land of love! if it ain't Dolph Small! Dolph Small, by godfreys!"

"Sure thing!" was the prompt reply. "Wonder you didn't know me sooner. I knew you the second I laid eyes on you. You ain't changed a bit—and neither has your horse and buggy. Makin' believe poor, same as ever, ain't you? You're a wise guy, you are!"

Mr. Griggs did not join in the laugh. If he was overjoyed at meeting his relative—a nephew by his first marriage—he concealed his feelings.

"What in time are you doin' here?" he demanded. "Last I heard of you you was in the army."

"Guess you ain't heard very lately then. I was in the army once, while the Spanish War was goin' on and a spell afterward, but I've been a good many places since. Just now I was on my way over to see my dear old Uncle Balaam. Goin' to make him a visit, I was. Blood's thicker'n water."

"Humph! I never cal'lated you knew much about water. Comin' to make me a visit, hey? Walkin', was you?"

"I was. But I ain't got any objection to a ride, now that you've asked me. Shove over on the seat and give me room."

Before his perturbed relative could protest, he had climbed into the buggy.

"But—but I ain't goin' home," declared Balaam, as soon as he could think. "I'm goin' over to Ostable, on business. Got a bank meetin' there . . . Ow! Stop that, won't you?"

The last section of his remarks had been in reference to a dig in the ribs from his companion.

"Ho! ho!" chuckled the latter. "Bank meetin', hey! Trust you for bein' around where the coin is! Ho! ho! You are a smooth old guy, and I always said so. All right, I'll go along

with you, and then we can drive back together. Time! I don't care anything about time. Got more time than I have anything else. Git dap, Methusalem! What are you—petrified?"

Major, thus aroused, jogged on. Mr. Small, not in the least disturbed by his uncle's angry silence, chatted volubly.

"I suppose you wonder where I've been for the last four or five years," he observed. "Lord sakes! where ain't I been? Let's see—this is nineteen hundred and three, ain't it. Been movin' round so I've kind of lost track of the years. Cuba, the Philippines, China—I've traveled some, I tell you! And seen! What *ain't* I seen?"

He proceeded to narrate some of the things he had seen, also some of his experiences. Mr. Griggs listened in awe-struck and angry silence. He was wondering how he could rid himself of this new addition to his family annoyances.

"Yes, sir!" said Adolphus, "she got me out of that scrape. Don't ask me why she took a fancy to me. I don't know. They all do it. I always could wind a woman round my little finger. They'll do anything for me, the girls will."

"Humph!" grunted Balaam, who had heard the last sentence. "You're in luck. I wish they'd do anything for me. I know one I'd make walk a chalk mark right off."

"Who's that? Say, you ain't married again, are you?"

"No; iain't likely. I was thinkin' of my stepdaughter, Mary, her name is."

"Oh! Mary! I'd forgot her. And I guess she's forgot me altogether. Little slim girl, freckles, hair down her back, and—"

"No! Freckles! There ain't a freckle to her. She's growed up, I tell you. Growed up! Drat her, I should say she had. Now she wants to get married. That's it! Take all the trouble to raise a girl, and give her—give her

all the luxuries and—and everything, and soon as she gets of age she sets out to marry and leave you."

"Who does she want to marry?"

"Feller named Clifford. Irving Clifford, his name is. Lives over to East Harniss, clerk in the grocery store. That is, he was clerk there, now he's goin' to take a job with a wholesale house in Chicago. But he don't take Mary to no Chicago, not if I know it."

"Humph! you're pretty hot, ain't you? Irving Clifford—Irving Clifford? Why, say! I used to know him, too, didn't I? Corporal in the —th' Massachusetts Volunteers through the war, wasn't he?"

"Yup. I wish to thunder the Spaniards had killed him."

The tone in which this was uttered made Major prick up his ears. Adolphus was surprised. He regarded his uncle thoughtfully.

"What's the matter with Clifford?" he asked.

Mr. Griggs told what was the matter. It took some time; but, boiled down, it amounted to little more than that Clifford wished to marry Mary Barstow. Mr. Small listened.

"I see," he said, "I see. But, look here, Uncle Bale, why don't you let him marry her, if he wants to? You wouldn't have to support her then, and, if I remember right, you was always growlin' 'cause you had to pay her board and clothes. Do you think so much of her that—"

"No," interrupted Balaam savagely. "If 'twan't for the will she could go to Jericho with Clifford, or the Old Harry himself, for all I cared."

"Will! What will?"

"Why, her dad's my second wife's first husband. Mary don't know about it, of course. If she did she—"

He paused. Adolphus, who was listening eagerly, ventured to remind him of the pause.

"Well, go on," he said. "What about the will?"

"Nothin', nothin'," replied his uncle hastily. "There—there ain't no will. I was just foolin'."

He changed the subject and began to speak of the weather. It was now Mr. Small who remained silent. After a time, while his uncle was hesitating for a word fit to describe the frost which had injured the previous fall's cranberry crop, he asked another question.

"I suppose likely Mary ain't had the chance to see many young fellers besides this Clifford?" he inquired.

"No. There ain't many in East Harniss, thank goodness! Clifford's about the only one that's worth lookin' at."

"I see! Hum! I see! I wonder if she did see one, one that was—er—well, used to managin' women 'twould make any difference?"

"Don't know. She ain't likely to see none, that's sartin. And if she did—well, he'd have to get Clifford out of the way fust."

"That could be managed. That could be managed, I shouldn't wonder."

"How? How? Tell me how and I'll give you—"

"What would you give me?"

But the Griggs caution had the upper hand once more.

Balaam hesitated. "I don't know's I wouldn't give a couple of dollars," he said.

His nephew laughed. During the remainder of the ride to Ostable he said little or nothing.

They reached the outskirts of the town, and Balaam ordered Major to halt.

"You might as well get down here, Dolph," he said. "There ain't no use in our ridin' through Ostable together. 'Twill make talk, and when you've lived as long as I have, you'll know that talk by folks about what's none of their business is a nuisance. You get down

here and wait around till I get out of the bank."

Somewhat to his astonishment, Adolphus made no objection. He climbed slowly from the vehicle.

"I'll wait somewhere along here," he said. "While I'm waitin' I'll try to think up some way to help you out with Mary and Clifford. His name's Irving J., ain't it?"

"Irving D."

"Oh, all right. And Mary's dad's name was Samuel? Died in eighteen eighty-four?"

"No, eighty-three. And his name was Jonathan. Here! what's that got to do with it?"

"Nothin'. Only if I'm goin' back there to help you and to meet Mary, I want to be loaded with all the statistics. So long, Uncle Bale! I'll be here, waitin'."

He watched Mr. Griggs drive off, and then, after waiting until he was certain that that gentleman must have reached the bank, he walked briskly up the main street to the courthouse. Entering the building, he sought the office of the clerk of probate. The clerk was out, but the young man in charge was willing to oblige.

"You keep the records here, don't you?" inquired Adolphus. "Deeds and copies of wills, and so on? I thought you did. Well, I tell you: I want to find my aunt's will. It ought to be filed here. Her name was Sarah Granby—Mrs. Sarah Granby, of Wellmouth; she died in eighty-two—no, eighty-three, that's it. Just show me where it's liable to be, and I'll look it up myself. It ain't very important."

The Granby will, strange to say, was not to be found, but Mr. Small was much interested in the records, and spent some time over them. When he left the courthouse he was smiling, and there was a satisfied look on his face.

Balaam, the bank meeting over,

found his nephew waiting where he had left him. They drove on together until Ostable was a mile behind. Then, in a quiet spot in the woods, Adolphus laid a hand on his relative's knee.

"Pull up," he said. "I've got somethin' important to say to you. I've thought of a way to keep Mary from bein' married—just yet, anyhow."

Balaam pulled up, eagerly enough. Mr. Small began to talk, volubly and to the point. At first his uncle was inclined to scoff.

"Rubbish!" he snorted. "You cut him out! *You!*"

"Yes, me. You say yourself that Mary hasn't seen many young fellers. Well, I've seen girls enough, and I know how to handle 'em. And Clifford's got to leave for Chicago in a week; you said so."

"In a week or *two*, was what I said."

"That's all right. Once get him in a fuss with her—once get her mad with him—and she'll never ask for him again; not with me around, she won't. If she does, I'll eat my hat."

"Humph!" with a disparaging glance at the headgear mentioned. "I'd hate to have to eat it. But how can you get her mad with Clifford?"

"I'll see to that. I've got a scheme. I've known Clifford when he was a soldier, same as me. A good many funny things happened, or might have happened, those days. Little Irving's goose is as good as cooked, you take my word for it."

There was more of this, a good deal more, but Mr. Small's serene confidence made an impression, and Mr. Griggs, in his desperation, was inclined to listen. At last he answered that he was willing for his nephew to try.

"But what are you doin' it for?" he asked suspiciously. "What is there in it for you?"

"Nothin', of course. You're my uncle, and I want to help you out, that's all. Now you trot along home and I'll

arrive, by train, to-morrow noon. You must be mighty surprised to see me; you forget all about to-day and ain't seen me since afore the war, you understand. Now you just give me twenty dollars or so to buy some new clothes with and——”

Mr. Griggs interrupted with a vehement declaration that he would not give his nephew a “dum cent.” His indignation at the suggestion was stormy and emphatic. Adolphus heard him through, and then said the twenty dollars must be forthcoming or the scheme was “all off.” He went on to show how necessary it was that his appearance be that of a prosperous citizen, and, at last, Mr. Griggs dragged forth a fat pocketbook containing money he had just drawn at the bank and reluctantly parted with two ten-dollar bills.

“I’m an everlastin’ fool to do it,” he declared, “and I know it. See here! if you don’t show up to-morrow I’ll have the sheriff after you.”

“I’ll show up, don’t you fret about that. Why, Uncle Bale, I wouldn’t part with you—and Mary—for a consider’ble lot more than twenty dollars. No,” with a broad grin, “and I don’t intend to.”

He watched the buggy out of sight and then strolled leisurely back to the Ostable railway station. There he took the noon train for Denboro. In the latter village, the metropolis of the Cape, he purchased a twelve-dollar suit of clothes, a few collars and ties, and a new hat. Later in the afternoon, transformed and resplendent, he strolled into the Denboro post office and accosted the blond young lady at the general-delivery window.

“Mabel,” he observed genially, “will you do a favor for me?”

The young lady turned her head and informed him that her name did not happen to be Mabel. She added that the visitor was “fresh.” Mr. Small

apologized, explained that her likeness to a friend of his, “one of the prettiest girls on the Cape,” had caused him to make the mistake, and commented on the weather, the number of summer visitors in town, and other matters. When the conversation had reached a sufficiently friendly stage, he resumed his request for the “favor.” Would she copy a letter for him?

“It’s a joke on a friend of mine,” he explained. “Just copy it on some sort of thin paper, such as foreign letters are wrote on. You know the kind.”

The young lady, who happened to be alone in the office, read the note he handed to her and giggled. She asked for further particulars concerning the joke, and Adolphus supplied them, drawing heavily on a prolific imagination.

“I ain’t got any foreign paper,” giggled the girl. “If I had I’d do it in a minute. I’m awful fond of jokes. The only paper I’ve got that looks foreign is this, and it’s got the post-office department headin’ on it.”

“That’s all right. Tear the head off. Say, is there a movin'-picture show in town to-night? If there was I’d go—if I had company. Do you like movies?”

Mr. Griggs’ surprise, when the depot wagon stopped at his door at noon the next day to deliver a passenger, was great. When that passenger turned out to be his nephew, Adolphus Small, whom he had not seen for years, the surprise was paralyzing. He and the returned wanderer greeted each other with exuberant affection, and when the former announced that he had come to pay his uncle a visit, Balaam almost shook his arm off.

Mary was introduced to the visitor, and, though by no means as enthusiastic as Mr. Griggs, was gracious and hospitable. The three had dinner together. After the meal was over, uncle and

nephew retired to the woodshed for a smoke. Balaam was a trifle grumpy.

"Ain't you had *nothin'* to eat since you left the army?" he demanded.

"*Nothin'* that tasted like that," declared Adolphus, with a chuckle. "It's the salt air, I guess. Time I've been here a week I'll have an appetite. Say!" changing the subject in order to prevent the explosion which, judging by his uncle's appearance, was imminent. "Say! She's a peach, ain't she? I don't wonder Clifford's gone on her. Has he been to see her since yesterday?"

"No, he ain't. She was goin' out to meet him I cal'late last night, but I locked her in her room."

"You did! What did you do that for? Ain't you got any sense? Don't you know that's the surest way to make her set on seein' him? If she wants to go out to-night let her. And if he comes here to-night you——"

"Come here! If he dares to come to this house again I'll——"

"You'll let him in; that's what you'll do. Look here, Uncle Bale, I'm runnin' this game now, and I know my business. You leave it to me. Now I'm goin' in to help her wash dishes, and you go somewhere else, do you hear?"

The dishwashing, if intended by Mr. Small as a step toward gaining Mary Barstow's good opinion, was not an unqualified success. She granted his request for a dish towel, but, after watching him use it for perhaps two minutes, wiped the remainder of the dishes herself. Neither did she appear greatly smitten by the young gentleman's swagger or his glib tongue. Her smiles at his jokes were but faint, and his stories of daring adventure in the Philippines and elsewhere were received without comment. It was only when he asked her opinion of his tie, one of those purchased in Denboro, that she showed marked interest.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I got that necktie in Cuba. 'Twas a present—given to me."

Mary looked at the tie. "Yes," she said, "I imagine it must be. How kind!"

"Oh, that's *nothin'*. A good many folks have been kind to me, in my time."

"I didn't mean that exactly; I meant kind of you. I suppose you wear it for their sake."

On the whole, Adolphus did not feel that he had achieved a triumph. However, he was not at all cast down. It took much more than that to shake his serene self-confidence.

After supper—Balaam counted the biscuits consumed by his guest, and, when the latter reached for the eighth, spoke feelingly concerning indigestion and kindred ills—they adjoined to the sitting room. When her dishwashing was finished Mary joined them. She took up her sewing.

"Ain't you goin' out this evening?" inquired Adolphus, paying no attention to the indignant scowls of his uncle. "I say, ain't you goin' out this evenin', Mary? It's a fine evenin'."

"No, I am not going out."

"Why not, Mary?"

"Because I don't wish to, Mr. Small," with a slight emphasis on the "Mister."

"Course she ain't goin' out," snapped Balaam. "She's a good, obedient girl, and she knows I don't want her to. That's the reason, ain't it, Mary?"

"No," was the calm reply. Adolphus laughed aloud. Mr. Griggs did not laugh.

He felt even less like laughing when, a few minutes later, there came a knock at the door, and Miss Barstow, rising to open it, admitted a young man.

"Good evening, Mary," said the caller.

"Good evening, Irving," said Mary. "You're a little later than you expected to be, aren't you?"

Balaam sprang to his feet.

"Irve Clifford," he shouted, "ain't I told you never to—"

"Hush!" interrupted Miss Barstow. "Don't be silly, father. We'll go into the dining room, Irving."

She was leading the way, but there was an interruption. Mr. Small, who at the first sight of the newcomer had started, sprang forward.

"Why, Irve Clifford!" he cried. "It's Irve Clifford, by all that's wonderful!"

It was Mr. Clifford's turn to start. He turned to face the speaker, who was standing with hand outstretched.

"Irve," said Adolphus again, "don't you know me? Have I changed as much as that?"

"Changed," repeated Clifford. "Why! Who? Why, it's Dolph Small, isn't it? Dolph, how are you?"

His joy at the recognition was as nothing compared to that of Mr. Small, who seized his hand and shook it again and again.

"If *this* ain't a surprise!" exclaimed Adolphus. "To think of seein' you here! I've been hopin' I might run across you somewheres, but I'd about given up hope. She has, too, fur's that's concerned; but now—"

"She? Who?"

Clifford and Mr. Griggs asked the question together. Miss Barstow said nothing, but she appeared interested. Adolphus seem puzzled.

"Who?" he repeated, addressing his reply to Clifford. "Why, Rosa, of course. Lord! how many times she come cryin' to me after you left. Did I think you'd deserted her? 'No, no!' says I. 'He ain't the kind to desert anybody. He's as true and square as they make and—'"

Mr. Clifford interrupted. "What are you talking about?" he demanded angrily. "Dolph Small, are you crazy? Who thought I'd deserted her? Who?"

"Why, Rosa, I tell you!"

"Rosa who?"

"Rosa who? Irve! Irve! Rosa de 6B

Mattos, the little girl with the big black eyes and the hair. My, what hair she had! Don't you remember you used to call it black silk; only 'twas finer'n any silk you ever saw. You said—"

"You're a liar!"

Clifford darted at him. Adolphus promptly got behind the center table. Mr. Griggs seized the photograph album, with the vague idea of using it as a defensive weapon. Mary Barstow, her eyes flashing, took command of the situation.

"Irving," she ordered, "stop! Stop! I tell you! Sit down! Father, be quiet. Now," turning to Mr. Small, "I want to know what you're talking about. Do you mean to say that—that he—
What do you mean?"

Adolphus looked troubled, troubled and embarrassed. He hesitated before replying.

"I—I guess I didn't mean anything," he stammered. "Twas a mistake, perhaps. I wouldn't get Irve into trouble for nothin'. I—I must have got him mixed up with somebody else. It's all right, Irve. I'm on—I—"

"Oh!" The frantic Clifford shook both fists across the table. "What do you mean by 'on'? You know you're lying. You know—"

"That's enough of that," declared Balaam, with dignity. "Adolphus is my nephew, and you can't call him a liar in my house. Mary, are you goin' to stand there and hear such talk? Be you—"

"Hush, father! Irving, if you don't sit down I shall leave the room. Sit down, for my sake. Now, Mr. Small, you have said something—"

"I ain't said nothin', Mary. I wouldn't have said nothin' for worlds. If I'd known you—"

"Never mind me. You've said something about Mr. Clifford—either too much or not enough. Now go on. Go on, if you please."

"Mary," pleaded Clifford, "don't pay

any attention to him. The man's lying, I tell you. He always was a dirty sneak and a liar. In the regiment everybody knew——"

"That's enough!" Adolphus drew himself up, and his voice shook, either with indignation or another feeling. "That's enough," he declared. "Uncle Bale, you know I wouldn't raise a row in your house for no money. But when a feller that's served along with me, and has, as you might say, had his life saved by me——"

"That's another lie!"

"When that feller accuses me of bein' a liar and—and other things, it's time for me to speak out. I've got a name and a reputation and I'm goin' to clear 'em—let the chips fall where they may. I say nothin' about racin' around with every female in sight, white or black or yellow—didn't seem to make no difference—I say nothin' about that. Soldiers are soldiers, and when they get away from home I suppose you must expect such things, from certain kinds. But to make love to a decent, respectable Spanish girl in Havana, to get engaged to her, and then run away and leave her—that's beyond fun. That's right down cowardly."

Clifford was out of his chair again, but Miss Barstow spoke first.

"Nonsense!" she said contemptuously. "Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it. Irving, do be quiet."

"You don't believe it, hey?" Mr. Small reached into his pocket. "You think I am lyin', too, I suppose."

"I don't," cut in Balaam. "I always said——"

"Shut up, Uncle Bale! Mary Barstow, you think I'm lyin'. All right, then what do you say to that? There's a letter that speaks for itself. 'Twas given me three years ago when I left Havana, and 'twas charged me that if ever I met *him*," with a wave toward Clifford, "I was to deliver it. Here

'tis. I wash my hands of the rest of it. I've done *my* duty. I'm goin'."

He threw an envelope on the center table and marched proudly from the room. Clifford dazedly picked up the envelope.

"I—I don't know what 'tis," he cried. "I—I—it's got my name on it, but——"

He tore the envelope open and read a few lines.

"It's a—lie!" he cried. "I never heard of the girl, I tell you! I——"

"Profane swearin' ain't goin' to help you none," protested Balaam. "I'll read the letter, if you won't. It's my duty to read it. Give it here!"

But Miss Barstow had the letter and was reading it. She read it through and tossed it back upon the table. For a moment she stood motionless, her face pale and her breast heaving. Then she, too, walked out of the room. Clifford sprang after her.

"Mary!" he cried. "Mary, where are you going?"

The slam of the door was the only answer. Mr. Griggs, grinning maliciously, stepped forward.

"Here's your hat, Irving," he said. "Oh, yes, and here's your letter, too. Better take it; it ought to be answered by this time, if it's ever goin' to be. I must say I didn't know there was so much wickedness in the world. Good night."

Mr. Griggs and his nephew prepared their own breakfast next morning. Miss Barstow remained in her room. Three times during the day Irving Clifford called, and each time Mr. Griggs—for Adolphus kept out of the way—brought down the answer that his step-daughter was not receiving visitors. The day after that Mr. Clifford did not call. That evening at the post office Balaam heard the news that the young man had left East Harniss, and the supposition was that he had gone to Chicago. There was rejoicing in one

room of the Griggs house and tears in another.

"I told you," crowed Adolphus. "I told you to leave it to me, didn't I?"

"You're a wonder, Dolph!" agreed Mr. Griggs. "You're a wonder, if I do say it. You've got some of my blood in you, you have. I don't care how many biscuits you eat after this. Of course," he added, his customary caution returning, "you won't be able to eat a terrible lot more, anyway."

"Won't I? Why not?"

"Why, 'cause—'cause I presume likely you'll feel that you'll have to be leavin' us yourself one of these days, won't you? Ha! Ha!"

Mr. Small said "Ha! ha!" also. The way in which he said it caused his uncle some vague uneasiness.

The uneasiness became less and less vague as time went on. For the first day after the scene in the sitting room Mary scarcely left her room. Balaam shouted the news of Irving Clifford's departure through the keyhole and came downstairs, chuckling. On the third day, having grown weary of preparing meals and doing the marketing, he ascended them again to beg her to come down. The grocer had called for orders, he said, and she was more used to ordering than he was. Besides, the grocer wanted to see her; he had some special goods just in that he thought she'd be interested in. She did not deign to answer, and it was not until a note from the grocer was pushed under her door that she was prevailed upon to descend. After that, however, she seemed to be more resigned, or more willing to accept the situation philosophically, and by noon of the fourth day was in fairly good spirits.

That afternoon she and Adolphus went out for a walk. They stopped at the grocer's and the fruit dealer's and then strolled on to the bake shop, where Mr. Small spent a little of the change remaining from the twenty dollars ad-

vance in ice cream and ginger ale. For a blighted being, one whose loving trust had so recently been shattered, Miss Barstow's appetite was now surprisingly good. She had two ice creams that afternoon.

The walk was repeated the next day and the next and the next. The program was always the same. First a short visit to the grocer's, where Adolphus waited outside while she ordered the household supplies, then the fruit dealer's and then the ice-cream parlor. Mary grew more and more cheerful, also more and more contented and confidential. She seemed to enjoy Mr. Small's society, and had a way of looking up into his face as they strolled on arm in arm which was pleasant, to say the least. Adolphus also was contented. Affairs were progressing even better than he had hoped.

The following evening Balaam, entering the sitting room unexpectedly, found the young couple sitting on the sofa looking at the photographs in the family album. They were sitting quite close together, and the position of Mr. Small's arm—it lay along the back of the sofa—was much more objectionable to Balaam than it appeared to be to his stepdaughter. She did not seem to mind it at all.

"Hello!" said Mr. Griggs gruffly. "Humph! You're pretty sociable, seems to me, ain't you?"

Adolphus grinned. Mary looked up in apparent surprise.

"Sociable?" she repeated. "Why, of course we're sociable. You don't mind being sociable, do you, Dolph?"

"Not a bit," replied Mr. Small. "I like it."

"Humph!" Balaam took out his watch. "Pretty late to be sittin' up, seems to me. Anybody that's walked as much as you have lately, Mary, ought to be tired enough to go to bed, I should callate."

Adolphus observed that it was only

the shank of the evening. With a wink at his uncle, whose poorly suppressed indignation seemed to amuse him greatly, he permitted his arm to drop from the back of the sofa.

It embraced nothing more substantial than the air, however, for Miss Barstow rose quickly and just in time.

"Well, perhaps it is rather late," she said. "But I'm not tired. Our walks don't tire me at all. I enjoy them. Shall we take another to-morrow, Dolph? I have some more marketing to do."

"Sure thing!" replied Adolphus, withunction.

With a good night to them both, and a most bewitching smile for the younger of the couple, Mary left the room. Balaam turned to his nephew.

"Say!" he growled. "This thing's got to stop, do you hear?"

"What thing?"

"You know what, well's I do. This goin' to walk with her and sittin' up with her—and buyin' ice cream for her and all that—it's got to stop."

Adolphus laughed. "The ice-cream part of it pretty nigh stopped to-day," he said. "I had to hang up the seller that sold it to me. I'm flat broke. You'll have to stake me to another twenty, Uncle Bale."

Balaam gasped. "I stake you!" he cried. "I give you another cent! I'll see you to the Old Harry first! Look here, you're gettin' altogether too fresh with my daughter. I've had enough of it. You can get right out of this house to-morrow morning!"

Mr. Small shook his head.

"I can," he said, "but I shan't! I'm havin' a first-rate time. Aint' you a little mite ungrateful, Uncle Bale? Irve Clifford would have had your daughter by this time if it hadn't been for me."

"I—I don't care. He ain't got her. And you haven't got any business carryin' on with her the way you do. The

whole town's talkin' about it. They cal'late you're goin' to marry her now."

"How do you know I ain't?"

"How do I know? How—how do I know? Why, you—"

"There, there! Don't blow up! What else did you expect? I told you I had a way with women, didn't I? Besides, I like Mary. She's a mighty pretty girl. I always said if I married anybody 'twould be a pretty one."

Mr. Griggs stepped forward. His fists were clenched and his face crimson.

"She ain't goin' to marry you!" he declared. "She ain't goin' to marry anybody. I won't have it."

"How you goin' to stop it?"

"I'll—I'll— Well, by godfreys, I'll stop it, all right! I'll tell her the truth about that Clifford letter."

"No, you won't. You was in that as much as I was. You'll keep still. If you don't I'll tell a few things myself."

"What'll you tell?"

"Why, I might read her this piece of paper," taking a small penciled slip from his vest pocket. "It's somethin' I copied over at the probate clerk's office: 'But providing my daughter, the said Mary Barstow, marries after becoming of age, the said trust held by her mother, my wife, shall terminate, and the said twenty thousand dollars shall be hers, the said Mary Barstow's, without let or hindrance!' Why, uncle, you look sick! Do you feel pale?"

Balaam had sunk into a rocking-chair. He did look sick, very sick, indeed.

"No, uncle, dear," continued Mr. Small serenely. "You won't tell Mary nothin'. And, provided you behave sensible and trust your old chum Dolph to do the square thing by you, I won't tell her nothin', either. Now you hand over that other twenty for ice-cream money and trot along to bed like a nice little boy!"

The following day Mr. Griggs, in a sort of disconsolate daze, drove once more to Wellmouth to see his lawyer concerning the mortgage foreclosure. The attorney asked some questions as to his client's health, but received such short answers that he gave up the cross-examination and invited the witness to dinner. During the meal he chatted concerning his own affairs. It developed that he and his wife had just discharged their housemaid for untruthfulness and general lack of rectitude.

"She was a nice-looking girl, too," he said. "West Indian and smart as a whip. But lie and steal! Whew! She could tell a falsehood and brazen it out better than any one I ever saw. Why, she would swear to a lie on the Bible for ten dollars. We only discharged her this morning, and what she will do I don't know. I pity her in a way. And yet, she'll get another place, I suppose. Her good looks and her innocent face would deceive any one. I wish you might see her—— Hello! there she is now, going by the window. Just look at her! Wouldn't you think she was a persecuted saint!"

He dragged Balaam to the window and pointed to a girl who was passing.

Balaam was staring at the girl with wide-open eyes. A new expression, a curious combination of doubt and fear and hope, was dawning on his face.

"Where'd you say she come from?" he demanded.

"From the West Indies—Havana, I believe. Why, don't hurry! Must you go so soon?"

That evening after supper the inmates of the Griggs Institute of Practical Economy were once more together in the sitting room. Adolphus was there, serene, impudent, and confidant as usual. Mary was there, but she seemed curiously nervous and expectant, starting at the least sound, and fidgeting in her chair whenever the sound of carriage wheels was heard

outside. Balaam was there also, and he, too, seemed nervously expectant, although he had returned home in an unexpected good humor and had heard his nephew's account of his walk with Mary without a scowl or a protest.

At last one of the series of footsteps did halt outside the house. A knock sounded on the door. Balaam started from his chair, but sank back into it as Mary, who had been up to her room for the fourth time since supper, came in and hastened to answer the knock. Mr. Griggs and his nephew heard voices in the hall. Then Mary reappeared.

"It's a woman," she said, in a puzzled tone. "A young woman, and she wants to see Adolphus."

"Why don't you ask her in?" inquired Balaam, whose face was oddly pale and whose hands shook upon the arms of his chair. "Ask her in, why don't you? If—if it's anything private between her and Dolph we can go somewhere else."

"Private!" snorted Adolphus. "I'd have you know I ain't got anything private between me and any——"

He stopped, because the young woman herself had entered unbidden. She was a dark-complexioned young woman, somewhat flashily dressed, and with a firm chin and a pair of snapping black eyes.

"How—how d'ye do, ma'am?" faltered Mr. Griggs, rising. "I was just sayin'——"

He did not state what he was just saying. The young woman prevented him. She glanced about the room, and now the black eyes were fixed upon the stalwart form of Mr. Adolphus Small. With a scream she rushed forward and threw her arms about that young man's neck.

"Oh!" she shrieked. "Oh, Dolph! I've found you at last! At last! At last!"

Mary Barstow was surprised. Balaam Griggs appeared to be surprised.

But the most surprised person in that room was Mr. Small himself. He staggered back, wildly clawing at the arms which encircled him.

"What! What! Who! Who! Take your hands off me, you—you woman!"

But the "woman" refused. She clung to him all the tighter, sobbing and shrieking that she had found him at last—at last. Adolphus stormed up and down the room, vainly striving to free himself.

"Look here!" he roared, addressing his uncle over the lady's shoulder, "if you don't take this fool away I'll—I'll smash her!"

"Oh, take her away, father!" urged the frightened Mary. "Do take her away, please!"

She and her stepfather, working together, managed to unclasp the encircling arms. The young woman stood panting in the center of the room, while the outraged Small sheltered himself behind the displaced sofa.

"Oh, Adolphus!" cried the stranger in heart-rending accents. "Oh, Adolphus, ain't you glad to see me?"

"Glad to see you!" spluttered the breathless victim. "Glad to—Who in blazes are you? I never saw you afore in my life!"

"What! What! Oh, sir!" turning to Mr. Griggs. "Tell me. Has he been this way long?"

"Long! This way! What way?" "Insane! Crazy! Has he been so long? If he has it would explain why he left me. Left me—and the children—without a word—and never wrote a letter or—or anything. Oh, Adolphus, my dear husband—"

It was Mary's turn to scream. She uttered a little shriek, and staggered back against the wall, where she remained, glancing from one to the other of the faces before her.

The word "husband" had acted upon Adolphus like an electric shock. He

danced up and down, gurgling and waving his arms.

"Go away!" he commanded. "Clear out! You're loony! You're off your head! Goin' around callin' folks your husband! And talkin' about children! Clear out of here! What do you mean by it?"

The young woman looked at him fixedly. Her expression changed, and her black eyes flashed.

"Oh, ho!" she said. "Oh, ho, I see! You ain't crazy! You did it on purpose. Very well, then I know what to do. Do you dare to say before these witnesses that you didn't marry me in Havana, when you was a soldier there? And live with me for two years afterward? And that you're not the father of my two children—as fine twins as any husband and wife ever had? Do you *dare* say that?"

"Dare! Dare!" gasped Mr. Small. "I marry you! I never saw you afore, I tell you. Twins! Good heavens and earth! Get a cop! Go get a cop, somebody!"

"Yes, get one—do!" said the young woman. "I'd like to see one."

The frantic Adolphus turned to his uncle.

"Will you get a cop?" he demanded.

Mr. Griggs shook his head. "'Twould make an awful talk in the village," he said dubiously. "This sort of thing ought to be kept quiet, seems to me. Tut! tut! tut! To think of such a thing happenin' in my house and afore my daughter, too! Oh, Dolph! Dolph! And I thought so much of you and trusted you!"

"Trusted me! Do you mean to say you believe it?"

"I don't know what I believe. Oh, dear, dear! That Havana must be an awful place. First Irve Clifford and then you. How could you do it, Dolph? And then come back and keep company with Mary! You—a married man!"

Mr. Small's fists were trembling about his head.

"It's a lie! I tell you!" he bellowed. "Mary! Mary Barstow! Will you go and get a cop and have this woman took back to the asylum?"

Miss Barstow, who was holding a handkerchief to her eyes—or mouth—shook her head. "I don't know," she said. "It would be such a disgrace for us all. Oh, Dolph! How could you do it!"

"Do it! Do what? I ain't done nothin'. You don't believe what she says, do you?"

"I don't know. I—I don't see why if it was true of—of Mr. Clifford it shouldn't be true of you. I—"

She covered her face with the handkerchief, and hurried from the room. Her shoulders were shaking with emotion.

"Well!" demanded the black-eyed young woman sharply. "What are you goin' to do, Mister Runaway Husband?"

The "husband" was too much agitated to utter anything coherent, except profanity. Balaam ventured a suggestion.

"If I was you, Dolph," he said, "I think I'd get out of town as quiet as I could. Your wife won't say nothin' if we ask her not to. I—who's that?"

"That" was Mr. Irving Clifford, who had entered the house and the sitting room unannounced.

"Good evening, Balaam," he said cheerfully. "Hello, Dolph! Where's Mary?"

Before the paralyzed Mr. Griggs could collect his senses, scattered by the new development, Clifford had opened the door leading to the stairs.

"Mary!" he called. "Come on, Mary! Are you ready?"

"All ready, Irving," replied Miss Barstow. A moment later she entered the room. She was wearing her hat and carried a valise in her hand. Mr.

Clifford gallantly relieved her of the latter burden.

"We must hurry," he said. "The carriage is waiting."

Balaam had found his voice. He sprang forward.

"Here!" he shouted. "Where you goin'? Irve Clifford, where are you goin' with my daughter?"

Mr. Clifford halted for a moment.

"Well," he answered, "first of all, we're goin' to the minister's to be married. After that we're going to my uncle's at Wellmouth. To-morrow my wife and I start for Chicago. No. Balaam, I haven't been to Chicago yet. Only to Wellmouth. By the way, I saw you there this morning. You were talking to this young woman," indicating the person with black eyes.

Mary paused at the door. "Good-by, father," she said. "I'm sorry it had to be this way, but you wouldn't have any other. Good-by, Dolph! Thank you so much for the ice cream—and those walks to the grocer's. The grocer took care of Irving's letters to me and mine to him. He's Irving's best friend, you know. Good-by! I hope you and"—with a choke—"your wife and"—another choke—"the twins will be very happy together."

She went out. Mr. Clifford spoke once more.

"Good-by, all!" he said. "So long, Dolph! By the way, here's a piece of advice: The next time you get that girl in the Denboro post office to write a three-year-old letter from Havana just see that she doesn't write it on United States government paper with this year's watermark."

The door closed. From the road without came the sound of carriage wheels. The black-eyed young woman turned to Mr. Griggs.

"If you think I've earned that ten dollars you promised me this morning," she said, "perhaps you'd better pay it to me."

Out of the Miocene

By John Charles Beecham

The letters which we received while George Sterling's stories of primitive man were appearing in the POPULAR assured us that you were interested in these graphic pictures of what happened before Man, as we know him now, appeared on this planet. Here is a great novel along the same lines: a story that illustrates what Bergson calls "the forward *push* of evolution" from the terror-filled ape to the feeling of law and beauty, and the face upturned from the sod. Only here you have not only the first glimmerings of manhood appearing in the ape's brain, but you have the mind of a modern man traveling backward through the æons and living again in his progenitor of the Miocene age. A fascinating story, built on scientific discovery and written by a man who has the gift of narrative.

(*In Two Parts—Part One*)

CHAPTER I.

WAS it a dream, that vision of the old Kansas Sea that boiled and roared in awful grandeur over our Mississippi Basin so many thousands of centuries ago, the great sagillaria forests and the beasts they hid, the *zeuglodon* and *mosasaur* in terrific battle, and all the horrors of the time when the world was still in its babyhood? Or was Professor Haupt right when he told our philosophy class that each man's consciousness is only an infinitesimal part of the great General Consciousness that existed before the world began; and that all our instincts are faint adumbrations of the soul's experiences in previous existences?

Sometimes when I am alone in bed on a still, dark night those terrors again come creeping upon me, and my hair is rigid, and every nerve is taut as I hear the stentorous breathing of the great cave bear as he smelled out my

footprints. And while reason laughs at dread, my hands steal out from the blankets for a leap into the trees to safety as I did in my apeman days.

With all due modesty, I can confess to some small reputation as a scientist. Some great universities have recognized as authorities Bruce Dayton's works on the Jurassic reptilia. Yet, scientist and agnostic, I sometimes wonder if the curtain of the past was not drawn ever so slightly that I might glimpse within its folds and see some of those stupendous workings of nature at which we can only make mere guesses from the fragments of bones that have come down to us.

It is now nearly a score of years since it happened. I was working for the United States Geodetic Survey, one of a party of six mapping a desert table-land in the great Southwest. Every Western man knows the country—a wall of snow-crowned hills without a pass or break, behind these mesa

stretching to an alkali plain so hot and dry that even the rattlesnakes can not live there.

In every mountain town you will find men who admit confidentially that they know every trail and water hole in the Southwest. Few ever traveled this desert. It is off the beaten trails. Crossing it you go from nowhere to nowhere. There is no mineral wealth to entice the prospector. There is hardly enough grass in the whole two hundred miles to supply a single sheep with herbage. Nothing but mile after mile of blistering alkali, powdered to a fine dust that rises to choke you in every breeze. The Indians shunned it like smallpox. Even the bad men in the old days of the Colt and the rope waited for the sheriff when they were hemmed in rather than make a try across it.

Ours was the first survey, and the sixth day's work found us in the heart of the tract. The water supply was low, and they sent me for more. I think the intolerable heat of the last six days must have affected me, for this is the only way I can explain my supreme foolishness. Ten miles after I left camp, following our well-staked trail, I saw a mirage. Having just made the trail, I should have instantly recognized it. But the one thought that filled my brain was that here, a mile away, were trees and water, cutting my trip short. I left the trail.

After an hour's wandering I came to my senses. I tried to pick up the stakes again. Another hour, and I knew I was lost. By night my canteen was empty, and I had a raging thirst. I clared not stop. There was a beautiful moon, and I plunged on through the unmarked waste.

It was about four hours after sunset when I stumbled on one of those mysterious grooves in the face of the desert travelers sometimes find. It sloped down sharply to a natural gorge that

rapidly widened and deepened, promising water.

A half mile, and the rock walls towered on either side two hundred feet or more. There was grass in this valley; there were trees—sure signs of a spring. My horse shied suddenly, and as I pulled the bit I saw a deer only a rod away, its big eyes blinking in mild surprise at the intrusion. It did not move an inch until I could almost touch it, when it gently trotted ahead of us.

Deer in the alkali plains? Tame as in Central Park? What had I stumbled into—fairyland? While I doubted, I heard the baying of a hound, and saw the dim outline of an adobe hut along the margin of a pond. The next moment a square in the black wall flamed red, and I knew some one had lit a lamp.

A bandit rendezvous was my instant suspicion. I jumped off my horse and crouched, rifle in hand, behind a tree.

A door was flung open and a figure stood silhouetted at the entrance. It was an old man, seventy years of age at least. I could not see his features nor mark details, for the light was behind him and blinded me, but the long beard that swept below his waistline, the stooping shoulders, and the break in his voice as he challenged: "Who's there?" revealed his years.

"A friend," I answered, "lost in the desert," and stepped forward.

"Come in, friend," he replied.

Exhausted, I sank into a chair. He gave me water and fed me, studying me the while. I marked him as closely. His clothing was of a cut the fashion ten years before. Neither his beard nor his hair had seen shears or razor for years. Although age bent his shoulders, he was only a little short of six feet tall, and proportionately built. What a big man he must have been in his prime! Even now there was an aura of tremendous strength about him, expressed in every motion. Everything I could see confirmed my first impres-

sion that here was a hermit. I started to tell my story.

"Eat first!" he commanded. There was such finality in his tone that I obeyed without question.

When I had finished he took a chair directly in front of me.

"How did you become lost?" he asked.

"I might begin by introducing myself," I replied.

"As you wish. This is the West; it is not necessary."

I told him what our party was doing, and rather sheepishly confessed how I had left the trail. His glance was fixed on me in a steady stare. As I progressed with my story, his eyes made me uncomfortable. They never blinked, but bored in as if to read my inmost thoughts.

"H'm, h'm!" he grunted, combing his long beard with his fingers, "a very possible story."

"You don't mean to question——" I blazed.

The commanding light that sprang into his eyes froze me silent before he broke in.

"Young man," he thundered, "you are the first stranger to cross these portals in twenty years. You will have to abide by my peculiarities of speech while here."

"If you could give me a night's lodging, and show me the trail to-morrow morning——" I began.

"Tut, tut! We will cross that bridge on the morrow. Pardon me a moment while I prepare your chamber."

I marveled at his nicely of speech. As he left me, I looked about the cabin.

The walls, the floors in the corners, even the rafters above me, were covered with bones. Bones and huge tusks, some of them arranged in heaps, some of them partly fitted together, bones of animals, bones of human beings. In one corner was a partially constructed skeleton, apparently of a man. The

sightless sockets seemed to mock me, as if telling me that soon my bones, too, would find their place here. I began to feel uncanny. Was this a murderer's den? What Procrustean bed was he fitting for me? I meditated a dash outside for my horse. The host had my rifle.

Then I saw, in one corner, a huge thigh bone, at least four feet long. Near it was the skull of some large animal. I looked at the supposedly human skeleton again. The conformation of the jaw showed it was an ape's. I waited.

"You are a paleontologist, professor?" I asked, as he returned.

He glanced at me sharply.

"I presumed so from your collection," I explained, waving my hand about the room.

"Hum!" he grunted.

"By the bye, professor," I remarked in the awkward pause, "I have not asked your name."

"It is immaterial," he replied shortly.

"Your work is Smithsonian," I persisted, "or university research?"

"A personal hobby."

As a boy, paleontology had fascinated me, and life in a university town had given me opportunities to follow my bent. I went to the corner and examined the thigh bone. I lifted it and tapped it, to find it hollow. Beside it was a skull. I noticed the teeth particularly—sickle-shaped, with sharp cutting edges. Turning to face my host, I found him half risen from his chair, gripping its arms, and intently watching me.

"A carnivorous dinosaur," I remarked casually. "Do you make it megalosaur?"

"You are a paleontologist?" The question came like a pistol shot.

"The merest tyro. A dabbler when I was a boy."

I told him of my early life. All the while his hands worked together agitatedly, and an unearthly glow burned

brightly in his eyes. Suddenly he whirled on me. Both hands gripped my knees.

"The answer to my prayer," he murmured huskily. I looked at him in astonishment.

"I am growing old," he explained. "The strength I might have used I frittered away. I am growing feeble. For a year I have prayed that I be sent one such as you. You are the answer to my prayer. You are divinely commissioned to a great work, a work that will put your name and mine among the first of the world's discoverers."

Was the man mad?

"What work?" I asked.

"To find the beginnings of life."

I looked my amazement.

"Listen," he appealed. "My name is Scott, Eugene Scott. The world that knew me has forgotten, so that is all you need know. About fifty years ago, when I was as young as you are, I began the search for Darwin's Missing Link.

"After tramping Africa from the mouth of the Kongo to the Uganda country, and south to the Cape, studying every form of ape life I could find, I concluded that the Missing Link no longer exists; in fact, has not existed for ages. It is an obsolete type, and thought of its persistence to this time is fantasy. Both the apes and man are developed types, I believe, from this common ancestor. The apes have developed more particularly along certain physical lines, and man as a rational being. In the present scheme of things, there is no place for the earlier type.

"My life aim is to make some contribution to our knowledge of Evolution, the great science, the science of beginnings. Only by knowing the story of life can we ever solve the mystery of life."

His eyes again flamed with a weird light, and he rose.

"My quest is the quest of the learned of all times, and where others beat

futilely against blank walls of the pit of our ignorance, I believe I may climb to the light above. To stand side by side with Newton and Aristotle and Darwin—that is my hope! Where the old Greeks guessed so far and so truly, what may I do with the appliances of modern science? Only a little ways to go, perhaps. Omar surmised that. You remember what he says:

"A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes, and a single Alif were the Clew—
Could you but find it, to the Treasure house,
And peradventure to the Master, too."

He spoke more rapidly. "What method should I follow? Should I adopt Haeckel's palingenetic process? But then I would make the same errors he did, probably, would find the same vitiations from the phylogenetic record he outlined, and would convince only the few. By diligent search of unexplored rock formations and marshes, should I unearth bones and rock prints, and build a history on these? Such a history must necessarily be incomplete and inconclusive. It would not reveal the secret, the mystery of life and progress.

"No, I must map out some new way, some untrodden path. How? I puzzled over the problem for months. Then one day the answer came."

He paused. Directly before me he stood, his eyes riveted upon me, as if they strove to read my inmost soul. The unearthly glow of madness was surely in them.

"I must go back through the ages to the first forms of life."

I failed to comprehend the stupendous idea he sought to convey. He must have observed my bewilderment.

"I must bring myself back to the dawn of creation, and watch the first ooze quicken into living protoplasm. From that first life form I must progress in its descendants through æons of time to the days of the cave man. That accomplished, the tale is

complete. Our recorded history is but a few pages of the story of the world."

"You have done this?" I asked, amazed at the violence of his madness.

"No, I have failed."

The infinite regret and infinite bitterness expressed in those words told the whole story of a life ruined, and reason shattered by failure.

"Knowledge and fame were mine," he continued, "but I shrank from the risk. I was a coward. I am a broken man, allowed to live because death would be pleasanter."

His tragic utterance ended in a sob. Head bowed and between his hands he sat, staring at the fire, and I did not break the reverie.

With sudden animation he again addressed me.

"You are a young man, a bold man, or you would not be here alone. You could take my place, and have my opportunity."

By now he was on his feet, his eyes glittering again.

"Man, you will be famous. Will you undertake a desperate adventure, more desperate than Columbus took when he first set sail for the West; an adventure with a thousand chances of death to one for life; and if you succeed, no wealth, but an imperishable memory? Dare you?"

He gripped my arms, his face near mine.

"I want you to go back, back to creation. I want you to see the northern hemisphere one great glacier, and all animal life disappearing before a polar frigidity that we cannot comprehend, the flood of Noah's day. Ah, those Hebrews, they had a revelation. Science scoffs at the childish record of those terrible times that they gave the world, but it is truth."

"I want you to see the days of the mammoth, before the ice age. I want you to see our ancestors hovering in the caves that form the bone breccias

of to-day. I want you to see the pithecid creature from which the early man sprang, clambering in the lepidodendrons and ferns of the eocene and miocene. I want you to see the little tyracotherium, the ancestor of our horse; and the mighty cave bear, lurking in grim forests of conifers that towered and clustered mountain high over still plateaus buried in eternal shade. I want you to go farther back and see the dinosaur in its native habitat. Still farther back you shall go, and see the monsters of the sea in the days when all the world was water. Not only see them, but live with them: be them. If you have the courage you shall go back to that farthest time, when all the world was mist and mud, and the earliest life forms stirred sluggishly in the primordial slime. Dare you go?"

I knew he was crazy. But I was fascinated by the ardor of his speech, the fire in his eye, the scene and the hour. Somehow his madness was in my blood. I laughed foolishly.

"There would be some rare shooting?" I inanely remarked.

Scott spat with disgust.

"Shooting?" he snarled. "Do you think you are going back in a carriage? Do you expect to drag your carcass into the uttermost depths of the ocean of time? Do you think you can bring your body through the ice of the glacial age, and mire it in the slough of a world before land and sea separated?"

"What do you propose to do?"

"You believe in a future existence, do you? Soul and body reunited after death, and all that?"

I was brought up a Calvinist. Up to then I had not thought much on religion, but I agreed, "Yes."

"All bosh! Why should the Creator go to the infinite trouble of resurrecting that particular compound of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, sodium, and other elements that is you, free it from the excreta of vermin that eat you after death,

and reunite it with the spirit? Why? When the very food you eat to renew your corpuscles is made up of atoms that formed the man of yesterday, atoms taken from the soil where that man's body disintegrated?

"What renews your corpuscles; gives you life, growth? Food. What is food? Animal and vegetable matter. Whence come they? From the soil. What is soil? The dead of yesterday. Bone and gristle, flesh and blood, leaves and grasses, plant and animal cells, one conglomeration of putrefaction from which we draw our nourishment. Read Omar. He knew."

"But the soul is immortal," I challenged. "There is heaven after death."

"Heaven? The maggots."

He sickened me. The sheer brutality of it—hut of course the man was mad. Such gross materialism is impossible in a rational being. I shrank away from his lean, hooked nose, the sunken cheeks, and the eyes that always burned.

"Listen," he urged, moving closer while I edged away. "There is an immortality, the immortality of the soul. But you and I, as individuals, have no immortality. After death, the soul goes back to the General Consciousness. Call it Brahma, Nirvana, God—what you will. He gives and He takes. By and by He gives again, my soul to your grandchild, maybe; yours to my grandchild. So our immortality is in our children. We spin our thread, and they pick up the cord where we left off and continue it. Ever there is evolution, progression. Therefore our code of morals. To keep us clean, so the race might progress, the Creator gave us hope of the hereafter—and fear. To the man of to-day these things are no longer necessary. We can bear the light, and still live to progress. Centuries ago the old Hindus, absorbed in contemplation of the ineffable, knew these things we are just beginning to

learn. Metempsychosis, the old faith of the Brahmin, is truth."

He drew a deep breath. The fevers raced through my veins, leaving me hot and cold, and I grew dizzy, but still he held me fascinated.

"Now tell me why my soul and your soul, which have before them an infinite progression through forms of life still unknown to us, cannot and do not preserve some consciousness of the forms through which they have passed, and cannot, under proper conditions, be projected back into active consciousness of those forms?"

Dimly I began to comprehend the mystery he propounded. But what did it entail? I was too stunned by his stupendous revelation to realize.

"Granting that you are able to bring the soul to consciousness of its other forms," I hazarded, "what is to convince me after returning to normal that what I saw and felt is not the phantasmagoria of a dream?"

"The only evidence you have that anything exists, your senses. You will actually see and feel these things."

"How?"

"In the body of that earlier form that your spirit once occupied."

Now I knew he was mad. He was convicted by his own argument. Who was to resurrect that body, long since returned to the original soil from which it came, and gone through countless forms since then until its component elements were scattered to the four winds of heaven?

"How are you going to resurrect that old form?"

He smiled tolerantly. "Why resurrect it? I told you that was impossible. Why not project the soul back to the particular time the body existed?"

What amazing dream was this?

"We are atoms in two oceans, time and space. Walk from here to the forest yonder, and your corporal self passes through a portion of space. Each

moment you live you pass through a portion of the ocean of time. But the progression is only one way—for the corporal body. With the spirit it is different. Time has no boundaries for it. Out of the infinite, into the infinite, it comes and it goes. It is one with the Eternal. Therein Moses was right.

"What I shall do is transplant your spirit into some period of the world's infancy, when from the womb of Mother Nature there sprang those forms that are now the amaze of scientists."

Once more he caught me by the arms and hurled the challenge:

"Dare you go?"

"How do you do this?" I faltered.

"That mystery I cannot reveal." The moment's drama was over. He was again the teacher.

"I learned it from an old Vedantist. I told you of my search in Africa for the Missing Link. After that failure, I drifted to India, in the faint hope that the cradle of civilization might teach me something. One day I stood on the great temple at Delhi. Below rolled the Ganges, with its thousands of worshippers bathing. I thought of the futility of it all—the vain hope of humanity. Some of the bathers were little better than beasts. Why an after life for them?

"Presently I realized that some one was reading my thought. How he perceived it, I do not know. I only know that I felt that my mind was an open book to him. I turned and saw an old Hindu a little distance away, watching me. An uncontrollable impulse compelled me to address him.

"'Does the Mystery disquiet you, Seeker after Knowledge?' he asked.

"'Have you solved the Riddle of the Ages, Father?' I asked. The words were off my tongue before I knew it. I think he suggested them.

"'Follow me,' he directed.

"I was with him a year. From him

I learned of the spirit world, mysteries our men of science, with their empiricism, would call frauds. I found that our wisest philosophers are coarse thinkers, feeble intellects, mere children groping after the super-truths that will never be known until the new man of the golden age comes. From him I learned the secret I shall use to-night. But come, you have a fever. Let us retire?"

Scott's spell was broken. I felt very sick. The cottage swam before me. The blood pounded in my temples. I faintly recollect that I fell in Scott's arms. I remember his voice, coming from a far distance, saying:

"The fever will make it easier. The soul will more readily leave its corporal habitation."

Then I fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

At the halfway house where the distorted fancies of dreamland give way to realities, my first conscious perception was a peculiar sense of disassociation, of detachment. I was in the world, yet out of it. I was myself, yet not myself. I could not reason it out just then, I was too sleepy. It was good just to lie there with eyes shut and breathe the fresh air and luxuriate in that delicious sense of lethargy that one experiences at the close of a deep sleep, when the dormant brain cells laggardly resume their functions.

I stirred slightly, and felt myself losing my balance, falling. My hands, flung up, caught something round and firm—the limb of a tree. Eyes blinking, I tried to learn what it was all about. What was I doing in a tree? Had I been sleepwalking? . . . Where did I bunk last night? Oh, yes, in Scott's cottage. I must have climbed here while sleepwalking. Odd, that I should do that.

My gun! . . . That was gone, too.

Perhaps it was below. I looked down and saw—

Two brown legs, naked, hairy, heavy-boned, thin-calved; where mine should have been.

Who had dressed me in this monkey skin? Williams, the rodman, he was always full of tricks. . . . No, Williams was miles away. Scott then. Did he have a sense of humor? . . . All the same this was queer. I began to wonder whether I was myself, Bruce Dayton. But who else could I be? I pinched my leg to make sure.

Then I became aware of another self within me. For as my nails closed on the flesh, I instinctively leaped upward. I remember an instant's sickening sense that I had jumped to destruction; then an overwhelming reassurance that the distant limb would be reached. Both thoughts shot through my brain in that brief moment of the leap aloft, before I clung in affright to the branch.

That other self dominated me. For I swung, with a liteness that no athlete could equal, from limb to limb with amazing celerity. My true self reasoned that what I did was impossible to man; my other self compelled with instinctive confidence. Hidden in another cloud of that wonderful foliage, some fifty feet or more above my former perch, I stopped, ears alert, to catch the sound of pursuit.

There was not a rustle. For some minutes I waited. Then my new self did another strange thing. It compelled me to crane my head forward and foolishly yell defiance at the something that had pained me. Yet my true self told me all the time it was my own hand that struck the blow.

When I opened my lips, I was astounded. What gibberish was this that poured forth; harsh gutturals coming brokenly from my lips? It was a growl, a snarl, the utterings of a beast, not of a man.

"Scott," I tried to shout.

My lips could not frame the word. To my one-self's consciousness the name stood out clearly and distinctly. To my other self it was incomprehensible. I tried to speak, but lips and tongue could produce only gutturals.

A flame of recollection flashed before my true self's consciousness. I remembered Scott's story. I remembered his last words as the fever conquered me: "The soul will more readily leave its corporal habitation."

Had he projected me back to a day before man was born from monkey? Was his amazing story true? Was it true?

With an effort I remained calm and took inventory of myself. I lifted my hands. No, those long, prehensile, hairy, black, thick-skinned claws were not mine. I twitched them and touched the tree. The fingers gave little information. That the tree was hard and firm was all I learned. What the contour of the limb was, whether the bark was rough or soft, touch did not reveal. This was not my nervous organism.

I was covered with hair. I examined it curiously. No, it was not an artificial covering of skins. It was my natural integument. I was wearing no clothing.

My face? Surely my face was my own. I felt the forehead, low and retreating, thick-skulled. That was not mine. And the nose, flat, with distended nostrils—that was not mine. And the chin, prognathous, snouty, with thick, heavy lips above and great teeth. These were not mine. Who was I? What was I?

I dared not reason. For to reason, I knew, would make me mad. My overwrought mind reeled at the successive discoveries. Who was I? When was I? How was I? What waif of creation had Scott made me; who robbed me of identity; who transformed me into a brute while he left the conscience and reason of a man?

I shrieked. The weird, eerie cry my lips emitted, I cannot describe. At once came replies. From every side, far and near, were answering cries. They approached me, those other creatures to which I was corporally kin. I could hear their excited chatter. Terror of them possessed me. I was weaponless, helpless. They would rend me from limb to limb.

In that stress of fear my new self once more resumed the captaincy. Silently it directed me through the foliage, always away from the rustling on every side, and kept me hidden when the other tree dwellers approached. The thick tangle of vines, clinging parasitically to the branches, screened my movements. Never had I seen vegetation so rank.

As I swung, I began to feel an odd sense of security, and an odd companionship with this other ego that guided me so carefully. I knew we would be friends, that this was his domain, and that he would take care of me.

When all was quiet again, I realized that I was hungry. It was my new self that told me this. It also told me I could find berries and roots if I descended, and maybe, somewhere, a grove of coconuts or plantains. I cautiously made my way downward, availing myself of the intertwining branches of a score of trees or more before I reached the ground, fully three hundred feet below.

Nearing the earth floor, I began search for a tree whose branches were not more than six or seven feet from the ground. It was some time before I found one, but I did not care to trust myself on the earth until then. A well-defined sense of unknown terrors peopling the huge fronds of ferns, cane brake, and giant lycopods restrained me from too precipitate descent. I watched the top of the undergrowth carefully, and by and by saw a strange catlike

animal stalk something below. It was as big as a tiger, and in its upper jaw, pointing down, were two powerful tusks, like those of a walrus. Years afterward I learned it was *Felis Machaerodus*, the tiger of the Tertiary.

In a wild panic, I scrambled higher in the tree. The noise I made must have startled the cat's prey, for it darted away in the bush. The beast leaped, but its paws closed on grass. It favored me with a vengeful, hungry stare, but I fled wildly upward. It was some time before even my gnawing hunger nerved me to a second descent, in which I was careful to give wide berth to the area where I had seen the tiger.

When I finally thought the coast clear and dropped to the earth, the instant my foot touched ground, my true self came to the surface and demanded mastery. I put my foot forward confidently to run to a near-by watercourse. Only a few steps, and I stumbled. My legs were cramped and bound, my gait slow and awkward. Free locomotion was impossible. In falling, my knees crooked. As my palms touched the earth, I felt an overpowering inclination to proceed that way. To run on all fours appeared to be the most comfortable method. It was an effort to walk erect.

I found berries and some succulent stalks of a plant like our modern celery. There was also a spring, some distance from the grove. With my true self in complete possession of this new body, I carelessly left the security of the trees and ventured into the reeds and grasses. I was drinking, lying flat, with my lips touching the water, when my faithful guardian, that other self, warned me. I heard a faint rustle and looked up, startled. Not fifteen feet away a huge lizardlike creature had risen from the mud. It was not a crocodile, for it had much longer limbs.

I ran for the trees. Five slow, waddling steps, and the breath of the beast

warmed my back. The new self surged to supremacy in the moment of terror. I dropped to all fours and with great leaps kept just ahead. The lowest limb of the nearest tree was fully ten feet above me, but with a supreme, despairing effort I jumped and caught it. Below was the beast. But the touch of my strong, clinging fingers on the limb gave a delicious sense of safety, and I swung upward with scarcely any effort. Stopping on a safe limb, I scolded the brute below. It watched me for a time, with a twinkling malice in its eyes that I could well understand, and that gave me, chattering above, the supremest glee.

All at once I found myself not alone. For the tree was full of other apeman creatures like me, yawping, screeching, growling, and snarling at the beast, taunting it, reviling it, exasperating it with every trick of voice and manner they knew. Finally in futile wrath, with a vain attempt at maintaining dignity, it walked away.

Then they turned on me. The odd feature was that I understood them. This discordant jargon of sound was fully intelligible to my new self. I knew who I was, Aka, the sentinel. The tribe raged because I had cried the alarm and then played a hide-and-seek game. They snarled at me and spit, Mog, with the long nose, and Ai-yai, the swift one; Ku-ku and Gur, the hags; Kush, the black-haired one, and the younger apes, Go, Hiki, Roo, and Sur. In all that crowd there was only one who said nothing, Baba, the pretty one.

Weird, guttural sounds they uttered, inarticulate cursing, voicing the primitive brute passion of anger. I gave back snarl for snarl, and curse for curse, glorying that they kept away from me, for I knew they were afraid.

But by and by another apeman came, carefully picking his way through the trees, and swinging slowly and awk-

wardly. His jumps were shorter than mine, and I saw that he was not at home among the branches.

I knew him at once, Gru, our chief. Straight toward me he came, while the others hushed and moved out of his course. A chill of fear swept through me at the sight of him, looming monstrous among us lesser apemen, his enormous chest expanding rhythmically, his heavily muscled arms nearly twice the size of mine, and his fingers reaching below his knees. His forehead was nearly flat, but his chin jutted out in a heavy ridge of bone, much farther than mine or any of the others. I had plenty of time to escape, but something told me it would be useless. My snarls died to a faint whine as I cowered.

His huge hand—no need to double it into a fist—swung out and gave me a violent cuff. In a flash, I was all brute that moment; I tried to bury my teeth in his forearm. I snapped air, and at the same instant suffered a second cruel blow, that sent me crashing to the ground. I wildly threw out my hands, with the instinctive motion of that first moment of my awakening into this life, and caught a branch to stop my fall. With a fierce wrath burning in my heart, that numbed every human emotion, but thoroughly cowed and subdued, I remained there.

Gru signaled a retreat. At the sound of his hoarse, discordant voice, I raged with a hate I could scarce stifle. Although I obeyed the order, I bided my time.

Physically, I knew, I was no match for him, but at that moment I began plotting to kill him. The thought gave me an intense, savage joy I cannot describe—so keen and so thrilling was the anticipation of my teeth in his throat. In a human state I have never experienced such ecstatic joy. Civilization dulls our sense of pleasure.

Covertly I watched Gru. I observed that his predominance was purely a

physical one. He was not so swift in the trees, nor were his wits so keen as the others, for he blundered often into great branchless gaps where farther progress was impossible on the route he picked. His covering of hair was much coarser and heavier than ours. Some I noticed, particularly the females, were only lightly covered except about the head. Gru's head was set between his shoulders on a thick, short neck, like a gorilla's. He also had another gorilla characteristic, slight ridges on the frontal arches above the eyebrows. His arboreal habits, however, caused me to doubt that he should be classified a gorilla. He was either an atavism or a stranger to this tribe, I concluded; one nearer related to the monkey than to man, while the other apemen were nearer human.

Baba remained close to Gru, and was always watched with his jealous eye. She was fairer than any of her sisters. She was his mate, and I hated him for that.

The first emotions of hatred and revengefulness were activities of my apeman mind. The first plotting for revenge was also in my apeman mind. But it was too simply constructed to reason closely. Without realizing it, my human intelligence came to its aid and formed conclusions. The apeman eyes saw, and the human mind interpreted.

While the human mind reflected on the sensations transmitted to it through the apeman organs of sight, hearing, touch, and smell, the apeman mind was quietly active in looking after the necessities of existence. Both thought functions were synchronous; one conscious, the other subconscious, and neither interfering with the other. But in moments of stress, the human mind wholly retired, until the tension relaxed, when it quickly came to the fore again.

My human intelligence also had a perfect knowledge and memory of my apeman mind's thought processes. But the

apeman mind had no memory of its own processes, except those immediately antecedent, and none whatever of the human mind's processes. It had only an instinctive recollection of friends and foes, what was good to eat and what not. The powers of reflection and apperception that enable a human to abstract were entirely lacking.

After making these discoveries, I had a vision. If I, by a tremendous self-control, could subdue the beast passions which my present body was subject to, if I could reduce to a minimum those stresses and strains of sudden peril or acute hunger or thirst which repressed the human, if I could make this apeman intelligence a mere servant intelligence to minister to my physical wants, to what heights might I not rise in this apeman world? What good could I not accomplish? I knew their language, and was one of them. How many centuries might I not advance civilization by humanizing this tribe?

But had they souls? Could they reason? If they themselves could not reason, they at least were near the day when those of their kind could. A few generations, perhaps. This tribal grouping under a single leader indicated a social relation existing between these creatures which must necessarily imply an advance above the monkey stage of evolution. Could I not anticipate that day with them?

The vision staggered me. I forgot that an apeman lust for revenge and slaughter had possessed me a few moments before. I forgot that strange dominance of my new self in moments of stress. I forgot my shambling gait, and the tendency to walk on all fours. I was filled with the dream of being a Moses to the apemen, little realizing that the story of ages of gradual ascent from savagery was written on the rocks and in the bone breccias and *kjokken modden* of Europe and America.

Gru growled. My normal conscious-

ness instantly was submerged under the fear of another beating. I had been lagging, but mended my pace with frantic eagerness to avoid a blow. My apeman self, which only a little while before performed only the necessary mechanical functions of locomotion, was now dominant again, shamming obedience, while it lusted to kill.

For some time we had been gradually ascending, and were now possibly a hundred feet above the ground. I caught a glimpse of sunlight ahead, and in a moment we broke into a glade. There, clustered about the central trunk of a great tree, centuries old, was the village of the apemen. A rude platform, fashioned of canes and branches, cunningly bound by vines to the parent trunk, formed the foundation for a cluster of eight or ten small huts.

The term "huts" is almost too dignified, for they were only rough shelters of rushes and reeds on a tripod of sturdy canes, that served to protect in a measure from the violence of torrential rains to which these regions were subject. In these huts our small company of about twenty-five herded. One of them was my home.

Home? Could one of these huts, where I must lie huddled with three or four other brutes, be home to me? Again the human to the fore. Rather than the security of such a society I would roost in the treetops and take my chances with the animal life that might infest them.

The sun was sinking. But the twilight crept on gradually, not instantaneously, as in the equatorial belt. This must be the temperate zone. But which one? And where? There were no maps; there was no one to give information. The contour of the continents must be vastly different from that of the historical period. Judging from the vegetation, I must be existing before the glacial epoch.

As the darkness gathered, the other

apemen crept into the huts. From below us the night noises of the forest began to rise. Myriad were they—the buzzing of insects, the tweet and twitter of small feathered folk, the shriller cries of larger birds, the hoarse snarls of carnivora. I had remained outside at first, but when I heard the warning chirps of the birds, and the quavering call of a creature that I instinctively knew was of tigerish breed, I shivered in fear. Manhood reverted before the pithecid ape, and I skulked with my fellows, Go, Hiki, and Roo. Gru growled in answer to the call of some cougar, and we felt security in his presence. At the same time morning light would bring back the old murder lust.

I could not sleep. The other apemen soon fell into a restive slumber, alert at every slight noise near the camp. But as I gradually accustomed myself to the night and relaxed my muscles, my human ego marshaled the experiences of that wonderful day, one by one, and reviewed them. I puzzled over the odd flitting from one consciousness to the other; that I was now human, now apeman; now a reasoning creature with moral instincts, now beast with only a measure of cunning and petty intelligence to lift me above other animals.

When questions involving my corporal existence were before me, I was apeman. In moments of isolation from my fellows, when they made no demands upon my intelligence, and events made no demands upon it, I was human. But in this life, constant vigilance was the price of existence, and to be one of the tribe my only chance for life. I did not want to die. Here Scott could find my soul again and resurrect it.

I sent a fleeting thought back to my human body, lying stiff and stark, I pictured it, in the hut on the Jutahy. But what if some one borrowed it, the way I did this apeman's. The very thought frightened me, and I dismissed it quickly.

It was passing strange, this flitting from one consciousness to the other. Would the two souls eventually merge? Already there was a recognizable understanding between them, each performing the functions for which it was best fitted. My new ego was developing a power for reasoning that I knew it did not possess in the morning. It must derive this power from my true self. Like an electric current sparking from a wire of higher potential to one of lower potential, my more highly organized human soul fed thought power to the apeman soul.

Presuming that the two became one, what would be the result? Would I elevate the apeman to human? Or would the apeman debase the human? Would the taint of this experience sear my soul, brutalize me once I returned to take my own place among humanity? Question upon question dinned in my brain. Only the future could answer.

To retain the soul of a human in the flesh of a beast, I must live like a human. Would the other apemen tolerate it? They were insatiably curious. But I thought they would—except Gru. Him I instinctively felt to be my enemy. I must kill him, or he would kill me. He would surely destroy my human soul, and probably this corporal body also. Life was never dearer than just at that moment, when it seemed most worthless. I would match my human wits against his beast cunning and strength. I was swifter in the trees than he, and could bide my time.

When dawn came, I went to the spring. I saw Gru watch me as I left, but he made no attempt to stop me. Probably I was in the habit of taking these excursions. Mog, Kush, and Ku-ku, the older apemen, looked at me queerly, as if they distrusted me. They must have sensed a difference in me, must have intuitively recognized that I was not what I had been. The human was beginning to display itself, I sur-

mised. After I left, I noticed Hiki, Go, and Sur following.

I bathed with relish. I had no soap, and was coated with dirt and full of vermin, but keeping a wary eye on the patch of rushes, danced about in the pool in glee and poured water over my body. Hiki, Go, and Sur remained in the trees, staring with a lively curiosity. After a half hour's bath, I looked about until I found a firm, leathery leaf, of considerable size. With the aid of some long grasses as threads, I converted it into a tolerable shirt. My fingers were clumsy, unbelievably clumsy and awkward, and at times I almost despaired, but I persevered and finally had my garment complete and tied about my waist.

I had taken a bath.

I was wearing clothes again.

Simple things. But they made a wonderful change in me. The human was no longer ashamed. It felt invigorated, too, by the plunge in the cool waters of the spring. I felt a man. The inclination of yesterday to walk on all fours was gone. My gait was improved and I walked with more freedom. The muscles of my limbs appeared less bound. I squared my shoulders and added height and dignity. The pool was a mirror, crystal clear, and I strutted before it, actually proud of my improved carriage and bearing.

This feeling of elevation was by no means confined to my human self. It seeped through to the apeman ego, which began dimly to understand these new standards. The cold plunge had been a pleasant experience; ergo, it must be good, so it reasoned. The abstract concept of cleanliness as a virtue was still far beyond it. The concrete pleasure was all it could realize. But it was a beginning.

This relapse into my new ego occurred while I was hunting breakfast. Oddly, I had not thought of hunger while bathing or tailoring. But when I saw Hiki munching plantains, my nor-

mal self, still reflecting on the maxim, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," was swamped before a physical desire to have some plantains, too, and at once I became apeman again.

Alone, fed, and in no danger, I was human. With my fellows, or hungry, or in danger, I was apeman. Under such circumstances, which would control, the apeman or the human? Already the line of cleavage was less distinct.

Go, Hiki, and Sur, when I joined them, kept aloof from me with what I fancied was a new respect. After we had chattered together, and hunted roots and berries for a time, one of them finally approached me timidly and began examining my leaf shirt. With sudden disgust at their nakedness, I showed them how it was fashioned. They followed me eagerly.

We made four shirts, one for each of them, or rather, I made them, for my manual skill, through practice, was greater than theirs. They wore them timidly; to copy after me and not because of a sense of shame, I afterward realized.

I was watching the clouds in a reverie when the human soul emerged from the darkness and possessed me again. Suddenly came a thought that bore it aloft on pinions of hope. I trembled at the discovery I had made, and scarcely dared believe.

When I experienced disgust at the nakedness of Go, Hiki, and Sur, and made them shirts, I was all apeman. This new self had experienced shame. It had commanded my hands to conceal that shame, and they did it.

It could mean only one thing. A progressive impulse, a virtue, had been born in this dark, savage, apeman mind of mine. No direct outside suggestion had put it there. Carefully I recollected my thoughts, and was certain that there had been no prompting from my human self. It had been entirely dormant.

To be ashamed—what a happiness! To know a wrong—what a joy! A virtue was born on the earth. I was not an apeman. I was human. I could think. I knew evil. O divine sense of knowing good and knowing ill!

Go, Hiki, and Sur kept away from me again and stared. Let them stare. They are brutes, I am human. In both body and soul, I am human. I am born again. I am the prophet, the leader, the Moses of the Tertiary. These creatures already apprehend my superior intelligence.

Go screeched a shrill warning. Instantaneously the apeman soul controlled. I scrambled wildly up the nearest tree. My hand just reached the nearest branch when a dreadful something hurled itself against the trunk. Its cruel claws sank into the muscles of my left leg, almost to the knee. But for the wonderful strength in my fingers, I must have been torn to the ground. But I pulled myself up, while the beast fell. I scrambled ten or twelve feet higher before I dared look down. There was the jungle cat, *Felis Machaerodus*, licking a bloody paw.

Moaning with pain, for I was all beast, I examined the wound. The tough hide was torn to shreds, and the muscles badly lacerated. The other apes had fled.

The leg rapidly stiffened, and I lost much blood. My human soul entirely deserted me. It was not even in the background to offer friendly suggestions. As a consequence I left the wound untouched, and it bled freely. I was very weak when I finally reached the village. Luckily Gru was gone.

Whimpering and whining over the hurt, I crept into one of the huts. The wound gave me much pain. The other apes, particularly the women, gathered inquisitively, gibbering and chattering, but helpless. Their curiosity finally sated, they left me.

All but one—Gru's mate, Baba. With

big eyes beaming sympathetically, she watched me silently.

My human intelligence finally broke through the cloud again faintly, and suggested that I make a tourniquet of some sort to stop the blood flow. But by this time I was helpless and could hardly move, let alone essaying a trip through the treetops. Despairing, I was ready to give up hope when Baba's big eyes gave me an inspiration. Simulating twisting a cord about my leg, I tried to tell her what I wanted. At first she failed to understand. Our apeman language was pitifully inadequate for such situations as these. But finally a flicker of comprehension came into her eyes. In a few moments she returned with some pliant vine growth, and broke into an excited and happy chatter as I tightened it about my leg.

By this time a raging thirst parched my tongue. To reach water was impossible. I must suffer in agony. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. What tortures would the succeeding hours bring?

Baba stood about helplessly. There were no utensils. I chanced to see a big marine shell, probably picked up on some distant seashore, and pointed to it. "Ood, ood," I begged, the appeal for water. Baba understood and hurried away.

Oh, the horrors of thirst! Forty minutes passed, and she was not back. Something must have delayed her, or she had forgotten me. The tiger was keeping her from the spring. Worse, he had killed her. That fear increased the agony.

I was feverish now, and my dry lips cracked and split from lack of moisture. My tongue became swollen. I had no human patience and resignation to summon in this hour of trial, no stoicism, but tossed about in intense suffering.

Hour after hour, it seemed, I tossed there, although I know it was only minutes. Finally an apeman crawled

in, bearing the precious shell. It was only half full of water, muddy at that, but it was the purest, most refreshing draft I ever drank. I slept after that, and, when I awoke, the fever was gone. The wound already showed signs of healing.

I was surprised at the stillness in the camp. Going outside, I found the tribe gone. Had they deserted me? I did not care; I could provide for myself.

For a week, while the wound gradually healed, I rested. I found another spring, directly under the protecting boughs of a tree, into which I could leap at the first sign of danger. I bathed there daily, and breakfasted, dined, and supped on the succulent fruits and fresh berries of the woods. I grew to know and love the surrounding country, with its mysteries and dangers, its giant flora, and its fierce fauna.

It was a beautiful country. The modern world has nothing to equal it, not even the dense silvas of the Amazon. Trees now long extinct lifted magnificent crowns of foliage over dank dells where huge tree ferns, megaphyton magnificum, and scores of others, struggled for mastery with dense thickets of calamites, tall, cylindrical branchless stems, with whorls of branchlets bearing needlelike leaves and spreading in stools from the base. Sometimes there were forests of Sagillaria, to remind us that the carboniferous era was not yet displaced; the tall, pillarlike trunks rising like Corinthian columns. On the higher ground were somber taxine pines, mingled with familiar deciduous trees, then just coming into their own.

One thing I missed. That was meat. Whenever I saw a bird roosting in a treetop, or saw one of the smaller creatures scurrying among the grasses below, I had a fierce, saving longing to kill it. My apeman self yearned to sink teeth in the raw flesh and taste blood. But though the longing was at

times almost unconquerable, my human soul retained its grip. As the days passed, I could feel new impulses stir in the brute soul. Memory became stronger. Reasoning power began to develop. The human was largely ascendant and distinctly triumphing.

CHAPTER III.

When a week had passed, I began to feel a strange restlessness. I could not define it or analyze it. I moaned around the camp, and when need for food called me away, I hurried back as soon as I could to become wretched again.

At first I could not understand this feeling. But one morning, the seventh day after the tribe left me, I realized what it was. I was lonely. With a great and overwhelming longing I yearned for the companionship of my fellows. Incredible as it may appear, I found the companionship of apemen preferable to a solitary existence.

Coming home from the spring one day, I heard the old chatter in the camp above. It was more than chatter; it was a wild, savage, bestial paean of victory, of success in the chase. It was the call to meat.

Instantly the human soul, ascendant almost entirely during the past week, was submerged. With a fierce answering cry of welcome I swept upward and burst into the tree village. There was meat there, meat for the women and children, meat for the killers. Gru was parceling it out. Avidly I swept forward and snatched at a piece. Gru jerked it away before my fingers closed on it, and struck me heavily. Mad with rage, I sprang at him. His long arms met me, and his fingers closed cruelly on my throat. Choking and shaking me, he threw me aside. I lay there, cowed and gasping, quaking with helpless fury. Though they hated Gru as much as I, Mog and Kush, Ai-yai and

Sur, leered and chuckled at my misery, gorging meat while I hungered.

The smell of blood and flesh food filled the camp, but I was the only one denied, the pariah, sitting outside the circle like a leper beyond the city wall. I knew the reason, I was a grown male but not one of the killers. Meat was only for those who came back from the chase with food for their mates and offspring.

How I hated! All the time Gru watched me, always between me and the meat, and always facing me. He divined the thoughts in my mind, and grimly waited for the test of strength in which it was his life or mine. He sensed the change in me and realized I was a menace to his chieftainship. He knew that some time we must meet, fang to fang, his strength against my cunning. I believe he feared my superior intelligence, and wanted to provoke the fight now, when I was at a disadvantage. What impulse induced him to let me go when he had his fingers on my throat, I do not know. Perhaps he enjoyed my helpless writhings in the savage, insatiable rage that possessed me.

Though the others jeered, I did not notice them. They were the rabble, the hoi polloi, who cheered for the topmost. It was he to-day, and I to-morrow—if I won.

As I gradually cooled while the gluttons, gorged to repletion, sank into sodden slumber, I missed some one from the camp. I scanned the faces vaguely, wondering who it was. Then I remembered; it was Baba, Gru's mate.

At once I was stirred to action. I took the census again. She was not there. Had an accident befallen her? Had she perished on the trip, a victim of the tiger or some other jungle beast? In my present disgrace, I could not ask the other apemen.

Since she roughly nursed me, I felt

a strange, savage regard for her. It was as if she was mine to protect and care for, not Gru's. When alone, I had thought of her and wondered why she sent some one else with the water. When I lay wounded, I did not realize it at the time, but that savage regard was the first primitive impulse of the emotion idealized in man as love. Like a blind child, lost in a great city, the divine passion groped about in my gross, carnal heart.

Gru had taken her from the camp; he was responsible for her. If she had fallen a victim in the chase, the fault was his. He should not have exposed her to danger. Thus I reasoned.

But Baba was not forward. A timid creature, she clung to the trees where she had a chance to escape. Had Gru in one of his rages— The very thought reawoke me to fury. Half beside myself, I climbed into the higher branches.

I had not gone far when I heard a rustle, and turned quickly enough to catch sight of a slight brown form disappearing into the foliage. It was Baba.

In quick pursuit I followed, but she was the swifter, and led me a merry chase, doubling back and forth until I was out of breath, keeping all the time just out of reach, and when I lost her, revealing her recess to me by a chuckling sort of noise that was suspiciously like laughter. None of the other apemen produced a note like it.

Finally I caught her. It was on a big, gnarled branch, close to the parent trunk, where there was room and to spare for two of the apeman race to cling side by side. The coquette waited there just a second too long, just long enough to be caught. As my arm swung around her waist, she strained from me, then yielded.

Not until then did I observe that she wore clothing like myself.

The discovery momentarily awoke my

dormant human consciousness. In a flash I realized that the impulse to progress that was in me since this human soul tenanted me was in her, too. If this were true, was it not possible that the same impulse had existed in me before my human soul began dwelling in this body? Could this explain her evident interest in me?

Of all the apeman creatures, Baba and I were the only ones to wear dress. Go, Hiki, and Sur long ago had discarded their shirts. Familiarity with them had bred contempt. Curiosity was sated, and there was no sense of shame. But with Baba it was different. Without ever seeing me make a garment, she had observed mine and made one like it. Pascal discovering the principles of geometry before reading Euclid, Morse inventing the telegraph, were no more original geniuses.

It was because she knew shame that she did not come back with the water herself. That failure to return had puzzled me. Now I knew.

Then like a resurging wave came the thought of her gorillalike mate. The flicker of the human, that had enabled me to make these reflections, perished before brute hate. With its death came a tremendous physical attraction for this shy wild creature, and desire to keep her from the brute that owned her.

How long we chattered there, courting in the greenwood, the Corydon and Amaryllis of the Tertiary, I do not know.

A gasp, and she cowered against me. Within a foot of my face, agitated by every beast and primitive man passion, looming gigantic, blood-mad, was the face of the gorilla, Gru. Slathers of sputum covered his dripping jaws; his eyes bulged horribly, and were lit by a demoniac glare of revenge lust and murder, and his huge yellow fangs were bared. Numb with terror, I clung motionless while his powerful arms

whirled around me and he pressed me to his breast.

My breath was forced out in an explosive gasp. Utterly helpless in that grip, I could feel my ribs strain and bend. His teeth closed in my throat and bit savagely into the tough skin. My brain reeled dizzily. I was suffocating. But just as endurance was about to give way, and my ribs appeared to crumble under the terrific pressure, he gave a savage howl of pain and swung his arms aside. I caught a fleeting glimpse of Baba forcing her long nails into his eyes as I dropped to a lower limb. In a flash she was with me.

With a snarl of rage, Gru followed. I was too weak to leap, and the limbs danced and doubled before me, but his hoarse growl and the vivid recollection of the awful moment in his arms nerved me to my best speed. On and on we went; a mile, two miles, he ever behind, a terrible Nemesis. Hearts near to bursting, throats burning, on the point of collapse we raced, only yards ahead. We reached the end of the forest. Three hundred yards away was another wood, that led up a distant slope. Between was cane brake and grasses, bordering a small stream. In that tangle we knew lurked the jungle cat and other carnivora, huge lizards of the dinosaur type and poisonous reptiles, but without hesitation we dropped to the ground and ran for the distant grove. Without hesitation, Gru followed.

In the trees, we had gained slightly. But here on the ground he was the faster. We leaped into the stream. Baba hesitated just an instant at a brink, nearly a fatal instant, for Gru gained several steps. I pulled her across, just ahead of him. I seemed to feel his fingers touching my back as we jumped.

Plunging into a thicket of low tree ferns, we dashed into the midst of a family of bears. The she-bear was seated on its haunches, and at the sight

of us, charged. Only a quick leap saved us. But Gru, intent on his pursuit, did not try to avoid her. She slashed at him with her claws, but his powerful right hand caught the arm and wrenched it back as he eluded her. It gave us a few yards' lead, enough to reach the trees and scramble to the first tier of branches. It was not long before we were out of sight, fleeing silently, dodging here and there, until we finally lost him.

The sun was setting, but the fear of the brute behind us was greater than our fear of unknown perils before. Keeping as high in the trees as possible, where no climbing beasts could find us, we burrowed into a dense crown of leafery to find the heart of the forest. A full moon helped us, and when it finally set, we found a secure perch where we thought ourselves safe.

The next morning we ventured charily about until we found a spring and fruit. Now that we were alone together, I detected a slight but unmistakable shyness in Baba. It was another human attribute that pleased.

That Gru would search until he found us, I was certain. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was the law of the primitive apeman. I must prepare to meet him on more equal terms. I must meet his brute strength with something to offset it.

What one thing must I do to protect us? I had known, but now I did not know. My apeman soul groped through the dusk of stupidity for it. The feeble intellect, unable to perceive more than the concrete thing before it, unable to recall any fact but the most vivid experiences, was fogged in by the narrow periphery of the visible world. It revolved about one bit of knowledge, stubbornly persisting, that somewhere there was a friend who always knew and suggested the right thing; some silent voice whose counsel was always wise and secure.

While the apeman vainly strove to pierce the dense pall, the human, what it craved for, was asleep. The human element was as distant as if it had gone back to the body from which it came, leaving the savage soul with only a faint remembrance of its former presence, dim as a wan moon shining through fleece clouds.

Baba, sensing my trouble, beamed sympathetically, but was no inspiration. My apeman temper was short. Irritated at my inability to grasp this unknown something, I climbed to the tree-tops, leaving her behind. The vision of wave upon wave of fresh, green foliage, rolling in the stiff morning breeze that swept up the slope to the mountain chain far beyond, had no sense of beauty for me. But while I rested there quietly, my apeman soul gradually composed. I closed my eyes, swinging languorously in the cradle of the Tertiary. Finally I opened them again—and saw nature's beauty. The human soul had reawakened.

For a moment I thrilled with joy. Then came the horrifying realization that I had been unable to recall the human at will as before. It was slipping away. Yet during the past week it had almost exclusively controlled, and I was only rarely brute.

I strove to reason calmly, lest excess of fear should cause me to lose this precious gift again. When I was alone, and could perceive and reflect without distraction, I was human. When I was with others, and must conform with their lives, I was apeman as they. With the smell of raw flesh I had become brute. Extremity of terror as we fled with Gru at our heels had nearly destroyed the human. Society with my fellows and the stress and strain of this life were inevitably brutalizing me.

Gone was the dream of being the Moses of the age. Gone was the longing for society. I must live alone, and take my chances of existence in this

wild life without outside aid. Else brutefaction.

I would be lonely sometimes; hungry for companionship. Solitude was hideous. I would be afraid sometimes. Rather these than be brute.

But there was Baba. What should I do with her? She could not go back to Gru. She could not be left alone. I had no right to condemn her to my hermit existence.

I had almost mated with her. Drunk with the smell of blood and raw flesh, I had thought this thing. I, human, and she, half beast; lower in savagery than the Hottentot.

What a hell I was dropping into!

Looking into that deep blue sky, sublimely peaceful, and the thousands of rhythmically waving treetops chanting their morning prayer, drinking in all of the beauty of that wonderful morning, I began to perceive the slough I had barely escaped.

A mental nausea, a disgust of self and life, an intolerable loathing for the half of me, or more than half that craved such an existence, overwhelmed me. Vainly I searched for an outlet. Vainly I sobbed and shook, begged, prayed. There was only one way out—Scott. That inexorable fact, branded home, coming as a sequence to all the horrors and loathing, aroused an elemental fury in which I cursed him and damned him to torments a thousand times more terrible than mine—if there could be such a hell.

Only when I was exhausted came the thought of the bitter futility of raving. There was suicide. I believe I would have risked it—a plunge down, and oblivion—come Nirvana, Hell; come what may; it could not be worse—when I heard a chuckle.

It was Baba. Just below me, I saw her smiling up mischievously, like a puppy frantic at finding its master. She chuckled again, the same half-human laughter I had heard before.

I saw only her coarse features, her retreating brow and protruding jaw, the bristly hair that covered her body, the fanglike teeth, yellow and coated. My human soul revolted. As she leaped upward with agility, I kicked at her.

A look of astonishment and hurt, a pain not physical but verily distress of the soul, swept her face. She stopped a moment, then hesitant, as if half believing the evidence of her senses, she came nearer. So infinitely pathetic was that movement that I half relented for a moment. Then I saw her ugliness again, frowned, and backed away. She placed a hand on me, but I shoved it aside roughly, with loathing.

Like a woman, cut to the quick, Baba sprang down. A flurry in the leaves, and she was gone. I waited, but she did not come back.

Perhaps I was not treating her fairly. I should guide her back to her people, I reflected. I had brought her here, not my human self, but still I, and I must take her back. Alone in the woods, she would surely perish.

Descending in search, I finally found her huddled in the crotch of a branch. Her face was buried in her arms, that were folded over her chest. She did not hear me, and I touched her shoulder.

The unutterable woe that spoke mutely from her face as she lifted it still reproaches me. For if ever the primitive apeman soul that dwelt in her body ascended into the human in its emotions it did that moment. Her face was transfigured. Every trace of coarseness was gone. The fangs were there, and the bristly hair, and the retreating skull, but one did not notice these. It was the indefinable something expressive of deepest loss, an inde-

scribable pathos that humanized her and made her kin.

Nothing was said. A great tear formed in one of her glistening eyes and rolled down. At the sight the calm, reasoning human element in me that philosophized and abstracted and made long plans for a distant future was inundated by a flood of emotion that welled from the depths of my apeman soul and made me companion to her once more. In a flash I was beside her, and my arms around her, tuning my harsh, guttural voice to a cooing note.

Suddenly she pulled away, and her eyes searched my eyes with an intensity of gaze that brooked no denial, that wanted to know the truth.

I have lied to a good many women, those polite lies which social usage demands; told women foolish things I did not mean but that they liked to hear, flirted and fibbed, and done all the other drawing-room tricks, and never blinked an eyelid or thought a minute the worse of myself. But I could not lie to Baba. Those big, appealing eyes asked woman's one essential question, and asked it as a woman asks. Differences of time and race were swept away.

Half of me was apeman, and that half would mate with her. She saw that, I guess. The other half of me was human, and that half could never be hers. I guess she saw that, too. A woman of the underworld, loved by and madly loving a clean, vigorous boy, mind and body yet untainted, with every instinct for health and right living, knows the inevitable great renunciation.

For Baba turned sadly away, and leaped from me. I did not follow.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The second and concluding part of this novel will appear in the first October POPULAR, on sale September 7th.

The Bromides

By Holworthy Hall

Author of "Pepper," "The Terrible Freshman," Etc.

Seeing New York with Pepper McHenry and his friend Sewall from Harvard. Hitting the high spots with a look of innocence and a huge roll of Confederate bills

ANYTHING else, sir?" asked the bell boy, snickering in his sleeve.

McHenry and Sewall, who were already exhaling clean linen from their suit cases, straightened with one accord and glared at him.

"Why, yes, there's something else," said McHenry pointedly. "You beat it downstairs and bring up some ice water and some stationery and a dollar's worth of change and a couple of morning papers, and then if you don't act *too* humorous, maybe you'll get what's coming to you."

The chastened youth departed hastily, and McHenry, with a puzzled sigh, returned to his suit case.

"Gee!" he complained. "I don't know what's the matter with me, but every time I get into a hotel the whole gang, from the room clerk down to the shoeshine expert, tries to get funny! How long before you'll be ready for breakfast?"

"If you washed that soot off your nose," criticized Sewall, selecting a fresh tie to replace the one he had worn all the way from the Grand Central Terminal to the Hotel Gigantic, "perhaps they wouldn't see so much to laugh at."

McHenry glanced at the mirror, said "Holy mackerel!" and dived for the bathroom. By the time he had re-

moved the cinders from his countenance the bell boy was back again with his consignment of merchandise, and accepted Pepper's quarter with no further display of merriment.

"But why in thunder," asked Sewall, as they waited for the elevator, "did you make that poor mutt go all the way downstairs for that junk? We had plenty of change, and we'd get newspapers in the office, and we didn't need ice water or stationery—"

"Because," explained McHenry, lowering his voice out of deference to the feelings of the elevator man, "everybody in New York is out to take our money from us, Ted, and the only way to get even is to make 'em work for it."

Even after they had ordered breakfast—and the extent of their appetites staggered an experienced waiter—Sewall continued to ponder this last statement.

"You know, Pep," he said, "I'm beginning to lose my nerve. This party's going to cost us too blamed much!"

"Of course it is! What's the fun of coming to New York on a gebee unless it costs too much?"

"Well, we could have stayed at a cheaper joint, and saved a lot of these fool tips, and had more money to spend on the party—"

"You talk like a farmer," stated Mc-

Henry, boldly attacking his grapefruit. "Don't you know by this time that you never have enough to spend on the party, no matter how much of a tight-wad you are on the incidentals? Besides, look at the company we're in!"

"I think he was out too late last night," retorted Sewall, inclining his head toward the only other occupant of the café. "And anyway, I'm not stuck on paying real money to watch anybody else eat."

"Spend all you want," said Pepper generously, as he produced the huge roll of Confederate bills he had purchased at one of the irresistible novelty shops on Forty-second Street. "I've got four thousand—let's paint the town!"

"Shut up, Pep! That guy heard you! He'll think we're horrible four-flushers!"

"Nonsense!" mumbled McHenry through the interstices of a hot muffin.

"But that's just what I'm talking about," went on Sewall, lowering his voice as he saw that the man at the near-by table was staring fixedly at them. "We've only got fifty dollars to see New York with, and yet you had to come over here on a crack night train to get an early start, and then you make us put up at a kennel like this, where we've got to keep tipping all the time, and then you go and throw away three perfectly good dollars on a wad of Civil War currency! Why, for three dollars we could take a taxicab halfway to Halifax"—he didn't say Halifax—"and back!"

"Oh, but this was too good to miss!" maintained Pepper, sliding the roll into his trousers pocket. "We can have a whale of a time scattering that around Cambridge— I've got it all doped out. Scared freshman comes in for a subscription to the track team—hand him a five hundred—"

"Oh, you can't fool anybody with that stuff!"

"You bet I can! People aren't as

smart as you think they are. And then on the general proposition— Well, it's the first time I've been in New York for two years, and I don't care if they charge me a nickel a breath, I'll pant all I want to!"

"Shut up, Pep! That guy—"

"You're too blamed conceited, old top! He wasn't listening. There! He's going out!" McHenry poured his third cup of coffee. "Besides," he added, "if he thought it was real money he may take us for a couple of steel magnates out on a joy ride, and tell the reporters, and then the bell hops won't laugh if we're *all* cinders!"

"Well, you talk too loud, Pep! I don't think it's a good plan to sing out anything about money in a place like this, and you yelled it out just as if you meant it."

"If you're going to deliver a lecture," said McHenry, rising, "you'd better hire a hall. And let me tell you something—you don't want to forget that your uncle J. P. M.—get the initials, do you? —was born in Chicago—and out there we call this flea-bitten little burg a suburb of Buffalo. Why, my dad would have the willies if he thought anybody tried to tell *me* how to behave on Forty-second Street!"

They strolled out to the lobby and took possession of two comfortable chairs.

"Well—life's blamed short, and we're only here for a little while," said Sewall. "If you're so keen to get started, Pep, let's go out and spend something."

"Oh, stick around! I'm not going to cough up seven dollars a day for a room in this menagerie and then not use the scenery. What could we do now, anyway?"

"We might take a walk—"

"Walk nothing! The only way I walk on this trip is in a taxi!"

"Well, come on over and look at the dames on Fifth Avenue—"

"Dames nothing! It's too early. Let's get some cigars."

"You get 'em."

"Yell for a waiter," said McHenry lazily, but noting that his friend was growing irritated, he got up, and set about the accumulation of enough tobacco to bridge the gap between breakfast and activity.

He was cynically inspecting the contents of the humidor when he observed that beside him stood the gentleman who had taken breakfast at the near-by table. This gentleman was attired somewhat more youthfully than you would have expected one of his age to dress, and he also wore a smile which was apparently a permanent part of his wardrobe. He regarded McHenry genially, and volunteered the information that it was a fine day.

"Good enough for New York," said Pepper, bringing out the roll of Confederate money, discovering the mistake, and hurriedly substituting a dollar bill of more negotiable tenor. The stranger opened his eyes, laughed easily, and suggested that the young man must come from the West.

"Chicago," said Pepper shortly.

"In-deed! Business there?"

"Oh, no—I don't work!" He lighted one of the cigars and stowed the other away for Sewall.

"You're fortunate, sir!"

"If you call it fortunate to have to come to this bush town for a party," admitted McHenry. "Still—" Again the florid gentleman laughed easily.

"I'm not very familiar with New York myself," he alleged. "I'm much more at home in Chicago. My firm has a branch office there. I'm a broker—"

"Yes?" McHenry wanted to rejoin Ted Sewall, but he didn't like to be rude. Involuntarily, he said: "My father's in the brokerage business—" And then he bit his tongue, and blushed.

"In-deed! I shouldn't wonder if I know him. The name is—"

"McHenry," said Pepper unwillingly.

"Oh—John McHenry! Why, my dear boy! I'm doubly glad to meet you!" His fat face was fairly overloaded with cordiality, and he worked Pepper's forearm like a pump handle. "Old Jack McHenry!" Pepper winced. "Why, I've known Jack for twenty years! Surely you've heard him speak of Bill Green—that's me? Well, he's certainly to be congratulated. So are you, my boy. I hear he cleaned up a big deal in coppers last month—great headwork—glad to hear it!" The story had been in all the Chicago papers, and every intelligent man in the Middle West knew McHenry's father. "Well, now, this is lucky! Just over for a good time, eh? Going to blow in all that money on a little spree—"

"All what money?" faltered Pepper.

"Oh, I know you youngsters," laughed the florid man. "Dad made a killing—sonny gets a rake-off! Listen! I'm just waiting around until my boat sails—going on the *Pannonia*—looking for a bit of a good time. You've got a friend with you. Bring him along. It's my treat. And you're Jack McHenry's boy! Well, well, well!"

Pepper wondered if his three years at Cambridge had made him look less sophisticated than he felt; although he knew that his clothes were fully two weeks ahead of the current styles, and that his preternaturally solemn face and his new tortoise-rimmed spectacles made him look both older and more innocent than he really was.

"I'll tell you. I'll take you down to the races in my car. You probably want some excitement, and"—the florid man reduced his joviality to a confidential buzz—"I know a couple of good bookies—we'll have a guess at the ponies—what? Well, well, well! Just dropped in to get rid of some of daddy's roll! Boys will be boys! Still a boy myself. Don't get shy. I'll never tell Jack I saw you. Why, I haven't laid

eyes on him since nineteen nine. And you're his son—you bet I won't let you use up your kale when Bill Green's around—not when you're a son of Jack McHenry."

At about this period of the world's history, McHenry saw the light, and when, ten minutes later, Ted Sewall came nervously down the broad stairway to see what had become of him, he was met with a volley of winks which utterly bewildered and disturbed him.

"Hello, Ted!" greeted McHenry, winking more violently. "Meet Mr. Green—friend of dad's. I told him we were on from Chicago to buy a party, and he wants to take us down to the races in his car." He winked prodigiously, and stepped on Sewall's toe.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Green," lied Sewall, dazed, but obedient. The florid gentleman excused himself to telephone, and Sewall addressed his friend in words of Anglo-Saxon origin and clearness.

"Keep your shirt on!" hissed McHenry. "It's a circus! He must have spotted that collection of Jeff Davis bills, and thinks we're a couple of suckers. They're all yellow—and he calls my father *Jack*! He must know him better than my mother does!"

"But—but Pep—"

"Say," said McHenry impatiently, "are we on a party or a Sunday-school picnic? Jolly along—*don't mention Harvard!* Let him think we're right from the West. Be as much of an ass as you can. Talk like a fool. Blat about big money—we're a pair of rich rounders from Chicago, and there's going to be some fun in it. I don't know what the game is—but me for it!"

"But—but he looks like a crook—"

"Darn it, he *is*! Of course he *is*! That's where the fun comes in!"

"But, Pep—we're not—we ought not to get messed up— He'll rook us, as sure as fate!"

"Why, you frantic idiot!" said McHenry in his ear, as the smiling gentleman approached them from the telephone booths, "what do you think I'm letting him kid me for? This'll be the funniest party ever *you* went on! I tell you—I'm from *Chicago*! I'm going to rook *him*!"

II.

After the races they dined at Claremont—McHenry and Sewall and the perennially smiling Mr. Green, Florence and Myrtle and Sadie. It was difficult to determine just where the last three joined the aggregation; after it was all over, Sewall said that they must have been waiting in the grand stand, but McHenry was inclined to believe that they simply materialized when Green perceived that the boys were bored—just as live rabbits and the silk flags materialize from the empty hat when the prestidigitator makes mystic passes with his hand. Mr. Green said they were dear old friends from socially prominent New York families, but that was after Myrtle had confessed to McHenry that she lived on West Twenty-third Street. Still, cloak models happen in the best-regulated families of society!

At any rate, they dined together, as they had enjoyed the day together, at Mr. Green's expense; and it wasn't until the liqueurs were served that Sewall was able to remove his gaze from Sadie's hat, which was a marvelous confection composed of a velvet layer cake, of the color of grape juice, adorned with an ostrich feather and three limes. He was induced to withdraw his attention from it by the fact that Mr. Green leaned far over the table, glanced about to see that neither Andrew Carnegie nor a detective was within earshot, and stated his proposition.

"Well, boys and girls," he began, "we're all friends—and I'd like to do

a good turn for the son of my old pal out in Chi. I don't see why I shouldn't let you in on a little deal——”

“So do I!” agreed Florence promptly. “That is, if there's any money in it!”

“There is!” He sobered impressively. “The fact is—it's a sure thing!”

“Oh, they all are!”

“Bromide number nine hundred and ninety-nine,” giggled Myrtle, powdering her nose under pretense of covering a sneeze.

“Not a bit of it! We've all been down to Belmont—I win a hundred—mere chicken feed——”

“Lead me to the hencoop!” begged Sadie. “I need to pick up some of that kind of grub.”

“Listen! It wasn't this way in the good old days—take it from me! This idea of sneaking up to a bookie in a dark corner, and betting fifty cents, doesn't hit me for sour shucks! There isn't any *life* in it! Now, I do happen to know—I heard about—a simple little scheme by which we can beat 'em to it!” He reached over to tap McHenry on the arm. “You're not listening,” he said accusingly.

“Of course I am! If it's a song, I like the music so far—how do the words go?”

“Well—you told me you'd never been to see the ponies before——”

“Right-o!” admitted the gallant Pepper, smiling at his friend, Myrtle.

“Just the same, you know what a pool room is.”

“I do!” crowed Sewall, following out his instructions. “I play kelly like a wiz! Want to see me?”

“No—I mean a pool room in the sporting sense. Get it?”

“Oh!”

“I know,” said McHenry.

“Good! Well—I know one of the protected rooms——”

“Protected by what?”

“The police!” said Mr. Green impatiently. “It's down near your hotel, by

the way. Well, you understand, of course, that if you didn't want to travel all the way out to Belmont Park, you could slip in to Honest John's, and lay all you wanted——”

“Lay what?” inquired Sewall innocently, and then, also carrying out his orders, he beckoned to a waiter, and told him to bring some cigars of any good dollar brand.

“Lay your bets,” explained Mr. Green, as soon as the waiter was out of hearing. “You'd get the same odds as you could at the track, and you'd get the returns over the wire——”

“That's a lot better than wasting time at the Park,” declared Sadie vivaciously. “I'd bet on a turtle race—but I'd hate to watch it.”

“Let's take a shot at it,” suggested McHenry. “I don't want to kill another day dodging automobile traps—I like *action*!”

“You're a true sport,” proclaimed Mr. Green. “That's one grand little thing about you Chicago boys—you're real sports, and if there's any man I like, it's a real sport! I'm proud to know you!”

“Where does the money come in?” demanded Florence.

“Simply this.” Again he swept the terrace for possible eavesdroppers. “Yesterday I ran across a man I once helped out of a hole—old telegraph operator—and he's got the only sure thing in the world! You swear you'll never breathe a *word* of this?” They all swore it cheerfully. “Wire tapping!” said Mr. Green, in a voice barely above a whisper.

“Thought that was what they use to signal from cell to cell in the jail,” said Sewall, tossing a silver dollar to a small newsboy who ventured to approach them.

“Oh, no. You're thinking of something else.”

“Tell us about it!”

“Well—this young fellow just fin-

ished yesterday—he's tapped the Belmont wire!"

"What of it?"

"Don't you understand?" queried Mr. Green solicitously. "He's cut into the wire that runs from the track right to this pool room I was speaking about. He's in a room less than a block away. He gets the information, holds it up for five or six minutes, long enough to tip off a few friends, who hustle over to place bets *on the horse that's already won*; and then when he's safe, he relays the results to the pool room!" He leaned back, and smiled benignly. "Don't you call that a sure thing, boys and girls?"

"It sounds reasonable," hesitated McHenry. "Only—"

"Only what?"

"Why, down there to-day the bookmakers wouldn't take bets after the race started—and if the pool room had the same rule—"

"Why, don't you *see*? The track wires 'They're off!' Now, as soon as that reached the room, they'd quit taking bets. But my young friend gets the info—it comes right into his place! It doesn't go through at all—not until he chooses to pass it along! So—it takes, say, one-forty to run the mile. Along comes the report to my friend. The pool room hasn't got the flash that they've even started. They still take bets! Over hustles a man with a wad to put down on the horse that *won*! My friend waits until it's a cinch—then he clicks on his key 'They're off!' Pool room quits taking bets. A minute and forty seconds later my friend clicks off the winners. Don't you get it yet?"

"I do!" cried Sadie excitedly. "Say—put down a dollar ninety-eight for me, will you?"

"What do I need money for?" chortled Sewall. "Why—if we could get a *good* one—"

"Or three or four medium ones," said McHenry thoughtfully.

"I don't think any more of a dime than I do of a broken leg," stated Myrtle. "Let me in on that, will you?"

"It's an absolutely sure, double-riveted, copper-fastened cinch!" promised Mr. Green, touching the table with his fat fist to show sincerity. "Now, here's the idea—"

"Oh, wait a minute!" begged Sewall, trying to act as though the thought had just arrived. "Is it honest?"

Florence and Myrtle and Sadie simultaneously reached for their glasses. Sadie strangled, but the others were in time.

"Honest? *Sure!* Why, look here! These bookies are all crooked. You know that as well as I do. They lay odds, and even up things so they're *bound* to win. Is that honest? No! Well—I say that when a guy is out to do you, it's honest to do him, if you can get there first. That's all. Figure it out for yourself. Don't you remember when that skinny man this afternoon wouldn't take my bet on First Consul to show? Why? Simply because he couldn't take any more of First Consul without taking a chance. They work out the odds, and how much they can afford to take on every horse, so it's a matter of percentage. That's it—percentage. Individuals win, individuals lose—the books always make a percentage. Is that honest? No. So I'll get back at 'em any way I can. It's as fair for one as it is for the other."

"I see the point," said McHenry. "Only, you see, Ted and I have a date to-morrow—are you going over to see that lightning jerker friend of yours?"

"You bet I am! I'm not too proud to pick up a spare thou or two on the side."

To Sewall's horror and amazement, McHenry leisurely abstracted a genuine-twenty-dollar bill from his small capital, and tossed it across the table. "Put that up for me, will you?" he said carelessly. "No hurry about this, is there?"

Racing lasts another month. Let's see if the thing is all right. If this gets over, we'll make a killing."

"Killing is right," agreed Mr. Green, stuffing the bill in his waistcoat pocket. "Mr. Sewall?"

Sewall, goggle-eyed but still utterly confident in his friend, produced a ten-dollar gold piece.

"That'll do for a starter," he said. "Let's see if it's right before we go ahead with a fat one."

"Myrtle—Sadie—Flo?"

They each sought the treasury, and laid on the table the currency which Mr. Green had furnished them for this specific occasion.

"We'll meet here at seven for dinner to-morrow night," he decided. "I'll have the kale with me—if we win, and I sort of think we will!" He chuckled happily. "I'm a little shy myself, boys—the wires may not be working well yet, you know—we'll soon find out. And *then*—"

"By gosh!" said McHenry suddenly; "if I could double my wad I'd buy that Packard!"

"Double it? My boy— Well, we'll see. Now, who's game for a good show?"

"I'm not," said Pepper, yawning. "We've been traveling a long time—I want to get some sleep!"

"Same here," said Sewall.

Mr. Green looked disappointed.

"Well—it isn't eight o'clock yet—"

"I think we'll walk downtown, and turn in."

"Oh, take it easy! The evening's young yet—"

"That's all right. I'm dead tired. We'll be here at seven to-morrow?"

"Y-e-e-s—seven—but I wish you'd change your mind—"

"Couldn't think of it," insisted McHenry; and he and Sewall rose and prepared to go.

Miss Myrtle, who had taken a violent

fancy to McHenry, also rose, and squeezed his hand.

"Say," she whispered, "you're all right—d'you know it? Let's make a date for to-morrow afternoon some time—I want to slip you some news."

The young man from Chicago looked straight into her eyes, and lost somewhat of his flippant assurance. She wasn't at all like the magazine pictures of New York society girls; she was obviously of the other side of life, but as she stood there holding McHenry's hand, and meeting his gaze squarely, there was something in her expression which convinced and sobered him. He said to himself that she couldn't be more than eighteen or nineteen years old, and a couple of seasons ago she must have been very pretty—and here she was telling him, as plainly as her eyes could convey the information, that he was a very nice young man, and that she liked him, and didn't want him to make any mistakes. McHenry was touched, for he knew that she was undoubtedly to have shared in the dividends.

"Never mind," he assured her. "I'm a lot brighter than I look."

"Oh, really?"

"Absolutely!" He said good-by to the others, thanked Mr. Green for the entertainment, and lingered for a last word with Myrtle.

"*Why?*" he murmured.

"Well—I don't know—"

"Come on! Tell me!"

"I don't know—you're different—"

"How?"

"Why—I don't know—you understand, though—I'll see you to-morrow night here—good night!"

"Good night!" said McHenry.

For all his cleverness, he didn't know, just as for all her worldly wisdom Myrtle didn't know, that for the moment she was metamorphosed into a close approximation of a lady, simply

because McHenry was the first gentleman she had ever met in her life.

"You took long enough!" complained Sewall at the coat room.

"Too long," conceded Pepper seriously. "A minute longer and I'd have spoiled the fun—darn it, man, I'm beginning to get sorry for 'em!"

III.

Like leopards seeking refreshment in the early morn, McHenry and Sewall slunk from their hotel to breakfast in a dairy-lunch room across the street. It wasn't part of their program to meet the effusive Mr. Green before nightfall, and they were at some pains to avoid him. They didn't dare to give up their room, for fear that he might telephone, or inquire for them at the desk, but they packed their suit cases ready for instant departure. They spent the day at Coney Island, where amusement was cheap, and came back to the city with a bamboo walking stick, a horn-handled knife, three souvenir post cards, and two cases of indigestion. At a quarter of seven they strolled onto the Claremont terrace, and found Miss Myrtle sitting alone at a large table.

"Beat it!" said McHenry to Sewall, and Sewall took the hint. Pepper sat down, and volunteered the delicate compliment that Miss Myrtle had beautiful eyes.

"Oh, don't!" she said. "You know—I'm awfully glad you showed up early. I was crazy to have a couple of minutes—"

"Why?" reiterated Pepper mercilessly.

"I told you, I don't know. I don't know. Only I saw right away you wasn't the regular kind—it sort of made me sick to sit around here and see Murphy string you—"

"Murphy?"

"Sure. That's his real name. We're in with him sometimes—you wouldn't

get wise even if I told you. It's sort of funny when you come to think of it—I ain't used to passing up good things like you and your friend—"

"Mighty nice of you, Myrtle," he appreciated.

"No—some kinds of money's nicer than others. I don't want yours. I don't *know*!"

"Myrtle," he said, "what do you want most in this world, anyway?"

"That's a queer one—money, I guess."

"Well, next to money?"

"Please cut it out!" she pleaded.

"No—I really want to know."

"Well—*clothes*!" she blurted. "If you *want* to know—they help a lot. You've got to have 'em if you want to get anywhere."

"Tell me this—what's ahead?"

"What's— Oh, I see!" She drummed on the table, and paid close attention to her fingers. "You *are* green, aren't you? Do you suppose *I* know?"

"What I'm trying to get at is this," said McHenry diffidently. "Of course, this is a real experience for Ted and me—"

"Oh, I knew *that*! Nobody could look at you two shakes without knowing you're a couple of—infants."

"Zowie!" breathed the young man, who boasted that he came from Chicago. "Is it really as bad as that?"

"Sure it is," she laughed.

"But that isn't why you tried to—warn us."

"No—but mostly Murphy and us deals with—well, *suckers*! You know—tinhorn sports. They sop up champagne, and get fresh with us. I don't mind working games on *them*."

McHenry took her hand over the table, and hoped that Sewall wasn't looking.

"Myrtle," he said, "you're one of the nicest girls I ever knew!" For the first time in several months she blushed

without artificial assistance. "Why don't you get out of it?" he demanded eagerly. "You could if you wanted to. I'm awfully interested in this thing, and—and—"

"Sure you are," she retorted bitterly. "*Interested!* This is *some* party for you, isn't it? And you'll go home and tell all your nice friends what a rough time you have in New York. Look here, kid, be fresh if you have to, be spoony if you want to, but for God's sake don't be just *interested!* I haven't seen a kid like you for so long—The worst of us have good days, you know. Murphy's a Catholic—I've seen him come back from confession with the tears rolling down his face, swearing he'd turn straight. That's all. I liked you!" she finished breathlessly.

"Ah! That's it, is it? You—you were willing to throw down your—these people because you liked me?"

"I'm not throwing them down. You said you're wise—"

"Yes, but you didn't know it until I told you. Look here, Myrtle—can't you cut it out—"

"Don't waste your time, little one!" she interrupted. "Sometimes it's good fun. I make enough to worry along—I like it!"

"You *do*?" He was baffled and distressed.

"Sure I do!"

"And you wouldn't quit—not if I could get you a mighty good place—"

"A *job*?"

"Why, yes," he stammered. "A good one!" She shook her head decisively.

"Not on your life! Why, you poor little kid! You think I'm one of these broken-hearted— Why, look here! Do you know the biggest puzzle I've got? How to get a new summer suit!" She lolled easily in her chair, and laughed at him with her mouth; and he was too dazed to see that her eyes weren't laughing at all.

"Well," he said lamely, "I'm sorry."

"Sorry? I'm not. I'm just glad to know you. You've been like a glass of ice water after a party—here they come!"

McHenry struggled to his feet to shake hands with the advancing cohort. The girls welcomed him jocosely; and Sewall, appearing from the inn, hailed them with inanities. Mr. Green beckoned to a waiter, and said: "Three quarts!" Then he grinned craftily, and ordered heads to be put together. "Oh, it's a lead-pipe cinch!" he cackled. "Softest thing in the world! Do you know what we caught? Seven-to-one shot! Remember what I told you about these crooked rooms? Seven to one they gave us—the gelding was *ten* to one at the track! See? They shaved the odds on us! But—*just the same*—we copped!" He produced yellow bills, and tossed them on the table. "McHenry, boy, you win one-forty—Sewall, you win seventy—so do the girls. I'm no piker—I win a thousand. See the big ones?" He waved a portly roll before their dazzled eyes.

"Gosh! Me for a killing!" quoth McHenry, and the fat man's eyes glistered.

"Keep my seventy," said Sewall, in delirious excitement. "Keep it till to-morrow—"

Mr. Green shook his head.

"Nix, no, and nope! We're all through for to-day. Now we'll have a bite, and take in a music hall, and to-morrow afternoon we'll all go round for the plunge!"

"I can't go to-morrow, either—I've got a date," alleged Pepper. "You take the wad now, will you?"

"Take mine, too!" begged Florence and Sadie, picking up their cues admirably.

Mr. Green refused smilingly. He said he wouldn't take the responsibility of handling all that money. He didn't even want to act as treasurer overnight. He insisted that McHenry ought to re-

port in person, and when Pepper allowed himself to be persuaded, it was arranged that they should all meet at the hotel for lunch, and then the girls could wait while the men sallied forth in quest of gigantic profits.

"Good!" ejaculated Mr. Green. "You're a real sport, my boy—true son of your father. And, gad, how I love a true sport!" But by this time McHenry was so sure of himself that he didn't need Miss Myrtle's hand under the table to tell him that the stage was being set for the grand climax. All that disturbed him was that he and Sewall had to stay over another day.

IV.

They were to lunch at one. At half past twelve, McHenry, still coaxing his nonplussed friend, paid the hotel bill, had the suit cases checked at the Grand Central, and bought tickets for Boston on the three-o'clock. At lunch he talked foolishly and extravagantly of mythical deeds in Chicago, and partly verified them by sending a messenger out to buy orchids for the girls, and dollar perfectos for the men. He mentioned imaginary deals in the stock market, and said that bridge for less than ten cents a point was a willful squandering of precious time. He gave the head waiter five dollars for reserving a corner table, and when Sadie said she didn't like his tie, he sent another messenger to a haberdasher's across the street to buy half a dozen new ones, and retired downstairs to don the one which Sadie liked. Sewall sat stupefied, and thought of Bloomingdale and Matteawan and Waverly.

"Well, boys and girls," began Mr. Green at last, "we'd ought to be moving. First race in half an hour. Now, we men go over to the room, see? Two of us are pikers—it wouldn't look right if three of us laid big wagers on one race. You get the point? Sure! So,

we all go in, and bet ten dollars on the first race. Then we wait for the word. My telegraph friend's going to hang on for a big one—five or six-to-one shot—and when it comes, he'll send a pal of his over to us. I know the pal—he comes in, goes up to the grill, planks down his money, and makes his bet. The one of us who handles the big money's right behind him. You get it, do you? Not a word exchanged—nothin' suspicious—the pal makes a bet, and we follow. Now, the way to do it is to dope it out before the start. One man'd better carry the big roll with him." He made sure that they were not spied upon by any of the Pinkertons, and brought out a leather wallet from a side pocket. "Here—he'd better carry it in this. Mine's two thousand," and he ostentatiously slipped four crackling notes into the wallet, and handed it to McHenry.

Sewall held his breath, his palms suddenly gone moist, and his heart pounding; but Pepper merely reached into his trousers, and inserted a thick sheaf of bills beside Mr. Green's contribution. Under his lashes he stole a glance at Myrtle—and was sorry for her.

"Our whole wad," said McHenry lightly. "Four thousand even. Don't call on Sewall, Mr. Green—this is for both of us!" He passed the wallet to Sadie, who giggled and said: "Mine's only fifty," and she in turn delivered it to Florence and Myrtle. The net amount, according to the statements they made, was sixty-three hundred dollars. Mr. Green took the treasure to himself, and patted it affectionately, then put it in his pocket.

"At the same time," he hesitated, "I don't know—maybe it would be just as well if one of you young fellows took care of this. I'll tell you. We'll fix it this way: McHenry, boy, *you* be the plunger. You see, I was there yesterday—"

"Will you excuse us just a minute?"

asked Florence, winning an extra wide smile from the fat man because of her timeliness. The three girls departed, two of them blithely, and Myrtle with lagging feet, and an expression on her face which pained Pepper, and made him wish she understood.

"You see, I was in there yesterday, and cashed in, and maybe it wouldn't look right—they might hold out our money on us if they got cagy—if I brought you two in to-day, and we all cashed again. McHenry holds the wad, and I'll just pike along. It'll look better."

"Suits me!" said Pepper, accepting the wallet.

"Wait a second." He plucked out a fifty-dollar bill, and put it back again. "Thought I saw a twenty," he apologized. "I knew nobody wanted a twenty, so I thought somebody'd made a mistake. Say—well, I'll be da—why, there's Jimmy McChesney out there in the lobby. Excuse me half a second, while I shake hands with him?"

McHenry hung on the edge of his chair until the fat man was out of sight, then he clutched Sewall by the arm.

"Come on—*beat* it, Ted!"

"Wha—what's that!"

"Come on, I tell you!" He dragged his friend out to the check room, secured their hats, and sped out of the great hotel, across the street toward the station. It was ten minutes of three. The sign, "Ladies' Tailor," on a ground-floor shop caught his eye, and he dashed inside, leaving Sewall gasping on the sidewalk. Almost immediately he was back again, spurting for the parcel room where the suit cases were stored. He led Sewall a merry chase through the concourse, ducked past the gatekeeper, swung aboard the express, dropped into a seat, and laughed until he cried.

"Why, Pep—why, *Pep!*" panted his friend. "What's the—*matter!* What kind of a fool stunt—is this?"

McHenry, weak from laughter, tossed him the wallet.

"O-open it!" he managed between gusts of joy.

Sewall opened it, and took out the contents. There was a fifty-dollar bill—the one which Green had carefully displayed to them—and a stack of neatly cut yellow paper, the size of bank bills.

"Well—I'll be darned!" faltered Sewall.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!" gasped Pepper. "Wasn't it *beautiful?* And he said himself it's all right to do anybody who's aiming to do you! He said it himself! And I did it! I wish I could see his face—when he finds out that's Confederate money!" He writhed on his seat, and Sewall grew flaming red.

"But, Pep——"

"We had our party," croaked Pepper, wiping away the tears, "and it didn't cost us a cent—we've been to Coney, and the races—and the theater—and eaten in first-class joints—and stayed at a big hotel—and we came away with more than a hundred dollars——"

"Why, Pep!"

"Only—I hope you won't be sore, old scout—you know when I beat it into that tailor's?"

"What in the mischief——"

McHenry grew serious.

"I couldn't help it," he said, with a great sigh. "I just couldn't help it, Ted—it was a lot of fun, but we couldn't keep his dirty money—I did the only thing I could think of—I gave that tailor the hundred we had left, and told him a lady'd come in for a suit after——"

"Why, you crazy fool!" yelled Sewall.

"Oh, I got a receipt! I'll write to her from Cambridge and tell her to go up and get her summer suit! You see—after the way Myrtle tried to tip us

off, and the talk I had with her, I felt so sorry— But, darn it, Ted, there isn't anything we could *do* for her!— so I thought the *least* we could do was to help her along the best way we could. *Green's* bought her a hundred dollars' worth of clothes!" He collapsed utterly, and didn't recover until they were across the Harlem, gathering speed for the run to distant Boston.

"I told you we ought to stay at a big hotel," declared Sewall triumphantly. "Think of what we'd have missed by going to a little one—the way you wanted! Gee! What a party! And it didn't cost us anything, either!"

You will meet Pepper McHenry again in the first October POPULAR, out September 7th.



SACRED SINGING IN THE COUNTRY

FAR down in the country, where grand-opera methods have not yet been applied to church singing, a blessed old minister arose and announced the number of the hymn he desired the congregation to sing. He followed the old custom of "lining out" the hymn. That is, he would read a line in a loud voice, and then the congregation would sing it.

The first line was as follows:

"We praise Thee, O God, for Thy power ten thousand strong."

The congregation tried the line, and was on such a high key that when "ten thousand strong" was reached everybody was up in a screech.

"I'm afraid that's too high," said the benevolent old man, "too high on the 'ten thousand strong.'"

His difficulty was solved by an old fellow who stood up far back in the church and exclaimed in a nasal voice:

"All right, then; bring it down to one thousand."



WITH PAINE AT YALE

RALPH D. PAINE, one-time filibuster, war correspondent, and coal-strike reporter, gave up a brilliant career in daily journalism to settle down on a pretty farm in New Hampshire and write Yale stories, sea tales, and other rattling good literature.

Paine rowed four years on the Yale varsity eight. The first year Harvard won, and Paine took all the blame to himself. Thereafter Yale triumphed, and Paine modestly disclaimed any of the credit.

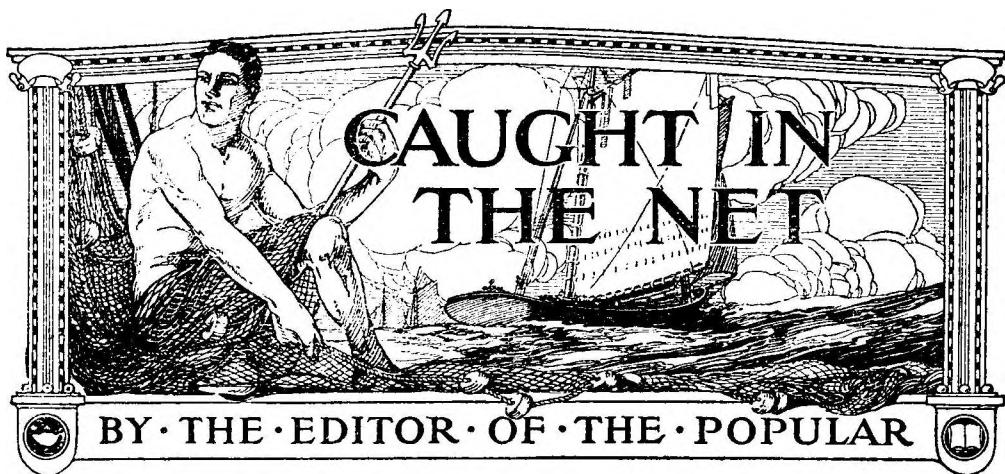
"No, not in one sense. Let's have something to smoke in the club car!" Instinctively he fumbled for change. "You'll have to pay, Ted—I've got just seventeen cents left."

"Why, that's funny! I've—why, I've only got eight!"

The men who had talked of deals on the market, of cars, and of thousands to risk in a New York pool room, looked at each other, and smiled feebly.

"If we dodge the porter—" murmured Sewall.

"Sure we can," said McHenry. "Come on, Ted. They *must* have some two-for-a-quarter cigars on this train."



THE SECRET OF HIS STRENGTH

WOODROW WILSON holds a position of authority to-day which is undoubtedly as strong as that with which he entered office in March of 1913. By temperament and training he is far from the hearty demagogue who has so often won power in a democracy, and it becomes a study of value to analyze the source of his influence.

His life has been free from early warfare. Political battles were fought by other men, while he was still quietly teaching the science of government and history. He entered public life with no personal bitterness, and without the scars of long strife. He inherited his ideas from men who had grown embittered or one-sided in making them prevail. He has been able to state those ideas with serenity to a people ready to welcome them and act upon them.

Between the years of 1896 and 1908, there had been a period of agitation in the United States similar to that created in country communities by the preaching of a religious evangelist. This period of agitation was in large part precipitated by the work of Roosevelt and Bryan. How to incorporate their agitation into legislation has been the problem for the last six years. That is why the coming of Mr. Taft to the presidency was welcomed. It was thought that he would initiate legislation to express the mood of the nation. He was to give permanent form to the emotional upheaval of his forerunners. Roosevelt and Bryan were the pioneers and ground breakers. Mr. Taft was to be the builder. But he brought a temper of mind and a philosophy of politics at rude variance with the prevailing mood of his people. He injected a stand-pat element into a radical situation.

So once again the voters went hunting for a man who would draft their desires into law. They believe they have found the man in Woodrow Wilson. The nation is not ready for more radical measures and new forms of radicalism. It has recently listened with indifference to proposals for government ownership of telegraph and telephone. It has indicated no desire to proceed drastically against the railroads in the establishment of freight rates by government decree. Equally unmistakable are the signs that it will permit no backward step.

What it wishes is a standing fast on ground already won, a clamping down in tight legislative form of gains already made. The mass of people feel rather than think. After a time they look for one to come with sure analysis and lift the situation from dimness to clarity. They desire a leader who can transform their emotional drift into conscious direction. No other public man is so keenly aware of this condition of the popular mind as President Wilson. And because he understands the American people at this point in their development, his position is strong.

To Mr. Wilson will be granted a margin even of apparent unsuccess, because he is occupying so much territory with the approval of a majority of the electorate.

BOSSING VERSUS TEACHING

BOSSING is easy. Teaching is difficult. Yet the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad finds that teaching pays, and its new general manager, Mr. Edward D. Levy, has created the slogan, "I am a teacher—not a boss."

The company holds regular educational institutes, the object of which is to make every official a teacher. The educational campaign is extended to every division of the road, and eventually connects with the life of every employee. It is guided by the idea that a man whose days are a treadmill of visionless routine cannot be happy, loyal, or efficient; and that the only efficiency worthy of the name must be a by-product of interest and joy in work well done.

According to the new standards, an official is held to be successful in proportion to his ability to teach. He is required to inject thought and imagination into tasks which have long been dead, and to inspire his men to use their inventive faculties in devising ideas for the betterment of the service. He must be able to show how the smallest task fits in, to explain the necessity of work which employees have been doing for half a lifetime without knowing or caring why.

Teaching is in itself an art. No wonder the Frisco superintendents are going to the psychologists and educators to learn how to excel in it—how to clothe rules, tariffs, statistics of cost, and other colorless details with the imaginative appeal which will stimulate the interest of the humblest worker.

Bossing is quick work. Education requires time, tact, enthusiasm, friendliness, and infinite patience. The one is wholly despotic. The other breathes the spirit of humanity and democracy.

NIGHT IN TOWN

IN that tumult and jaded intensity of night in the modern city, the visitor finds he can do anything he wishes. With unlimited means, how render any given expression unique and sufficing? What place to go to, out of all the strange haunts of great Babylon? What gesture to select, from the treasury of possible acts, with which to make illustrious this fast-speeding night? To grow intoxicated on wine that had slept through much solemn history is to make no more sensitive reaction on a choice vintage than if the brew had been of coarsest hops gathered no longer ago than the last midsummer. Surely that quality ought

somehow to filter back into the world of time in some sudden shower of amazing wit.

Everywhere there is the flash of careless spending, in jets of nervous vibrancy, as if the ultimate moment of existence was being just then clutched at. It ought to be a more than Arabian Night, a Manhattan Night, a night of tragic consequence. Back from the gay encounter, some more glorious Byron should go, to render under the sting of its revelry some greater Childe Harold. And yet, out of it all, what is there remaining but weary waiters sweeping the litter into ash bins?

AN INTERNATIONAL POST OFFICE

WHICH stamp do you want, a Canadian or a States?" queries the postmaster as you hand him a nickel and ask for a stamp.

No wonder he doesn't know which stamp you want, for half of you may be in Yankeeland and half in Canada!

You stood before a counter on which are post cards, stationery, and souvenirs for sale. It doesn't look different from the customary country store, but it really is unique—there isn't another one like it in this country—for one part of the store is in Canada and the rest in the United States, and at one end of the counter is a United States post office, while at the other is one belonging to King George.

And here is how this imaginary line affects the easy running of the machine. If John Smith, living in Beebe Plain, Vermont, writes to his neighbor across the street, who happens to live in Beebe Plain, P. Q., and mails it in his own post office, the letter may travel two hundred and fifty miles before the same postmaster who took it from John Smith gives it to Smith's neighbor at the other end of the counter! The neighbors live within one hundred yards of each other, their post offices are in the same store, yet the regular routing of mail takes a letter two hundred and fifty miles to cross a dozen feet of open floor space.

In actual practice, however, this course is not often followed, for the departments of both countries have instructed the postmaster to distribute the mail in the most expeditious manner, which means for this official to convey such a letter himself from one end of the counter to the other. But if a letter be mailed in Beebe Plain, Vermont, addressed to Rock Island, P. C., instead of taking the short three-mile trip, it will follow the two-hundred-and-fifty-mile route; while if it is mailed in Beebe Plain, P. Q., it will reach its destination by the shorter route.

Readers fond of geography may be interested to follow the routes on the map. From Beebe Plain, Vermont, the letter goes south ninety miles by Boston & Maine Railroad to White River Junction, thence it would return and pass through to Sherbrooke, P. Q., thirty-four miles north of Beebe Plain. From there it would be delivered to Beebe Plain, P. Q., after having been on the road for fifteen to twenty hours, according to train connections.



Luck! Hard Luck!

A TALE OF WILLOW CREEK

By Roy Norton

Author of "Fools," "High Finance," Etc.

Why do good men, straight and square;
Men who play life's game clean, fair;
Men who work when others sleep;
Men who give their word for keeps,
Get it in the neck?
Just luck! Hard Luck!

Why do others, knaves or crooks;
Men with minds like mill-tailed brooks;
Men with scarcely minds at all;
Men who travel on their gall;
Seem to land on top?
Just luck! Good Luck!

Luck? She's a heartless, withered squaw;
A hag unfair, who knows no law;
A cook who muddles every mess;
Who serves her dishes all by guess,
And doesn't care.
Such is luck! Old Mrs. Luck!

SHAKESPEARE GEORGE.

AND this is what Shakespeare George called a poem and wrote after we returned from Cabeza del Maestro, on the jaunt we took with Mister Hank Hogue, man-of-hard-luck, who heard of us through a friend of ours, old "Lost Mine" Mills, down in Placerville. Lost Mine, being an ancient, simple gentleman, told Hank that we were given to taking chances provided we could have some excitement to lend a little salt to the tameness of life. So, one fine afternoon, when all of us on Willow Creek were tired of doing nothing in particular, Hank Hogue found us in a humor quite ready to listen to any harebrained scheme. Perhaps I should add the more harebrained the better. Yet I doubt if we would have undertaken the Cabeza del

Maestro trip had it not been for Shakespeare George, who, being a poet by nature, and having been numerously jilted, sympathized with any one in love.

Hogue was one of these men who look as if they had fought everything in life, from hard weather, hard work, and hard conditions to hard luck. He was so reticent that he always spoke with difficulty, giving one the impression that before he said anything at all he had to take time to think it over and prune his words. They were always direct and to the point when he did speak. His eyes were always defiant, as if something had made him expect nothing but trouble wherever he went—the kind of eyes that make other men wonder what misfortune had fixed them into that queer, veiled stare.

He was somewhere between forty and fifty years old, with a skin like wrinkled leather that made him look like a very old young man or a very young old man, and he was as active as a mountain goat. He proved this by scorning the regular trail when he came to Willow Creek, coming instead directly over the tops of mountains, down into cañons, up the sides of cañons, and through the woods. He said he always traveled that way—just fixed a landmark in his mind and headed for it. Saved trouble. Man might get lost on trails unless he'd been over them before, or went with some one who had. He made his business known in about

four minutes of actual speech. He could use the shortest sentences of any man I ever heard talk, and fired them at you as if they were chopped off in chunks and loaded into an old yager.

"Willow Creek?" he asked, when he stood in front of where Tom, George, Tim, and I were trying to build a rustic arbor for Marietta.

"Yes," we answered, looking at him and wondering where he could have come from.

"Lost Mine Mills said to see yon."

We gave him all our attention at once; for we were fond of the old man who lived a full day's journey by rail from our camp.

"Want you to come to Lower California. Can't go alone. Injuns. Greasers. Outlaws. Pardner and two women there. My wife and his sister. Need help. Got gold. Can't bring it out alone. Can't leave it there. Tough country. Shoot?"

Tim pointed at a cardboard target stuck on a tree close by, where the whole bull's-eye was eaten away and not a shot outside the center ring. Tim grinned a little and asked the newcomer if he could beat that at twenty-five yards.

"Yes," imperturbably answered our visitor, who walked over and pinned on a fresh target he picked up from a little pile by the tree, then gravely tramped and counted twenty-five steps, while we watched and grinned, and were amused by this strange character that had floated in so unexpectedly. On the twenty-fifth step he seemed to pivot on his heels, pull a gun, and shoot at the same time, apparently without taking aim. He fired five shots so fast that they sounded almost like one explosion, and then said: "Look!"

We did. At first it didn't seem quite right, then we understood. All five shots had gone through a spot smaller than a silver dime. He was some shooter, that man was! We grew re-

spectful with that admiration a fellow gives to some one who can beat him at his own pet game. Any man that could shoot like that must be all right.

After that it was easier to listen to him, and it seems to me that it was because he said so little that we went. If he had talked more it wouldn't have been very attractive. It was more a case of helping a poor devil in rough luck out of a pretty tough mess, than the chance of a good time, that made us consent to go with him and see him through. Besides, George felt sorry for his wife, waiting for him to rescue her. So, after about a week's consideration, and fighting that fever they call the "pack itch" up North, we agreed to go.

Pack itch? That's a disease that attacks seasoned old prospectors. No matter how promising a place may be, no matter how comfortable they are, about once every so often they have to pull out for some other place—want to feel a pack between their shoulders. Can't be happy without one. Most always it attacks the Western miner in the spring. Some bright day he comes out of a prospecting drift, like a gopher out of a hole, looks around at the hills and up at the skies, and all of a sudden is restless. Probably up to that very minute he has been contented; but now the prospect is either no good, or else he has done work enough to hold it anyway, or he remembers that there was some place within a hundred or so miles that he always wanted to try out, and—away he goes. In Alaska it usually happens after the first freeze, when the waterways make natural roads. With our crowd on Willow Creek it was likely to happen at any time, because we had nothing else to do.

In that week while we made our preparations to leave Willow Creek, Hogue disappeared. We never knew where he went, but took it for granted that he would keep his promise and meet us in San Francisco, where we

were to take a coasting steamer that would drop us and our outfit off at Ballenas Bay. He was the sort of fellow that impressed one as "making good," and, what is more, the longer you knew him the more he proved it. In fact, he proved it so frequently and with such alarming suddenness, that one never could tell quite what Mr. Hank Hogue might do next. The first illustration of this was when we from Willow Creek met him at the dock in San Francisco. We were beginning to wonder whether he would show up at the time he said he would, and were standing around outside the steamship office hesitating whether to buy tickets, when he came. He was stodgily mounted on the seat of an express wagon beside a driver who looked like a cross between a prize fighter and a beer barrel.

"Hello!" said Hogue, with as much enthusiasm as if he had left us but fifteen minutes before.

He got down to the ground and dragged a box out of the hind end of the wagon and let it fall with a thump on the planks.

"Personal outfit," he said, and pulled some change from his trousers pockets to pay the driver, who, all this time, sat and thoughtfully stared at his horse, perfectly willing to let any one unload. Hogue handed him a half dollar.

"Six bits," said the driver, waking up and scowling at the coin in his hand.

"You said half a dollar," protested Hogue.

"Nope."

"Yes, you did!" Hogue retorted calmly.

"Nope."

"Well, I say you did."

The driver tilted his hat to a belligerent angle and remarked: "Don't gimme none of that stuff. Pungle up here."

Hogue was still very placid, but firmly refused to be mulcted, insisting that the bargain was clearly understood, and thereupon the expressman promptly

called him a liar, and stated that he would get down and "punch" Hogue's head. The latter looked at us with a sad air of regret.

"Got to think this over a minute," he said, as if to himself. "It don't seem right to let this feller bluff me out of a nice clean quarter, or to let him call me a liar when I ain't."

He took his hat off and ran his fingers through his hair as if not knowing quite what to do, then replaced the hat and said: "Reckon they's just one way to settle it."

Before any one could interfere, he made a dive for the expressman, jumping into the air to get him, caught him by the coat collar, jerked him to the ground, knocked him down, kicked him in the ribs, kicked him somewhere else every time the man got to his hands and knees to arise, then, grabbing him by the back of the neck, appeared to kick him back into his wagon. The expressman was too subdued for speech by this time. He looked like a man who had accidentally fought a cyclone.

"Half a dollar, wasn't it?" blandly inquired Hogue, entirely unruffled and scarcely breathing faster.

The expressman grabbed his reins and betrayed a frantic desire to get away from there. Mr. Hogue merely shouldered his box and said: "Got to send this aboard."

As we made a way through an appreciative crowd that had gathered we decided that our new partner was not a man to trifle with; but between that hour and the time we sailed, on the following day, he had not a dozen sentences to speak beyond advising us now and then to get certain things we might need, and borrowing a small sum.

"Rum sort of a cuss!" growled Tom.

"Sort of stingy with talk, that's all that ails him, I reckon," Sympathy said, in Hogue's defense. "Maybe he'll limber up some when we get aboard the ship."

But in this Sympathy was mistaken, for if Hogue had been taciturn before, he was now completely speechless. He was a good sailor all right, and once, in about half a dozen words, admitted that he had been to sea. Some of our party rather envied him during the first day out, which was rather rough. Down the latitudes we steamed, the weather clearing all the time to a dead, flat pall of sunshine and heat, until at last we came to Ballenas Bay, where the steamer landed us in about as strange a spot as any of us had ever seen. It took a long time to decide whether it was beautiful or menacing.

Here we had another surprise coming to us, for there were boxes and bales enough unloaded to make us think Hogue intended to open a general merchandise business. We couldn't understand how he had bought so much with so little money. And then, of a sudden, Hogue seemed to be at home. He could talk fluently in Spanish and that half-breed Indian dialect, and it began to dawn on us that he was mighty intent on this trip of his. He had four fights in the first half day we were there, and every time it was the same. He seemed to deliberate before doing anything, and then when he decided that it was time to go after a "greaser" or an Indian, he went so quickly that the air cleared itself from the dust of battle in about three seconds, leaving him invariably master of the field. He explained to us the wherefore of his outfit late on the first evening, when we had got hold of burros enough to take all that queer outfit we had. We had lodgings in a half-ruined old adobe, and Hogue was as mysterious as a conspirator when he gave us the word to meet in his room for a talk.

"If there's to be any holdup," he said, when we had our heads all together, "we want it on the way up. Those boxes and things are a bluff. Only two of them that ain't filled with stones

and sawdust. They've got things for my wife. I make these loafers think I've got a store outfit. Can't tell what might happen. Can't tell how news travels round here. Headquarters, this, for bandits. If any crowd is after our outfit, they've probably got word by now and wait for us."

We gawked at him, perplexed. This was a new sort of thing to all of us; but as he went on we saw what his plan was.

"We get this outfit to first camp, then dump it out in the night. Pack empty boxes and barrels on burros next day. Get through if can without fight. Outlaws hear of it. Won't tumble when we come back and we've got gold. Think we're traveling light. Leave us alone because we ain't worth botherin' with. Sabe?"

Most of us were quite admiring by this time. Hogue wasn't the fool he looked. Some of us were inclined to be a little skeptical of his outlaws, but took it for granted that he knew what he was talking about. In any event, we thought we could take care of ourselves without much effort.

"Now wasn't that fine," said George, after Hogue had left. "See? He thought about that poor wife of his all the time. Two boxes for her. That's what I call love."

So far as we could observe, no one paid any attention to us when we pulled out at dawn the next morning and headed toward the hills that were purple instead of gray at that hour. We climbed up a fair trail at first, with as plain going as any one could wish, and that evening turned into another that did not seem to have been used for many months. There was not a hoof mark on it, and here and there a patch of grass or a little brush had lifted its head hopefully.

Late that night we lightened our loads by some hundred weight of boulders, and it was so dark that if

any one had been watching from a distance of a hundred yards he could not have known what we were doing. Aside from that, there was neither much work nor excitement—except when Tim found a centipede in his blankets, and expressed his opinion of centipedes so volubly that we all tumbled out of bed, thinking we had been attacked. Hogue was the first one back in his blankets and the first to snore. It took considerable excitement to get him rattled.

Next morning we lost two hours running down three of the burros that had decided to go prospecting on their own hook, and George found three horned toads. And all of this was pretty tame work. It began to look to us as if we had come to the last place in the world for adventure of any sort. Then, about three o'clock in the afternoon, things began to look more hopeful. We received a messenger in the shape of a bullet that screeched over our heads, and knew that we were attacked. The outlaws had come at last.

We couldn't see where the shot came from, so hustled fast and hard to a little knoll that had plenty of boulders on its top to protect burros and men, and, as we went, were fired at about a dozen times with mighty bad marksmanship. Not a shot hit except one that perforated an empty box. Hogue was quite cheerful. After we got safely barricaded on our knoll and laid out to watch for the outlaws, we had a long wait. Then George, to amuse himself, dragged out a Mexican flag he had bought as a curiosity, and made a staff out of five or six sticks of greasewood bound together.

"Got to have a flag to fight for," he explained. "Only I wish we had our own instead of this one."

We all poked fun at him from where we lay stretched out watching the hills and trying to get sight of whoever had been shooting at us, while he mounted his flag between two rocks. It hadn't

been up five minutes before we saw a white handkerchief waved from the top of another knoll across a gulch, and were surprised to see how close the outlaws had got to us.

"Let's talk to 'em," said Hogue. "That's the way we do it. Talk's cheap. If we can't talk 'em out, we'll fight 'em out. Got to get to my woman, somehow."

He seemed to know what was done in polite society down there, so stood up and waved his handkerchief, and a man bobbed up, then another, and another, until we could see about thirty of them. The one with the flag of truce came down the hillside, and Hogue walked out to meet him. Then we sat up and blinked. The visitor was in uniform. We had been attacked by *rurales!* They were very sorry—and very dry. We all got together, and they drank a gallon of Bacardi that Hogue had thoughtfully brought along to cure snake bite. Said they'd been out hunting some *insurrectos* who had been giving trouble, and thought we were the men. Then the captain wanted to know where we were bound, and Hogue told him.

"Off the trail," said the officer in Spanish, as he prepared to follow his men back to where their horses were hidden on the opposite side. "New road been built in the last year. Cut across about two miles to the north and you'll find it."

We thanked him and looked at Hogue, who acted puzzled. He spoke as if answering accusations—just as if some of us had said, "Thought you knew where you were going and how to get there."

"New road, eh? Sorry I didn't know it. Been some time, you see, since I was there."

"Oh, don't you mind that, pardner!" George said soothingly. "Makes it all the easier for you to get through to

your wife. Bet she'll be mighty glad to see you. Let's just jog along!"

Hogue looked grateful, but said nothing, and we made for the road. It was there all right, and looked well traveled. Hogue began to look bewildered, as if he couldn't understand how things had changed since he left, and rode by himself, looking sidewise, here and there, and sometimes shaking his head doubtfully. We met a four-horse freight wagon, empty, rattling down the divide, and the driver didn't look the least bit surprised at seeing us. Hogue shook his head again, as if things were a lot different from when he last saw them.

"How long did he say he'd been away?" Sympathy asked me, when Hogue was out of hearing.

I couldn't remember having heard. Sympathy asked Stinger, and Stinger said: "I'll be blest if I know."

George, who had dropped back with us, scratched his chin and said: "Come to think of it, I don't believe he ever said. Funny we didn't think about that before! But he's all right. It don't matter, nohow. We're goin' to rescue that wife and that other woman and his pardner, roads or no roads. Poor cuss! Can see by the way he keeps diggin' along the trail that he's just crazy to get to her."

It did look like it, for Hogue was about as steady a trailer as ever I saw. Acted as if the days weren't long enough to suit him, and that we couldn't go fast enough. It wasn't a bit exciting—just plain hard work. It was plain that we would have done better to have come mounted on good ponies and unhampered by a train of burros; but their hoofs kept rattling steadily over the road, so we progressed. I doubt if the empty boxes would have fooled any one watching our progress, least of all an outlaw, and of these we were in doubt and fast losing hope. Nothing happened worth while until at last, just

as, at dusk, we came out on the rim of a valley, we saw Hogue stop and open his eyes as if he couldn't convince himself that what he saw was real.

Away down below us stood a good-sized mining camp with everything moving, and the rumble of a small stamp mill clumping a sort of chorus to all the other noises. There were quite a lot of buildings that looked new, and here and there an old adobe sticking to its ground as if afraid of being shouldered out of existence by some of the frame houses. There was a street where the lights were already showing yellow, and after spending the number of days we had in the wilderness, the place looked as big as San Francisco. While Hogue was still looking troubled, a Mexican with a peaked hat came out of the mesquite, and Hogue hailed him as if for relief.

"What place is that down there?" he asked.

"Cabeza del Maestro, señor," the man answered, and went on his way, humming a fandango as if the sight of a party like ours was on the regular program.

"I can't—can't—can't understand!" said Hogue, pulling off his hat and rubbing his head as if to stimulate it. And then: "Well, let's go down and find out about it."

It's easy enough to believe that we were a little more skeptical of Mr. Hank Hogue about that time. It was as if he had either played an April Fool's joke on us, or been a little locoed when he dragged us all the way down there for nothing. We didn't have much to say, either to him, or to one another, as we rode on down to the camp. He looked at us now and then as if wondering what we thought of him, and it wouldn't have taken very much of an excuse for some of us to have told him, in mighty plain words.

I often wonder, since then, what he must have been thinking of as we

sought a yard and stable, where we left our animals, stacked our pretended outfit, and from which we went to a hotel. Whatever he may have thought, he said nothing. He acted as if bewildered by everything he saw and, somehow, a stranger to it. Any of us from Willow Creek could have found our way about the camp as well as he could.

Evidently, during our meal, which we ate as only men just off the trail can eat, he was thinking things over in that slow, cautious way of his, and had come to a conclusion by the time it was finished. He led the way out to the barroom and office combined, and walked straight up to the desk that faced the doorway as if to keep guard over whoever might come in. The proprietor, who was plainly from the States, was busily trying to enter some bills in a big day book. Hogue was blunt, as usual.

"Do you know a man named Dan Carruthers?" he asked.

The hotel keeper looked up through his spectacles as if questioning whether this was a joke, and appeared to decide it wasn't.

"Sure," he answered. "Everybody knows Dan."

"Where can he be found?"

The hotel keeper looked amazed at such ignorance.

"Up at his house, of course," he said. "But seein' as you're a stranger here, maybe you don't know where that is. Here! Come out in front, and I'll point it out to you."

He slid his spectacles up on top of his head, came from behind the desk, and went to the open door. I was where I could see through it over his shoulder.

"That's it! Up there on the shelf back of the town. That big white house with a light on the porch. Dan's always there evenin's."

He trudged back to his desk, and Hogue stood blinking up at the house

that, under the new moonlight, stood out as clearly as if painted on the hillside. For a full two minutes, with his hands in his pockets, he stared at it, and then turned to me.

"Bill," he said, "I wish you boys would all come with me a few minutes. I want to talk to you."

There was a queer sort of catch in his voice that told me considerable more than anything he said, and I must have shown that something was up by the way I called the other fellows; for they all of them came out looking expectant and serious. Hogue headed toward the house on the hill, and said nothing until we were well clear of the nearest adobes and halfway up the trail to the mountain bench where we were headed; then he turned round and spoke.

"I reckon you men must think I'm one of two things, a crazy man or a common liar. I've brought you along to prove that I ain't either. Also, I've brought you along because I want those we're going to see—up there in that house—that I kept my promise. I can't afford to let them and you both think I ain't on the level and done the best I knowed how."

He didn't give us time to ask any questions. He must have known that we suspected him of something not quite straight; for, as if anything he might say would be doubted without further proof, he started up the hillside faster than ever. He almost ran, so determined he was to have whatever he had to do over and done with. It was all we could do to keep at his heels up the steep ascent, and that, too, in spite of our own eagerness; for I am quite sure the others felt as I did, that there was more behind all this visit than we had ever been told.

It was as if, all of a sudden, the whole night was filled with expectancy. The house itself, big, roomy, white, and fine for a mining camp up there in those ragged mountaintops, looked as if it

watched our coming. Some one inside had switched off the porch light, but the moon was now shining so brightly that we threw long shadows that seemed to tramp by our sides and double our numbers. Somehow, climbing up that hill silently, with those silent shadows climbing with us, we seemed very grim, like men going out to stalk something, or to kill.

Straight up on the porch we went, and Hogue stood in the doorway with us behind him. The room was furnished as a man with money might furnish who had brought everything from far outside and dragged it over the trails. There was even a piano, and in the corner a high-priced phonograph. There were bookcases filled with books, and on a library a shaded electric lamp, in the light of which a gray-haired man in a white linen suit sat reading and smoking. His back was toward us, and he acted as if accustomed to having men come to visit him on business matters, or for orders. He straightened himself up from a big easy-chair, turned and peered at us as if the light shining in his eyes blinded him a little, and said quietly: "Well, what is it now? What do you want? What's happened?"

Hogue seemed to have lost his voice. Then, as we stood there, without any one replying, the man seemed to realize that we were not some of his miners, and got to his feet, came toward us, still with that blinking, peering stare. Of a sudden he stopped, lifted his arms impulsively, leaned his head forward, and gasped rather than spoke: "Hank! Hank Hogue!"

He hadn't spoken very loud, but in the stillness it sounded like a shout. For quite a long time Hogue looked at him, and then said: "Yes, Dan. It's me. And you don't seem glad to see me."

Carruthers ran his fingers up to his hair as if distracted. "I—we—that is—

all of us thought you were dead! Or else that—that you had—"

"Run away?" questioned Hogue, as if astonished that his partner should have doubted him.

Carruthers did not answer, nor did he move. Just stood and looked, with his eyes wide open.

"What's the matter, Dan?" demanded Hogue, suddenly stepping into the room and coming close to his partner. "Come on! Out with it. What's up?"

Carruthers opened his lips as if to speak, then peered at us from Willow Creek, who stood there in the doorway, and said: "Who are these men?"

"Friends of mine," declared Hogue. "You can talk in front of them. Go ahead."

His partner looked at him anxiously, plainly showing fear, and then at us, as if still loath to say anything while we stood there, and it was a pretty tense situation that seemed quite long. Hogue scowled at him, perfectly motionless, not even shifting his eyes, and I suppose that we, too, were like figures cut from stone. And then, as if fate had timed her entry for this pause, we heard a woman coming through what must have been another room beyond, or a hallway, humming a quiet little song such as mothers croon to sleepy children.

Hogue bent his head forward in suspense until she appeared in a doorway, holding in her arms a little girl baby aged perhaps two years, whose soft hair, like shiny silken floss, hung downward in a tangle, and whose little hand and arm swung limply with baby grace. The woman stopped as if Death had lifted a hand and held her, and her eyes and lips opened very widely, and even in the shadows of the room we could see the color leave her face, and read the slow look of misery and fear that fixed itself.

Many things were happening at once. Carruthers stepped backward and to one side, and dropped his arms to his

side with a gesture of helplessness. Hogue took two steps forward with his hands outheld, not so much in yearning as in astonishment, and said, in a hoarse whisper: "Mary!" and then again: "Mary!"

We knew as well as if we were standing in front of him that his eyes were fixed on the child. And we knew as well as if he had spoken long sentences that the woman was his wife. Slowly he turned sidewise until he could face Carruthers.

"Yours?" he asked, in that same queer, croaking whisper.

Carruthers nodded his head. "Mary's and mine," he said softly, and there was that in his voice which told of a great love.

Hogue looked at the floor, staring at the rug, and something prompted me to move toward him quickly, some knowledge that I had seen him stand that way before and deliberate before acting, and that I must hasten to beat that incredible swiftness of his. I was not too soon, for his hand flipped suddenly to the butt of the worn pistol that projected from his old, leathern holster. He had made up his mind. They tell me that I am an exceptionally powerful man; but I want to say that Hogue's wrist was like spring steel, and that even with the advantage I had, it was all I could do to twist it away from his gun. Even then I had to wrench holster, gun and all, loose from his belt.

"Better think it over a little more, Hank," I said quietly.

He looked around at me, at the other boys who had come closer, to assist if needed, at Carruthers, who had jumped in front of the woman as if to shield her, and the red slowly went out of his eyes.

"Thanks!" he said. "You're right. I was wrong," and stood very still.

It was Carruthers who spoke first, and I saw that of a sudden he, too, had become indignant over something.

"You didn't think that Mary and I had—that we—that we weren't married, did you, Hank?"

Hogue still stood immovable; but we knew that this was just what he had thought. The child moved restlessly. The woman carried it hastily to another room, crooning, in a horrid, ghastly effort to control her voice that sounded broken and tortured. I don't want to hear a sound like that again! She came back almost instantly, shutting the door softly behind her, and stood as if undecided where her allegiance lay, looking from one man to the other helplessly.

George was the first to speak. He wanted to keep from humiliating her, and said: "Boys, perhaps we'd best go. These folks seem to have a lot to talk over."

"No!" said Carruthers sharply. "You owe it to her to remain here until this mess is explained."

There was something rather fine in the way he said that. We knew he was all man.

"More than four years ago," he went on, speaking to us and scarcely glancing at his partner, "when this place up here was a hell hole surrounded by the scum of the earth, Hank Hogue and I drew lots to see which one would go out to the States and bring a party to help us out with the gold we'd cleaned up from some placer ground. The other man had to stay and protect his wife and my sister. We didn't dare try to get away together, because in those days this country was a mere nest of outlaws and cutthroats. We had no Mexican we could send on such an errand, but we did have a half dozen that would stay here and fight if we had to. Hank went. He didn't come back. I found a true ledge of ore, and other decent men came. Before long Cabeza was a camp. I went to San Francisco and tried to get some trace of my partner, and could find nothing. I advertised.

I did everything I could. We were certain he was dead; but to make sure, his wife got a divorce, I married her, and that is our side of the story. She loved him as long there was a hope—better, perhaps, than she loved me. And I want to say right now that we've been happy, and I have made all the money any two or three men might reasonably need, and am making more every day. Also that I can't understand how it all turned out this way, because Hank Hogue and I were partners for ten years, and I hope still are. I can't believe, unless I'm shown, that there's a crooked or a quitter's hair in his head, and if I'm not shown, he can have half of every dollar I've made, and of every foot of ground in my name."

Hogue suddenly stumbled and his knees acted weak, and he fell into a chair. For the first and only time we heard him become eloquent. It was as if he were appealing for Carruthers' and the woman's respect, fighting for it against odds; as if his partner's words had torn something loose, and thawed him.

"You don't know!" he said, gesturing with both hands, and they trembled as he lifted them from the arms of his chair, then dropped them back again. "Dan—Mary—I did the best I could!"

He writhed in his seat, and interlocked and twisted his fingers; then looked out through an open window, appearing to avoid the sight of all of us, that he might better explain himself. No more somber figure ever spoke, no human voice ever contained more intensity.

"I was sandbagged the night I landed in San Francisco and left the wharf, and I saw the two men who did it, and fought them until I went down and out. I came to my senses aboard a whaler, north'ard bound, crimped, busted, and helpless. I was a madman. I fought until they thought they had killed me, and never had a chance. Not a chance!"

I went through seventeen months of hell. Five times I tried to desert. Five times they beat me till I couldn't stand up. Then at last we came back to Frisco, and on the evening we got our pay the very man who had sandbagged me met me at the wharf, and wanted me to go and take a drink with him. I hit him, and two others who had been hiding jumped out at me. I had bought a gun. I tried to hold them off, but the crook I had knocked down jumped to his feet and rushed me. I shot him. Then, of course, the police came and nabbed us all. It took every dollar I had to hire a lawyer who came to the jail, and then he proved no good. The sandbagger's pals swore it was a row that I commenced. Maybe that wouldn't have nailed me, for all that bunch had police records; but it was one of those times when the police had been nagged by the newspapers, and they wanted to clean up Barbary Coast; so they went to special pains and had as witnesses against me the skipper and the mate of that hell ship, who swore that I was a desperate man. Swore I tried to murder them a half dozen times, and brought the ship's log into court to prove my bad character. That fixed it. I was sent up for attempted murder—and they put stripes on me—and they wouldn't listen to me when I begged them to lend me money enough to send a man to bring you, Dan, to see me, and they wouldn't mail the letters I wrote! Sometimes, at first, I fought, and then—then—all I could do was to wait, and be good, so as to shorten my time!"

He broke down and gulped and tried to speak, and—well—I don't know all they did, for I had to look out of the window, and then I felt George tapping me on the shoulder, and holding his fingers on his lips, and motioning with his head toward the door, through which, on tiptoes, passing out into the moonlight, the other boys were going;

but as I slipped out after them I saw that on one side of the man in the chair, whose head was now buried in his arms on the table where the light showered all over it, was the woman on her knees, with an arm over his shoulder, and on the other side, bent over, clumsily patting his partner's back and trying to comfort him, stood Dan Carruthers.

Somewhat, as we tramped down the hill toward the camp, none of us had much to say, except Shakespeare George, who kept saying, "Poor, poor cuss! Lord help 'em all!"

Maybe George meant it for a prayer, and it was answered. It must have been a pretty hard knot they had to untie—up there in that white house on the bleak old hillside, after we left; but they were all real people, and faced it, and bravely fought it out, their own hearts tortured by the task, I suppose.

And there was no wavering the next morning when they came to the hotel, Dan and Hank, and told us their conclusion. Each tried his best to put his

partner in the best light. Carruthers had offered his wife her freedom, Hogue had relinquished her. And she, poor distressed little woman, had been compelled to decide.

The child was the compelling factor, for she admitted that she loved both men; but paternity has its claims. We saw her but once again, on the evening before we were to start back, and had supper at her house. Carruthers' sister, a faded, wistful, silent woman, was there, and she disappeared immediately after the meal. Both men tried to force us to take more money than we had expended, but of course we couldn't accept. They wanted us to interest ourselves in their camp, but already Willow Creek was calling us back. They wanted us to stay a while as their guests, but that, too, was useless. I like to remember, though, that as we left the house that night, the last thing we saw was Hank Hogue, cuddling to his breast that baby girl. Yet, as George says, it was "Hard luck!"

There will be another Willow Creek tale in the first October POPULAR. It is entitled "An Angel in Disguise."



GUNMEN IN CONGRESS

WHEN Martin W. Littleton was a member of the House of Representatives in Washington, there was elected to that body a Democrat who had been tried for murder and acquitted. As the case had been given national and even international publicity, some of the other Democrats in the House met one evening and had a discussion as to whether or not it would blight the sturdy followers of Thomas Jefferson to have in their midst a legislator who had been suspected of taking human life.

Littleton, who attended the conference, devoted a lot of time to listening to the various arguments. Finally, one of the leaders turned to him and asked: "Martin, has Congress a constitutional right to exclude this fellow from the House?"

Littleton rose to his feet and displayed a list of names.

"I wouldn't bother about the constitutional law on the subject," he said smoothly. "But, while you gentlemen have been discussing this profound detail, I have made a list of nine Democratic members of this House, each of whom has killed from one to three men. I'll read you the list."

That ended the argument.

Behind the Plate

By N. B. Beasley

The two things that make a good conversationalist or a good writer are special knowledge and enthusiasm. Beasley is new to the POPULAR, but we are always glad to welcome a new man if he has a good story to tell, if he puts enthusiasm into the telling, and if he knows his subject thoroughly. Beasley is an expert in sports, a specialist in baseball; and in this story he shows us how a pitcher can be made or unmade by the catcher, the man behind the plate.

“TELL you he won’t do!” snapped Jimmy Garrity, manager of the Huskies. The person under discussion was “Big Ed” McClellan, as good-natured and as erratic a left-hander as ever hurled a leather-coated, five-ounce missile across a plate. Need it be said that Jimmy was vehement in his remarks? When it is learned that Jimmy was as Irish as his name and as freckled of countenance as the original Kerry man, no imagination should be necessary to arrive at the conclusion that he was not only vehement but caustic.

Jimmy and his chief lieutenant, Kid Cahalan, were sitting in the Huskies’ clubhouse. The Huskies had been beaten that afternoon. Beaten isn’t quite the proper word; they had been overwhelmed, humiliated, routed. Thirty thousand of their loyal supporters had paid their way into the grounds that they might see their pets trample over the Browns, despised second raters and consistent tailenders. Instead, they had seen these Browns hammer the offerings of McClellan through three innings, and they had groaned when a scoreboard boy had turned a nerve-wrenching count.

Chase had succeeded McClellan, and he, too, had been subjected to indignities. Crabb, the star pitcher of the club, had followed Chase, and had tried to stem the tide of hits; but the Browns, hilarious over their new-found success, treated Crabb’s curves and Crabb’s straight, fast one—a pitch that was under ordinary circumstances a terror to batsmen—shamelessly.

Crabb, between innings, had tried to explain to the enraged Garrity that “nothing less than a thirteen-inch gun could fire a ball past that bunch now.”

The Browns had gained their flying start on McClellan. Garrity had figured this as an easy affair, and he had been certain in the belief that one of his bat boys could pitch him to victory over the league’s joke outfit.

The Huskies were fighting with the Tigers and the Bruins for the championship. It was late in August, and the three teams were so tightly bunched that the loss of a game might tumble a leader into third place. The fact that the Tigers and Bruins had also lost on that afternoon only served to cut deeper into the skin of Manager Garrity.

“Think of it!” he roared. “Here we had the softest club in the major leagues

to beat, and we went and burned the soup! I don't mind losing a game to the Tigers or Bruins or a couple of other clubs, they have a license to win once in a while—but the Browns!"

Cahalan, knowing the temper of his manager, held his peace.

Garrity arose, picked up one of his spiked shoes, and flung it, with unerring aim, at a single, swinging electric light bulb. The collision shivered the frail glass into a thousand pieces.

"Tell me, why did I ever send that big boob into the game?" he complainingly demanded, as he turned to Cahalan.

"Well, he looked pretty good out there in practice," mumbled the Kid.

"Practice! Practice, is it?" exploded Garrity. "What's practice? They all look good when they're warming up. They all have smoke and curves and control. They're all Walter Johnsons then. But slip them into a game, and what happens? They blow, I tell you, blow! And McClellan, the crooked arm, is the worst of the lot! I'm a Chinese ragtime singer if I ever yet saw a left-hander who could be depended upon. The first asylum was built for a left-hander, and they've kept them filled ever since."

"But—" began Cahalan.

"But, nothing!" yelled Garrity. "I'm through with them. This guy won't do, and I'm going to send him out of this league so far that his great-grandsons will spend fifty-six years working back. And what I'll do to him before he starts!" Garrity's lips parted in a cold smile, and his fingers were clenched as though holding an object upon which revenge was about to be meted.

"I think you're pegging this McClellan wrong," suggested Cahalan. "He needs encouragement, and he's not getting it on this club."

"He's had all of that stuff he's going to have," bitterly returned Garrity. "A major-league baseball club isn't a kin-

dergarten. We expect ball players to know how to play ball when they come here. I'm not paid for whispering con talk into a pitcher's ear. I'm paid to get the work out of the men. And they've got to work, so long as I'm in charge. McClellan won't do. I've said that a couple of times; I'm saying it again. I'm through with him, and I'm through with left-handers. I'm going to ask waivers on him this afternoon."

Garrity finished dressing in silence. Completing the task, he jammed his body through the half-open door and then slammed the barrier behind him.

McClellan, the cause and the object of Garrity's wrath, was at that moment sitting on the edge of a bed in his little room. His legs were drawn up and crossed under him, and on his knees was a pad of paper. Between the fingers of the left hand, that had so irritated Garrity on that afternoon, was a stub of a pencil. McClellan was writing his old catcher, a player who had seen prosperous days in the major leagues, but who had gradually slipped until now he was with a possible pennant winner in a Class A circuit. In his day, Bill Payne, the catcher, had been classed along with Charlie Bennett and Buck Ewing and the other great receivers of twenty years ago. Even now, when summer's hot sun unloosened the stiffness in the muscles of his arms and legs and bored into the marrow of his bones, Bill was able to show a respectable portion of the speed that had been his in the days that had gone.

McClellan, with more visible effort than ever he put into a ball game, was writing:

I can't make a go of it up here, Bill. I was in there to-day and I didn't have enough stuff to pull a team from an institute for the blind. I don't seem to be able to show the old fast one that I had last year. I don't know whether I've got a curve or not. They lean against them up here, Bill, and it's been so long since I've seen a curve

break past a batter that I can't remember. But, shucks, Bill, I can pitch. I know I can pitch to you. If they'd only bring you back up here, Bill—

McClellan chewed the end of his pencil until the lead was crushed, and then he signed the missive.

He tried to pucker his lips into the start of a cheerful whistle, but the strain broke him. His shoulders drooped, and he threw himself at full length on his bed and gripped hard at the pillows to keep back the sob that rose in his throat. McClellan had the physique of a giant, but that shell of muscular manhood still housed the spirit of a boy.

From the clubhouse, Jimmy Garrity went directly to the offices of the baseball club, and there he rushed through the outer doors, shouldering his way through a small crowd of newspaper men who were hanging around in the hope of picking up a vagrant bit of news. He thrust himself through the half-open door of the club owner's office without the formality of knocking.

"Where's a telegraph blank?" he cried, as he swung around on Charlie Gleason, the owner of the Huskies.

"A what?" ejaculated Gleason.

"A telegraph blank. Where do you keep them?"

"Why the rush?" asked the other easily.

"Just this much of a rush," returned Garrity, as his eyes continued their roving search, "this ball club will be shy one pitcher before another day's sun has set. I'm going to rid myself of McClellan if I have to strip his uniform off his body. The big, good-for-nothing, four-flushing pile of comedy. He can't pitch, never could pitch, and never will pitch. I'm through with him. I'm through with all left-handers. I'm cured."

Gleason arose from his chair, stepped across the room, and closed the door

Garrity had carelessly left open upon entering.

"I had been hoping, Jimmy, that you wouldn't take that view of to-day's exhibition," began Gleason, in a tone that was meant as a conciliatory one.

"Wouldn't take that view!" repeated Garrity. "Wouldn't take that view of to-day's game!" he screamed. "Can you tell me any other view to take and remain sane? Here I go figuring the Browns as marks and—Aw, don't make me think about it! If we lose that pennant we'll lose it because of this game. That bunch has us on the run, and unless we recover by to-morrow—well, unless we recover by to-morrow it's good night for a peek at that old rag."

"It's not so serious as that," said Gleason, with a show of concern.

"I tell you it is. Let one of these tailenders start putting in the screws and turning them around, and it's all off with any ball club. Serious? You're dead right, it's serious, and I'm going to get that McClellan off this ball club if it's the last thing I do."

Garrity again started scurrying around for a telegraph blank, and Gleason, watching him, pleaded:

"Wait a minute, Jimmy. I may be wrong. I don't want to place my judgment on a player's ability against yours, but I want to say something. First, I want you to know that you are manager, and that I want you to remain so. But, if you'll remember, this McClellan cost me a lot of money when I bought him last fall, and if he goes now it means that I am up against a dead loss."

"Yes, and you stand to lose a lot more if you don't get rid of him," retorted Garrity.

"That's exactly what I want to take a chance on. I've been up against a lot of stacked games in my time, and I have generally extracted myself on the lucky end. I'm playing my luck to hold

me here. Anyway, I have a plan. Listen! McClellan is a good pitcher, yes, a fine pitcher, if you please, but there's something lacking—”

“You said something there!” interrupted Garrity.

“There is something lacking,” repeated Gleason. “And I think I know what it is. McClellan has not been receiving the proper support. I do not mean that the infielders have not been holding him up, or that the outfielders have not been doing their best in pulling down long smashes, or that you haven't worked with him. What I mean is—he needs another catcher. I have watched Black behind the plate, and I have satisfied myself that he doesn't work with McClellan, as old Bill Payne did down in the sticks last year.”

“What of it?” questioned Garrity. “What can you do? Black is my best catcher, he is one of the stars of the league. Perhaps you are thinking of having old Bill Payne supplant him?”

“You've struck it—the very thing!” Gleason cut in heartily.

Garrity dropped into a chair helplessly.

“I give up!” he gasped. “You're going to bring—bring old Bill Payne—back!”

“That's it,” said Gleason. “Jimmy, you've been with me five years. I've never meddled in the affairs of management before. I consider you the best leader in the major leagues, and we'll bunk together as long as you say the word. We've never quarreled. I've never questioned your judgment regarding players, and you've never made any move that would give me the opportunity for a second guess. If you don't want to keep McClellan on the club, I guess he'll have to go. But—let me have my way this time; let us see how the plan will work out. Keep McClellan and give him one more chance. Give him another trial, with old Bill Payne behind the bat.”

“I'm not the boss of this club,” said Garrity slowly. “Whatever you say, goes, so far as I'm concerned. I'll gamble along with you on this pennant-winning proposition; but Payne—he's been out of the major leagues so long that he can't even get accident insurance. And his arm—I doubt if he could throw down to second—”

Gleason, perceiving that Garrity had weakened, continued:

“Let's call that bet when we face it. Payne isn't going to catch many games for us. The only time he will get behind the bat will be when McClellan is working.”

“But the other teams will run wild on him,” objected Garrity.

“They'll have to get on the bases first,” argued Gleason.

“You haven't any idea that McClellan is going to keep all of them off the sacks, have you?” scoffed the manager.

“No; but McClellan has a pretty fair motion toward first, and he will keep them running back; and, remember, it's August, and Payne has been going pretty good since summer started her bells ringing.”

“All right,” said Garrity, as though closing the incident. “But let me tell you something: If this McClellan doesn't make good with Payne, he can buy a farm in Jersey, and go to work pitchin' hay.”

Garrity turned and went out. As he closed the door behind him, he stopped, wheeled around, and reentered the owner's office.

“When is Payne coming?” he demanded.

Gleason reached for his watch, glanced at it, and answered:

“Coming? He isn't coming—he should be here now.”

“And McClellan?”

“McClellan doesn't know—yet.”

August had passed. September's days had slowly lengthened and had

been turned back. October, in its first week, was here. Charlie Gleason's judgment on McClellan had been upheld. The big left-hander, from the day Bill Payne reported, had won game after game. He had kept the Huskies in the thickest of the fight. Day after day had he gone in to the relief of the faltering Chase or the weakened Crabb, and never yet had he failed. The Bruins had been eliminated from the race, leaving the Huskies and Tigers to clash on this the final day of the season.

October's sun was sinking slowly but surely across the blue dome of the heavens. Its long rays slanted across a field of green banked with immense stands on three sides. The stands seethed with humanity. Faces were drawn, every position was a tense one, every action seemed nervous, strained, and frightened. Spectators, nearly forty thousand of them, had souls that were torn by the gripping forces of conflict—souls that were rent in fear that the blue-clad visitors would wrest victory from the white-suited men who had fought so dearly for an honor that seemed almost theirs.

On McClellan rested the hopes of the multitude.

The practice of each team was shortened. Jimmy Garrity felt that it would do his players little good to send them through a prolonged preliminary work-out, and Johnny Watson, manager of the Tigers, had dropped in with the idea. The usual brilliant stops and throws and the customary spectacular catches of the practice work were, then, missing.

While the stamping of thousands of feet betrayed the impatience of the spectators, the umpires walked on the field. There followed a short conference between the leaders of the teams and the arbiters, and then one of the latter turned to the stands and announced:

"Ladies and gentlemen: The batteries for this afternoon's game are: Tigers, Johnson and Crandon; for the Huskies, McClellan and Payne."

A call boy took up the cry and megaphoned it to all points of the park.

As the umpire carefully brushed off the plate, McClellan's big frame was seen emerging from the Huskies' dug-out, and a cheer that shook the stands to their foundations went up. The noise increased in volume as McClellan, after picking up his glove, marched, with a sure air, to the pitcher's box.

The practice pitching ended, the umpire bawled "Play ball!" and Wilson, right fielder and lead-off man for the Tigers, stepped to the plate. McClellan's first pitch went a trifle wild, but his next cut the plate. Wilson then tapped a foolish little grounder in front of the plate, and Payne, pouncing upon the ball, snapped it up and threw to first for the out. Kennedy followed with a short fly that an infielder gobbled; and Warring, the heaviest batter on the club, ended the inning by flying to center field.

Half of the period was over; the Huskies had the advantage, and a mighty cheer greeted the players as they trotted in from the field.

But the Huskies did no better. The first man struck out; the next rolled to the pitcher and was tossed out at first, and the third sent a grounder to the first baseman.

Again, in the second inning, did the Tigers go out in order, and again did the Huskies follow suit. In the third the Tigers were sent back to the bench almost as fast as they stepped to the plate; but the Huskies broke. Bradley opened with a single to right field, and Bill Payne shoved him along with a sacrifice. From the side lines, Jimmy Garrity flashed a signal to McClellan to sacrifice Bradley along to another base and take a chance on the next batter hitting him home.

Johnson grinned in derision as he saw McClellan swinging his club. The Tigers' pitcher swung his body half around, bluffed Bradley toward second base, and then unloosened a terrific shoot that came up on a line with McClellan's shoulder, and then dropped across the plate in a vicious out curve. McClellan swung frantically at the ball and made a hopeless miss of connections.

Johnson curled himself into another heap, and started another pitch for the plate, but varying the move ever so slightly so as to put up a fast ball for a strike that would cut right across the plate. McClellan started a swing as Johnson delivered, and ball and bat met in a crash. The sphere, a white, receding speck, shot over the heads of the infielders and dropped just in front of Watson, who was playing in right. Bradley raced home, and McClellan reached first, from where he watched two of his teammates make futile swings at elusive curves.

The minutes flew by as the Tigers batted and failed; and just as quickly did they pass when the Huskies went to the plate in the fourth inning. Through the fifth and sixth and into the seventh went the teams. Then from the seventh and into the eighth. Not a hit, not a run had been made off McClellan.

The forty thousand spectators began to realize what the pitcher had almost within his grasp. Not a sound broke from the thousands of throats as McClellan walked to the center of the diamond. Even the peanut and popcorn venders hushed their bargaining cries. The clicking of the telegraph instruments in the press box could be distinctly heard through the main stand, and to those in and near the newspaper men's inclosure the rattle was exasperating. In one corner of the field sat two of the Tigers' battery men; in another corner, two of the Huskies

were standing together with their arms fastened about each other's shoulders. One was Crabb, a pitcher; the other was Black, a catcher.

The eighth inning was on, and McClellan threw two balls to the first man to face him. Then he threw two strikes, and on the next pitch the batter flashed a grounder to an infielder for an out. Another infielder caught a weak fly, and an immense sigh that was slowly turned into a jerking round of applause filled the air when the third batter sent out a high and a long fly to center field.

The Huskies managed to get two runners on the bases in their half of the eighth, but Johnson's pitching was masterly, and the runners were left.

Into the ninth.

Johnny Watson's face was flushed with repressed excitement as he stepped to the plate, and he swung his bat with a confident air. After hitching up his belt, he leaned across the rubber as though daring McClellan to throw the ball. McClellan studied the batter, studied Payne's signals, and then ground the leather sphere into his glove. He twisted, then his arm snapped out as though released by a hidden spring, and the ball shot toward the plate. Watson hesitated, then swung too late. His bat touched the ball and tilted it high into the air for a foul, which Payne smothered.

A pinch hitter went in, and struck out; another batter was substituted, and he hit as did Watson.

For just an instant were the spectators silent. They wanted to be sure that Payne really had the ball in his big mitt, and it was not until they saw the Huskies trotting away from the field that they completely realized that the pennant had been won—and won because of McClellan's superb pitching.

The game—it had been more than a game; it had been a terrific struggle—was one that would be remembered.

McClellan had not permitted a hit,

nor had a man reached first base on him.

McClellan had driven in the run that had won.

McClellan was a name that was on every one's lips.

The odor of steaming bodies filled the clubhouse as more than a score of happy, laughing players kicked and yelled in glee while dancing underneath the streams of water that shot from the shower baths. They still had the world's series to play, but that, they figured, would be a romp for them. Merely practice, they argued.

Jimmy Garrity still sat where he had flopped himself when he entered. His spiked shoes were on his feet, his cap on his head, and his glove in his hand. Jimmy Garrity was thinking—and thinking hard. At last he shook himself, and, with his spikes crunching

their way across the wooden floor, he mixed with his players until in one corner of the room he found McClellan and Payne sharing a shower.

Garrity's hand was outstretched as he neared McClellan, and his voice was uncertain in its tone as he spoke:

"Ed, give me your hand."

McClellan, wondering, made a ridiculous attempt to wipe the water from his hand by smoothing it against a hip that was bare, and that was lathered with soapsuds, before giving it over to the energetic clasp of the manager.

Garrity then told the story which surrounded the coming of Payne to the club. He related it without a show of shame and without an effort to shield himself. As he ended, McClellan grinned and cried:

"Aw, shucks, Jimmy, you were right. I'm not a pitcher. Bill, here, is the real works. All I do is follow orders."



SAM BLYTHE GIVES AN INTERVIEW

SAMUEL G. BLYTHE, who writes fact and fiction about politics, made up his mind some years ago that his son Stuart was, "taking him by and large," the most remarkable person who ever condescended to step the earth. In fact, Stuart was so far above the average that Sam early decided not to waste him on newspapers, journalism, and the general work of writing. Sam figured that there were bigger things on Stuart's horizon.

Stuart attended several schools and colleges, and gobbled up learning in a manner highly satisfactory to Sam, and the last thing that Sam and Sam's friends knew about Stuart was that the young man was attending an agricultural college in Wisconsin. Also, Sam got letters regularly from Stuart discoursing at length on the charm of studying about how crops are raised and cut down.

"Wonderful thing," Sam confided to his friends. "That's a great thing. Stuart is learning all about the greatest business there is, the business of dealing with nature. I thank my stars that the boy will not waste his life in this confounded writing game."

Whereupon, Sam, being in search of political material, went to Portland, Oregon. As soon as he had registered at a hotel, one of the city's newspapers telephoned him that it wanted an interview from him, and would send a reporter to his room to talk to him.

In due time, the reporter arrived, fully conscious of the magnitude of the task of interviewing a great man like Sam.

The reporter was Stuart.

The Unscrambling of T-C.R.

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Taming of Red Butte Western," "My Uncle Bodfish," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

To avoid government investigation the edict goes forth that the T-C.R. system shall "unscramble"—that its subsidiary lines shall become independent units. Mellish, the third vice president of the T-C.R., selects young Burdick as general manager of the G. V. & P. branch of the West. Burdick, an enthusiastic worker, is elated at his promotion, but soon learns in Green Butte, whether he is sent, that his position is more or less of a dummy one; in short, that the T-C.R. people mean to still exercise full control to the detriment of the stockholders of the G. V. & P. The newly elected general manager gets into communication with his president, Bancroft, and tells him he means to fight the issue. But Bancroft is skeptical of success, calling the G. V. & P. a dead investment. Their conversation is overheard by an eavesdropper who reports it to Dickson, the division superintendent, and a strong T-C.R. man. Dickson plans to send Mellish the details of Burdick's attitude. The young general manager feels that he is doing the right thing, and in his stand is sturdily supported by Rhoda Clayburn, the girl he loves.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Two.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NINE POINTS OF POSSESSION.

SOMEBODY has said that a young man's best gift lies in a youthful ability to change quickly to fit changed conditions. A few weeks before his sudden promotion to a position in which he was accountable only to President Bancroft and a more or less shadowy board of directors in far-away New York, Burdick had been an alert and well-mannered young traffic solicitor, working in territory foreign to his own line, and distinguished mainly for his success in securing business by the time-tried method of making friends with everybody.

But the new job asked for an entirely different set of qualities, and in the few days following Mr. Bancroft's stop-over, Burdick developed them so rapidly that even his own lieutenants, Kelso, Hazlitt, Acklin, and the others, could hardly keep him in sight.

It was on a night barely five days past the president's brief visit that the two crews of first and second Seventeen waiting in the roundhouse tool room for the yardmen to finish making up the two sections, fell easily into a discussion of the portents and happenings which were already beginning to stir the rank and file on the orphaned G. V.

"I don't know any more'n a goat what this little whip cracker G. M. of ours is tryin' to do, but I'm tellin' you fellows right now that he's got my vote," declared Andy McPherson, who had been called to take first Seventeen. "The way he treated me and Hollister on that Bull Trail ditchin' was sure white."

"That's the dope," put in Hollister, who was present to answer to his name. "Nine big bosses out o' ten, comin' on the job to find a whole train piled up and waitin' for 'em, would 'a' jumped onto us with both feet, just to show their authority."

"Tain't because he don't know how to talk back, either," chuckled big Sam Orgeson, who was scheduled to pull the throttle on second Seventeen. "They're tellin' it over at Mother Callahan's that he give it straight to Bully Dickson about the way the main line swapped cars and engines with us just before the split-up. Any man that can stand up to Dickson—"

"I heard about that," interrupted Carberry, Orgeson's fireman. "Couple o' the main-line men that Dickson had been roastin' stopped in the hall and listened in. They said Mr. Burdick shot it to Dickson straight from the shoulder, and Dickson was so crazy mad that for a minute or two he couldn't even cuss."

Gilkie, roundhouse night machinist, was leaning against the tool bench, with his bare, muscular arms folded and one eye squinting sagely.

"There's big doin's a-comin', boys," he said oracularly. "All this here newspaper jokin' about the G. V. still a-bein' the tail to the T-C.R. kite is goin' to miss the targit by about 'a mile. The bosses are all over in Kelso's office right now, stringin' that new time card we've been hearin' about."

"Yes, and that time card's goin' to be some Ranahan, too!" interposed "Buck" Langley, Orgeson's conductor. "We're goin' to open up through service at both ends—Copah and Castleton, passenger and freight. Smithy, Kelso's clerk, told me this afternoon that one and two would make the overland connections, east and west, with both the N. C. and the P. S-W."

"Holy Moses!" exclaimed McPherson. "Say, that'll mean a forty-mile schedule, with no dead time, straight through from Castleton to Copah!"

"That's what she means," said Langley.

It was Gilkie's put-in again, and his squint became a ferocious leer.

"I could tell you fellows a heap more

than that, if I was a mind to," he boasted. "You ain't got the new G. M. more'n halfway sized up. You'll get some news t'-morrul mornin' some time, along about down to Grass Valley, I reckon—if the wires are workin'."

Now railroad men are not less curious than the common run of humanity in other walks in life, and Gilkie instantly suffered an onslaught of questions—which was probably what he expected and desired.

"You don't get nothin' out o' me," he chuckled. "Kimberley give it out cold that the man that peeped before the show was opened'd get his, and get it quick. But I can ease you up a little, maybe. There's a call out for every shopman, yardman, wiper, roustabout, and coal heaver on the G. V. pay rolls to report for duty in the back shop at eleven-thirty to-night. How does that strike you?"

"It strikes me that you're pipe dreamin', same as usual, Gilk," laughed Orgeson.

"Not much, I ain't. And that ain't all. There's eighteen engines in the house to-night, besides the two you fellows are goin' to take out on Seventeen; 'leven of the eighteen are under steam and ready to put on the table at a minute's notice."

"Well, what o' that? Go on!" urged McPherson.

"I can't go much furder, Andy, and keep my job. But I'll give you one more little pointer. When you pull down past the Hogback Mine sidings goin' out to-night you'll see a long string o' flats set out on the shift track. I know they're there, because I was in the crew that went down with 'em this afternoon. There ain't a single side board on one o' them flats, and maybe you'll be wonderin', as you go by, how the dickens they're goin' to load coal on them flats without side boards."

It was at this conjuncture that one of the yardmen came in to say that the

two sections of the southbound freight would be ready by the time the crews were out. Orgeson laughed again and gave Gilkie his due for a parting shot.

"Own up, Walt," he said. "You've told us all you know—and a little bit more, haven't you?"

"No, by jing!" Gilkie was beginning when the yardman cut in:

"Walt been stuffin' you? It ain't all stuffin'. There's a hen on somewheres. Acklin's trackmen, a hundred or so of 'em, are layin' down around the old freight shed, keepin' warm, and Kelso's just sent out an order to clear the yard."

Five minutes later the first section of train Seventeen pulled out over the switches and trailed away to the southward across the starlit desert, and a little farther along the second section, with Orgeson leaning from his cab window, woke the echoes with another cacophony of barking exhausts and clattering wheel treads. In a little time second Seventeen's caboose clanked noisily over the shop-track switches, and Jimmie Bolton, who had evidently been waiting for the train to get out of his way, ran across to the roundhouse.

"An order for you, Gilkie, from Mr. Burdick," he announced, pushing past a pair of grimy wipers who were coming out of the tool room with a box of waste.

"Shove it out!" grumbled the machinist, who also acted as night engine foreman.

Bolton gave the big man a slip of paper with certain numbers written on it.

"You're to get those eight engines out of the roundhouse and move them quietly and one at a time over to track 'B,' and couple them up."

"Got you! What next?"

"Nothing for you. When you get the string of engines placed, Jelph and his yard crew will shove the wrecking crane

in behind your locomotive outfit and couple it on for a trailer."

This was too much for Gilkie's curiosity, already strained to the breaking point.

"Say, boy, can't you loosen up a little? Shake out a few words, and tell us what we're goin' up against."

"I can't," said Jimmie Bolton; "for the bully good reason that I don't know myself. When it comes to that, I guess there is only one person who does know, and that's Mr. Burdick."

"Where is he now?"

"He's over in Mr. Kelso's office; they're all there, working on the time board."

"Working" was the word Jimmie Bolton used, but an onlooker listening at the half-opened door of the office across the yard might have said "jangling." On Kelso's desk a huge drawing board was set up, with a sheet of brown paper, crisscrossed with vertical and horizontal pencil lines, thumbtacked upon it. Beginning at the upper left-hand corner, the horizontal lines bore the names of the G. V. stations from Castleton to Copah. Beginning at the same corner, the vertical lines marked off the hours and minutes of a twenty-four-hour day.

Zigzagging diagonally across this chart were a number of varicolored threads, each representing a train. These threads, wound around pins driven into the board at the intersections of the horizontal station and vertical time lines, showed the proposed progress of the trains from point to point and hour to hour. The freights were already in and agreed to, with their speed and meeting points satisfactorily wrangled out; and Kelso, with an engineer's blue print showing the grades spread out before him, was stringing, or trying to string, the two fast passengers.

Burdick sat back with Kimberley, and let Giffard, chief dispatcher, Kelso,

and Acklin fight it out. Kelso was insisting that the southbound flyer must make a certain speed up Dead Man's Gulch from the desert to the mesa level, and Acklin was protesting that the track, in its present condition, would never stand it.

Kelso wouldn't give in, and neither would Acklin. The acting superintendent argued, with much force, that every minute lost on the Dead Man's grade or any other was a minute that had to be gained somewhere else. Acklin pleaded eloquently for "safety first." Half of the crossties on the gulch grade were dry-rotted, and there were fills weather worn until the end of the ties stuck out. Give him a little time, until he could replace a few of the rotten timbers and dump a few trainloads of earth on the fills. What was the use of—

Kelso broke in impatiently and appealed to the general manager. But Burdick refused to be dragged into the details. "All three of you know what I want, and what I've got to have. Those trains must make the overland connections at both ends of the run—not once in a while, but every day. Go to it on that basis!"

"But the motive power," protested Acklin. "We haven't got an engine in the bunch that'll pull a six-car train up that grade on this schedule."

Kimberley spoke up. "Don't worry yourself about the motive power, Acklin. You and Kelso string your time card. We'll pull the trains."

Just here Giffard, the dispatcher, took a hand. By the subtraction of a half a minute here, and the addition of half a mile there, the speed over the passage perilous was reduced to a limit to which Acklin gave a grudging assent, and the discussion passed on to the next moot point, which was in the cañon through the Junipers. In the heat of the cañon wrangle, Burdick glanced at his watch.

"It's time to begin," he said to Kim-

berley; and when he rose to go out, the master mechanic followed him to the platform.

The night was quiet and undisturbed. Overhead the stars were shining brightly, and there was no wind. Gilkie had four of his eight engines placed on Track B, and was getting the fifth on the turntable. The long yard, ordinarily cluttered with cars, was clear and open, with the switch lights dotting it like so many red and green and yellow fireflies.

"You are sure of the identity of those T-C. engines, are you, Kimberley?" Burdick asked.

"Yes. I gave the numbers to Mr. Shapperton three hours ago. The T-C. roundhouse stall numbers are on that memorandum I gave you. Four of the engines are under steam; the others have banked fires and may have to be pulled out."

Burdick was twisting the charm on his watch chain, his one sign of nervousness.

"There will be arrests by the wholesale, Kimberley, and I'm trusting you to see to it that Kelso, Acklin, and Giffard can prove their alibis. Stay with them yourself, and have witnesses who can swear that they were working on the time card and saw nothing and knew nothing."

The young master mechanic made a noise in his throat that sounded like a growl.

"That's the one thing I'm going to ask you to let me out on, Mr. Burdick," he protested. "I'm not saying that you can't pull it off yourself—I know you can. But you are the one who ought to be able to prove an alibi."

"No," returned Burdick decisively. "I'm not asking any man to take a bigger risk than I am willing to take myself."

"But you'll need a second; a—a sort of lieutenant to see to it that your orders are carried out promptly. Quick

work is going to be our only salvation in this thing, and you'll have a couple of hundred men to handle. Let me in on it, Mr. Burdick. I've got money enough in the savings bank to back my own bail bond."

Burdick's hesitation was only momentary. Then he said: "All right, Gardner, if you feel that way about it. There will be work enough for two of us. Turn the alibi business over to Jimmie Bolton, and then go over to the shops to meet the men, and hold them until they're wanted. I shall be up at the hotel for the next half hour or so, and you can get me on the phone if there is any hitch."

It was quite half an hour later, and Burdick, pacing the lobby of the Inter-Mountain, had burned one cigar and the better half of another when the revolving doors spun around and a keen-eyed, square-shouldered man, who looked like the traditional Kentucky colonel gone young, came in.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting," he said, drawing the general manager aside into one of the writing alcoves, "but there were a good many strings to be pulled. Also, there was a delay; I couldn't find Boss Delahan."

"But you did find him?" queried Burdick.

"Oh, yes! I had to get an auto and drive out to his road house at Butte Springs. He is game, as I thought he would be. He has it in for the T-C.R. Dickson and Canfield tried to upset him in the last election, and he hasn't forgotten it."

"I hate to use such an infernal old scoundrel as he is, Shapperton—even in a good cause," Burdick began.

"I know. If the police and the county authorities were not so hopelessly at war with each other we might have cut Delahan out. But, as I have told you, we have no shadow of legality. We have only the fact that the engines, the crane, and the material, or at least

the engines and the crane, were a part of the original G. V. & P. equipment turned over to the T-C.R. when the lease was signed three years ago. The T-C. had no equitable right to take them away and substitute others less valuable."

"But you have said that it wasn't any use to sue for their recovery."

"I did say so; and there are two good reasons. Though you might not have any difficulty in finding witnesses to swear that the property in question was a bona-fide part of the original equipment, you would have to face the law's delays, and with an unscrupulous outfit like T-C.R. against you, you might be years getting your judgment. That's one reason, and the other is still stronger. You would have to bring the suit for recovery in the State courts, and it is an open secret that Judge Cullam's election was secured by T-C.R. money."

Burdick nodded. "I'm getting it, a little at a time," he said. And then: "I'm going entirely upon your say-so, Shapperton. To a man who has never had anything to do with courts and the law, this thing we are going to pull off to-night looks pretty reckless. But I'm game."

"You have nothing to fear. You will probably be arrested to-morrow morning on a charge of grand larceny and be bound over to the grand jury. If you are indicted, and the case comes to trial, we'll beat 'em, hands down."

"That is your end of it; mine is to recover the stolen equipment if I can. If I once get it into my hands, they'll have a lovely time getting it back again, I'll promise you that. As I said a minute ago, I don't know much about the law, but—"

"But possession is nine points of the law," laughed the attorney. "A Digger Indian knows that much. Getting back to the details: the frame-up is complete, so far as I could swage things

.in the short time you have given me. Delahan will pass the word to police headquarters, and if a general alarm is turned in it won't be answered in any frantic hurry."

"It's pretty nearly a miracle," said Burdick. "I've had this thing in mind ever since you hinted at the possibility last week. The crane and the material train have been where we could get hold of them any night, but the engines have been in service, with never more than three or four of them in the T-C. round-house at one time. To-night, by the merest chance, I suppose, they are all there. Two of them came in on the evening trains, and two more are scheduled to go out on main-line three and eleven. It might not happen again in a month of Sundays."

The attorney was jingling his keys in his pocket. "What I can't understand is Dickson's stupidity in leaving so much of the property lying around here in Green Butte where you can get your hands on it," he commented. "It would have been so easy to get it out of your reach by distributing it along the main line."

"I know; and most of the cars have been so distributed. But we are going to make sure of something like one hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of the loot before to-morrow morning—if the shoe string doesn't break."

Shapperton laughed.

"All right; go to it! I'll be ready with your bail bond in the morning. And—oh, yes; there's one other point. You are cocksure you can identify your own property?"

"Yes. We have the makers' numbers for the engines and the crane, and the trainload of material can be identified by many eyewitnesses."

The lawyer climbed into his overcoat, and his eyes were snapping.

"I'd like to be with you—I would, for a fact, Burdick. But, of course,

that wouldn't do. Have they reached for you yet through New York?"

Burdick nodded. "There was a wire yesterday from the chairman of the board directing me to do nothing antagonistic to T-C.R. It also said that complaints had been made which might lead to an investigation."

"What will you do?"

"I didn't answer it. I thought there might be more to say, perhaps, after the earthquake."

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIGHT OF MIGHT.

Parting from Shapperton on the sidewalk in front of the Inter-Mountain, Burdick walked the short distance from the hotel to the railroad, swinging along briskly until he came to the intersection of the T-C.R. passenger tracks with Desert Avenue.

Burdick shaded his eyes from the glare of the electrics. On one of the material tracks paralleling the T-C. shops he could make out the long train of flats loaded with steel rails, cross-ties, and bridge timbers—the "pick-ups" gathered along the lines of the G. V. & P. a month earlier. He merely wanted to make sure that the "pick-up" train was still there, and it was. Also, he could distinguish, on the spur behind the coal chutes, the shadowy bulk of the big wrecking crane for which the light one had been exchanged.

To the left lay the other half of the field. Just across the T-C.R. gridironing, the G. V. tracks began, dovetailing themselves by crossovers into the larger main-line yard. Two city squares to the eastward the builders of the G. V. & P. had duplicated the layout of the T-C.R. division plant. On the town side of the tracks were the headquarters building and the freight station, and diagonally opposite and a little farther away were the shops and the semicircular engine house.

On the crossover nearest to the T-C.R. tracks at the Desert Avenue crossing stood a G. V. & P. switching engine, simmering like a teakettle over a low fire, with its crew of two men apparently asleep in the cab. Burdick glanced at his watch. It was eleven-forty-five. In fifty-five minutes the T-C.R. overland would be in from the West, waking the station and yard to fresh activities.

The time was critically short, but the midnight interval was the only one that would serve. At one-fifteen the main-line night freights would begin to arrive, and from that time on, the big yard would be crowded with cars and busy with two switching crews. It was now or never, and Burdick ran across to the switching engine and climbed to the footboard.

"All ready, Johnson!" he said, and the man on the right-hand box sat up quickly, and, with a gentle tug at the throttle, sent his engine swiftly backing down the G. V. yard.

What followed was merely a preliminary move in the well-considered plan. Knowing that the success or failure of the next half hour would turn upon measurable freedom from interruption, Burdick meant to make it as difficult as possible for a city mob to interfere. Under his directions the switching engine got behind a string of box cars and pushed it up to the Desert Avenue end of the yard. This done, Burdick gave the engineer his final order.

"Now pay attention, Johnson, and get this straight. After you've taken me to the shops, come back here and couple to these boxes. When you hear three short whistles down in the yard, shove your string ahead so that it will stand squarely across the street and block it. Do you get that?"

Johnson nodded, and a few seconds later Burdick was dropping from the engine step in front of Kimberley's office. Kimberley was waiting, and a few words passed quickly.

"Are the men all here?"

"All ready and waiting—in two squads, as you directed."

"Good! How about the *Examiner* man? Did Halkett send a reporter?"

"Yes—young Walton. He has his skeleton made, with the straight truth of the steal to build on; and they're going to hold the presses for the complete story."

"All right. Give Walton a place on Morissey's engine, where he'll be in the thick of it. Do it quick, and then pass the word to Burkett and Gilkie. The time is short."

The silence was broken by three short whistle blasts from somewhere down by the G. V. & P. shops. Morissey eased his lever into the forward motion, and slid his engine ahead to a touch coupling with half a dozen T-C.R. freight cars which had been left as a "cut-out" on the idle track.

A big freight puller, black with men clustering thickly in the cab and on the tender, came backing swiftly up the G. V. yard. As Morissey was easing his blockade string to a stop, the freight puller took the farther crossover with a deafening roar from its pop valve, and shot away past the T-C.R. roundhouse. The reporter leaned from his cab window to get a better view. The big engine had stopped on the material track and was evidently making a coupling to a long string of loaded flat cars. Walton decided instantly that he was too far away, by the entire width of a railroad yard; and, grabbing the dropped notebook, he jumped from the switcher's gangway and sprinted for a better point of view.

Before he had covered half the distance to the T-C. roundhouse, things were happening rapidly enough to satisfy the eagerest of news gatherers. The big freight puller had made its coupling and was storming down the yard, towing the heavy string of loaded flats. For a fraction of a minute no-

body gave the alarm. Then a night car repairer, tumbling from his bunk in a switch shanty, saw the yellow-lettered "G. V. & P." on the engine's tender; saw, also, that the loaded flats were manned like a wrecking train.

At the car repairer's yell men came running; from the roundhouse, from the coal chutes, and from the three switch shanties. One tried to throw a crossover switch in front of the storming freight puller—and found that it had been blocked. Half a dozen others made a rush for the train to cut it at the couplings, and these were beaten off by the men on the cars.

It was all over in a minute or two, but the thundering rush of the material train down the G. V. & P. yard proved to be merely the signal for a second and still more astounding surprise. Out of the noisy limbo below the crossover switches came a train of eight engines, all coupled together, all working steam, and the last one in the line towing a light wrecking crane.

Like the big freight puller, each of the engines was black with men. As this engine train crashed and ground its way past the T-C. roundhouse, the swarming army tumbled off, massed itself, and rushed the scant handful of bewildered T-C.R. night employees. Walton shouldered his way into the thick of the mêlée. Burdick, with his light overcoat buttoned to his chin, was standing on the turntable, snapping out his orders. At the onset, the rush of the swarming attackers had been like the charge of a sheriff's posse, and every T-C. man in sight had been swept up and put under guard to keep the alarm from spreading. When Walton came up, two brawny back-shop machinists had the T-C. night foreman pinned against a wall, holding him helpless.

Figuring it out afterward, when he was considerably less excited, the reporter understood that the raid had been carefully planned in all its small-

est details: One after another, in swift succession, eight of the housed T-C. engines were run out upon the table, four of them under their own steam, and four with their blowers roaring to quicken the banked fires, and men clustering as thickly as ants wherever there was a handhold to help the low steam pressure in the short journey from stall to table.

With the overcoated leader to call out the stall numbers there was no fumbling, and no second of precious time lost in the accurate "spotting" of the big machines as they were rolled out to the balancing inch upon the turntable. Following the same carefully thought-out plan, the engines were taken in rotation, each banked-fire machine with a live one ahead to handle it the instant the table was placed. Once out, and headed eastward, each coupled pair was sent hurtling down to the crossovers to disappear in the midnight darkness shrouding the G. V. & P. lower yard.

Some uncaptured T-C. man had raced up the yard to the shops, and the big steam siren was bellowing the fire alarm. Two T-C. freight locomotives laid out at the upper coal chutes took up the screeching dissonance, and then a pair of sidetracked yard engines joined in.

There were still two of the eight retrievals to be worked across the turntable when Morrissey's fireman came running across the yard.

"There's a mob half a mile long blockin' th' avenue!" he panted. "Tim and Johnson're keepin' it back wid sawin' the boxes back and forth. Th' fire ingines're there, wid th' chief, and somebody is hollerin' t' bring danny-mite!"

"Don't lose your head, Johnnie," was the even-toned reply from Burdick. "Go back and tell Tim and Johnson to be ready to uncouple and run for

it. We'll be through here in a few minutes."

The switcher fireman faced about to run with his message, and he was hardly gone before Burkett, the G. V. backshop foreman, turned up. His hat was gone, one shirt sleeve hung in ribbons, and the blood was oozing from a cut over his left eye.

"There's too many of 'em for us up yonder on the spur track where they keep the big crane," he reported. "We tried to borrow one o' their shifters to pull it out, and they mobbed us."

Burdick wheeled upon the big foreman and saw the blood.

"How badly are you hurt?" he demanded.

"Nothin' to mind—on'y the blood keeps runnin' into my eyes and blindin' me."

The last of the banked-fire engines was on the table, and the yells from behind the moving two-train barrier at the street crossing were rising ominously.

"We've got to have that crane," was the instant decision. "Take as many men as you need and scrap it out with them! I'll be up there in half a minute, with an engine and more men. Break for it!"

Burkett disappeared with a dozen of his shopmen at his heels, and Burdick shouted up to Gilkie, who was at the throttle of the tabled engine.

"How much steam have you got, Gilkie?"

"Barely enough to move her on the table."

"Give her all the blower there is, and work her out to this east-inlet track with the pinch bars to help. We're going after that crane, but we'll be back before you get her placed." Then, followed by the newspaper reporter, Burdick crossed to the tool-room door, where two of the G. V. raiders were still standing guard over the night roundhouse boss.

"Jordan, you've had the little end of the stick, and nobody can hold you responsible," he rapped out. "We've got that train of material you stole from us a month ago, and the eight engines you swapped us out of at the same time. Also, we're going to get the wrecking crane that rightfully belongs to us. In return, we've handed you back the light crane and the eight scrap heaps you worked off on us." And then to the guards: "Turn him loose, boys!"

It was high time that everything should be turned loose, Walton thought. Though the moving-train barrier was still holding some part of the town mob back, scattered detachments were already flanking the barrier and pouring into the yard. Leaving Gilkie with enough men to help pinch the eighth engine from the table and head it toward the crossovers, Burdick called to the others, climbed to the cab of the one remaining "live" engine, and, taking the throttle himself, sent the big "Pacific type" passenger machine flying up the yard to the spur track, where Burkett and his reinforcements were trying to dislodge the enemy from the heavy crane.

With a yell, Burkett's men pressed the fighting, pushing the growing crowd of T-C. defenders back. Then the coupling was made, there was a frantic dash of the attackers to pile aboard the crane car and the engine, and the cut-out was made. In the backing rush down the yard with the crane in tow, Burdick surrendered his place at the throttle to one of his own engineers.

"One more shift to make, Blakesley," he shouted, trying to make himself heard above the whistling din, augmented now by Blakesley himself in his effort to command a clear track through the thronging mob at the Desert Avenue crossing. "They'll switch us in below the roundhouse, and we'll have to back up and couple in with

Gilkie's engine. He can't get out under his own steam."

Burkett saw and understood; also, he saw what Burdick seemed not to see—a sudden scattering of the crowd on the crossing as of men flying from an impending catastrophe, with the box-car barrier no longer in motion and Morrissey and Johnson hastily uncoupling to make a run for safety. None the less, at the sudden stop, made with the driver jams grinding fire from the wheels and the momentum of the massive crane shoving mightily to make it ineffectual, Burkett sprang for the switch, set it, gave the "come ahead," and was back in his place under the crane jib by the time the momentum was checked and Blakesley was slamming his reverse lever over to shove his clumsy tow up to a coupling with Gilkie's engine.

In the hundred-yard reverse race it was Burkett who clung to the jib down-fall with one hand while he signaled to Blakesley with the other for speed and more speed. At the switch-throwing instant the big foreman had marked the flying crowd at the crossing, and had heard the frightened cry of "*Dynamite!*" wherefore, he knew what was coming. The police or the firemen were about to blow up the obstructing box cars blocking the avenue.

Blakesley did his part well. With the brakes again gripping the wheels, the ponderous crane and its pusher slid up to Gilkie's engine. Burkett and two more jumped from the crane and stood on the engine's pilot to lift the stiff coupling while the others fought back the crowd. There was a hissing of steam, and the coupling pin clanked home. Instantly Burkett broke out with a yell of urgency and warning.

"Jump for it—everybody!" he shouted; "*they're dynamiting them box cars!*" And to Blakesley he made the wide-arm signal, which means all the speed there is, and then some.

Again Blakesley did his part, with the huge "Pacific type" throwing fire from the stack, and more fire from the rails. But now there was the added weight of the banked-fire engine, with a maddened and growing crew of the lately arrived rescuers to be fought off. Twice and once again obstructions were hurled upon the track, and at the last a few pistol shots rang out. Then somebody yelled: "Let 'em go—they'll get theirs at the crossing!" and the cry was taken up and repeated until Blakesley caught it and understood, and so did Burdick.

"What do you say?" shouted the engineer, with a quick side glance for his chief.

For a single instant Burdick hesitated. The crossover they must take lay within less than a hundred feet of the blocking box cars, and he had a horrifying flash-light picture of the explosion timing itself to the moment of passing, with half a hundred of his men riding unsheltered on the crane and the trailing engine. Then:

"Make it, Blakesley—you've got to make it!"

Blakesley went back to his racking of the sand lever, and the spinning drivers took a fresh bite on the steel. A big policeman with a thonged revolver hanging from his wrist caught at the handholds on the cab and tender, and got one foot on the step. One of the G. V. men crowding the gangway snatched up the coal scoop and the policeman let go.

By this time the big flyer was picking up speed. A moment later it struck the panic-cleared street crossing, and shot, with wheel flanges shrieking, around the curves of the crossover to the G. V. yard, with the throttle pulled wide and the whistle held open. Ten rail lengths to safety beyond the crossover switches there was a flash, a deafening roar, and a huge dust cloud to envelope the junction of the two yards,

and to blot out the nearer masthead lights. But the big Pacific type and her tow went rocketing on down the home yard unhindered, and the exultant shoutings of the men on the crane and the trailing engine gave cheering notice that nobody had been killed by the flying wreckage of the explosion.

CHAPTER X.

PAYING THE PIPER.

Street gossip, grinning broadly as it commented, saw nothing but a juggling of corporate names in the new status of the G. V. & P. It made no doubt that the old T-C.R. monopoly was to be maintained, and was touched in its *amour propre* by the assumption on the part of the railroad officials that the juggling of names would fool any considerable proportion of a wide-awake and intelligent population.

Newspaper comment, too, in the region affected had been sarcastic, baldly discrediting the sincerity of the unscrambling. The editors, like the people for whom they wrote, were inclined to treat the entire matter as a huge joke perpetrated by a crafty T-C.R. management upon all concerned, not excepting Congress and the national department of justice.

But on the morning following Burdick's midnight raid, public opinion was invited to reverse itself; or, at least, to admit that the joke, like the legendary shield, might have two sides to it. Reporter Walton's sensational story, filling half of the first page of the *Examiner* and emphasizing itself under blatant particolored headlines, figured as the invitation. Walton had contrived to get it all in; the cutting out of the material flats, the rape of the wrecking crane, the attack on the T-C.R. roundhouse, and the bold "swapping" of engines.

There was editorial comment besides, and the *Examiner*, which had

never been accused of fingering T-C.R. hush money, came out in hearty approval of the Burdick "sand."

Green Butte, which had been pugnaciously loyal to an independent G. V. & P. in years past, thrilled applaudively at a thousand breakfast tables, and Frederic J. Burdick, hitherto regarded merely as one of the many led captains of the big T-C.R. monopoly, leaped instantly into the limelight, figuring as a type dear to the heart of the West—that of the stout-hearted fighting man, the courageous David who refuses to be appalled by the gigantic proportions and resources of his particular Goliath.

Because of this sudden reversal of public opinion, and no less because T-C.R. lacked much of owning the good will of the people it served, Burdick found himself holding a congratulatory levee on the morning of hurrahs. He had slept late, and when he stepped from the elevator in the Inter-Mountain Hotel the spacious lobby was astir with a breezy Western citizenry come to tell him how egregiously it had been mistaken in him, what an admirable scrapper he had proved himself, and how the entire city would fall over its own feet in the rush to sign his bail bond if T-C.R. should drag him into court.

Shapperton was in the lobby crowd, and, after the congratulators had been appeased, he spirited Burdick away to the quietest corner of the café and ordered the breakfasts.

"The bold, bad burglary is a popular success, just as I figured it would be," he commented, hugely gratified at the public demonstration and the generous offers of pocketbook backing. "Half the battle in any scrap lies in capturing public sentiment. If Green Butte is moved this way, you can imagine how your local towns are raising the roof just about now."

"I'm trying to imagine it," said Burdick. "But the credit is yours. If you hadn't had the nerve to advise me,

I'm not at all sure that I should have done it on my own initiative—merely because I would have been afraid of the law. And the public-sentiment part of it is yours also. I should never have thought of making a grand-stand play of it, with an *Examiner* reporter to umpire the game."

The lawyer smiled. "The T-C.R. people will go at you through the courts—which they own—and, failing there, they'll try to sandbag you personally. That is your heaviest handicap, Burdick, as I pointed out yesterday; you are practically fighting the battle alone. You haven't even the backing of your own directory. If T-C. can manage to obliterate you, the powers that be will see to it that your successor is a man who will know on which side his bread is buttered."

"I've counted the cost—all of it," was the militant rejoinder. "If you can keep the T-C. from tying us up in some sort of a legal knot, I'll do the rest."

Shapperton's laugh was a wordless tribute to the rarest of human gifts—the ability to fight with the eye single.

Pushing through the winging screen doors of the café came a big man with drooping black mustaches, a thief taker by every twitch of his heavy shoulders and every bulge in his thick-muscled arms and legs.

"Torget—the sheriff!" Shapperton whispered across the table. "He's after you."

Burdick kicked out the unoccupied chair at the end of the breakfast table, and when the sheriff came up he was welcomed affably with hospitable words and the winning Burdick smile.

"Sit down, Mr. Torget, and have a bite of something to eat, or a cup of coffee, with us, won't you? I suppose you have a warrant for me, but I'm sure you won't insist upon serving it until after I have finished my break-

fast. It's wicked to arrest a hungry man."

The sheriff sat down, grinning. "You are a pretty cool one," he said. "They told me up at the courthouse just now that you'd be likely to break and run."

"Not to-day," laughed Burdick. "My hair isn't the right color. Won't you try a cup of coffee? It is unusually good this morning. No? Then perhaps you will smoke a cigar"—tendering his own pocket case. "Help yourself; they're not bad. A friend of mine buys them for me in Porto Rico."

Torget grinned again, and took a cigar, turning to the lawyer to say: "What kind of a scrapper is this we've got hold of, Mr. Shapperton?"

"One who will stay with you until the cows come home," was the laconic answer. Then: "What's the charge, Torget?"

"Mighty near everything in the code from mayhem to grand larceny with vi'lence," returned Torget, who had been transformed by the Burdick brand of affability from a grumpy court officer into a grimly good-natured fellow man. Then he gave the bit of information for which Shapperton was waiting. "Mr. Burdick, here, and his master mechanic and two 'r' three of his foremen, 'r' goin' to be bound over to the grand jury. You can count on that much."

"There's nothing in it," said Shapperton briefly. "We'll give bail, and we wouldn't ask anything better than a chance to go before a jury with the facts."

"I sure hope you can talk the squire 'round on the bail makin'," was the rather doubtful rejoinder. Then the nib of the matter came out. "Colburn, the T-C.R. attorney, is goin' to sock it to you there. There's three of Dickson's yardmen in the hospital this morning, and a coal heaver with both legs broke. When I come away from the

office, Colburn was arguin' with Remson, the district attorney, that there hadn't ort to be any bail; leastwise, not f'r you, Mr. Burdick. He said you was a dangerous criminal and hadn't ort to be allowed to run loose a holy minute."

Burdick's appearance in the justice's court—his first appearance in any court—followed the breakfast-table talk. Kimberley, Gilkie, and Burkett had already been brought in, and Burdick's appearance was the signal for a crowding inrush of spectators, most of whom were G. V. & P. sympathizers.

The justice was an elderly man who had once been a lawyer with a good practice in the East, and was now a migrant for health's sake, and he was evidently unbiased. His examination of the case was more or less perfunctory, and he went out of his way to remind Colburn, who was prompting Remson, the State's attorney, that there was no jury present to be influenced by his—Colburn's—impassioned interruptions.

But in the summing up the magistrate was judicially impartial.

"It is for the trial court to say whether you were acting within your rights or whether you can be justly charged with the crime or crimes named in the warrant, Mr. Burdick," he said gravely. "Without attempting to decide upon the merits of the cause, I am compelled to admit the force of the State's contention by binding you and Mr. Kimberley and your two foremen, Gilkie and Burkett, over to await the action of the grand jury. There remains only the question of bail."

At this point Remson, primed beforehand by Colburn, made an eloquent plea for commitment without bail. With an ostentatious show of magnanimity, he offered to withdraw the charges against Kimberley and the two foremen, who, as he argued, had doubtless acted under mandatory orders from

their chief, if the one man responsible should be remanded to the custody of the sheriff and sent to jail, where he belonged.

The justice listened with a growing coldness in his faded gray eyes. He was wise in his generation, and it was not the first time that he had seen the gripping hand of the big corporation reaching for its victim through a court official who owed his election to his masters. For that reason he ignored Remson's plea; Shapperton, commenting after the fact, said that he acted as if he hadn't heard it.

"In the matter of bail, the attendant violence, if there were any, will not be taken into account," he said, speaking less to Remson than to the crowd of Burdick sympathizers which had wedged its way into the little justice shop. "Your bail, Mr. Burdick, will be fixed at five thousand dollars, and that of Mr. Kimberley and your two foremen at one thousand dollars each."

Instantly the crowd of sympathizers came to the front, and there were a dozen solid citizens ready and eager to sign for the culprits. When the bonds had been duly executed and Burdick had been given sterling proof of the quality of Green Butte loyalty, there was an adjournment to the sidewalk, and once more Shapperton extricated his chief from an enthusiastic mob of congratulators.

"That lets us out for the present, and you can go on about your business of running your railroad," said the lawyer. "Don't worry about what the grand jury may do, or the court, if a true bill should happen to be found against you. Remson would have to sift this town through a flour shaker to find twelve men who would bring in the verdict he'd like to hear."

Burdick took his release and went down Desert Avenue, approaching the G. V. & P. headquarters by way of the avenue crossing and the tracks in the

yard. The scene of the midnight turmoil had been decently normalized. The wrecks of the blown-up box cars had been cleared away, and the T.C.R. carpenters were putting in new crossing planks where the dynamite had splintered the old.

Reaching the headquarters building, he stopped in at Hazlitt's office. The round-bodied traffic manager was up to his eyes in work, but he dismissed his stenographer at once, having his own small story to tell of the night's happenings. He had joined the group in Kelso's office in time to hear the signal whistles, and to be shut up and locked in with the others when Jimmie Bolton had put his back to the door, declaring that the first man who tried to break out would be shot in his tracks.

"Was that by your order, Burdick?" Hazlitt wanted to know.

"It was! There was every reason to believe that a bunch of us would have to go to jail this morning, and I wanted to make sure that there would be enough of you left to keep things moving."

Hazlitt chuckled. "Jimmie Bolton may have been born and raised in Ohio, but he is taking on the 'wild and woolly' earmarks with beautiful facility. He kept his hand in his hip pocket, and we all thought he had gone suddenly crazy and might possibly have a gun. He showed us afterward that there was nothing more deadly than a handkerchief in the pocket—that he had run a cold, brassbound bluff on four grown men."

"Jimmie's all right," said Burdick, and after that the talk became a discussion of the probable results of the open declaration of war. Farther along, Hazlitt said, with a quizzical twinkle in his eye:

"By the way, you had a caller a few minutes ago—somebody who was exceedingly anxious to see you."

Since intuition is not exclusively a

feminine gift, Burdick jumped instantly to the answer.

"Was it Miss Clayburn?" he asked.

"Yes; how did you know? She wouldn't talk to Jimmie, so she came in here. I tried to persuade her to wait, but she wouldn't do that, either. She asked for paper and a pencil, and left this note for you."

Burdick tore the end from the official envelope, and read the note.

DEAR MR.—ER—PIRATE: I have read the morning paper, and I simply *had* to run away from Motherkin and Joyce. One minute I want to clap my hands and dance, and the next I'm too miserable to breathe! I had a letter yesterday from Sadie Bancroft, mailed in Pasadena. She has been talking to her father, and she thought it was only fair to you to get word to you in some way that the New York people are telegraphing like mad, and begging Mr. Bancroft to authorize your discharge.

Mr. Bancroft says he won't do it unless he is obliged to—and what makes me miserable is that I didn't tell you about Sadie's letter yesterday, before it was too late. Now I suppose he'll *have* to discharge you, and *I'll be to blame!*

RHODA.

Burdick thrust the letter into his pocket.

"We've got to hold out, Hazlitt," said Burdick. "This affair of last night leaves us no alternative. We are outlaws now, and our only possible chance for justification lies in hanging on like grim death and making good. We've got to show results. Money is the only thing that will talk for us. We must begin to dig up earnings right from the jump."

"I can follow you that far," agreed the traffic manager.

"The new time card is the first thing. Smash it into shape with Giffard and Kelso, and get the copy to the printers to-day, if you have to sidetrack everything else. Then take my service car and a light engine and get out among the shippers."

"You're going to give me a free hand in the rate making?"

"Absolutely. Break those T.C.R. contracts wherever you find them and route everything you can by way of Castleton or Copah. Tell the shippers that we'll stand between them and loss, if there is any loss, and give them the free use of the wires. We're in this thing for blood now, Hazlitt, and you mustn't let the grass grow under your feet."

"I'm with you," said the able lieutenant cheerfully; and when the general manager was gone he snapped the catch on his door and called for the rough draft of the new time card, sending two clerks scurrying in search of the dispatcher and Kelso.

In his own office Burdick found Jimmie Bolton holding a little levee, smaller than that which had gathered in the Inter-Mountain lobby, but no less enthusiastic.

Before he wasted a glance on his morning mail he took the penciled note from his pocket and read it again, from the purely frivolous "Dear Mr.—er—Pirate" to the underscored ending, "*and I'll be to blame!*" "Not much, you won't, you loyal little bunch of precious contradictions!" he protested, apostrophizing the absent note writer; and then he discovered that he was still boyish enough to flush handsomely when he looked up and found Jimmie Bolton standing at the desk end, ready with notebook and pencil to take dictation.

There was work enough to keep Bolton's pencil flying through what remained of the broken forenoon. Just before luncheon, after Bolton had gone to his typewriter in the outer office, Shapperton came in.

"Anything new?" inquired the lawyer, picking out the comfortable chair which had once held the burly figure of President Bancroft.

"Nothing startling as yet. Did you think Dickson might come over here and beat me up?"

Shapperton held up a monitory forefinger.

"Don't you make the mistake of turning this thing into a joke, Burdick," he warned. "I tell you, those fellows are going after you—you personally—with a sharp stick. They are not intending to wait for a court verdict; especially when they know pretty well that the verdict will be against them."

Burdick laughed.

"You'll have to make it stronger, Shapperton. You're not asking me to believe that Mr. Mellish, or any of the three vice presidents, will bribe the hotel waiters to drop a slug in my coffee, are you?"

Shapperton got up and walked to the window to stand jingling his keys and staring out at the car-encumbered yard. There is no man so hard to warn as the one who refuses to believe that there is anything to be feared. Lawyer-like, Shapperton didn't want to tell all he knew; and, besides, there were as yet only a few significant facts mixed up with a good bit of inference.

"See here," he said, turning suddenly upon Burdick. "How long have you been working for a corporation?"

"Ever since I quit going to school. Why?"

"You have never seen anything downright crooked authorized by the man at the top, have you?"

"No, I guess not."

"But you've seen laws broken and the rights of other people kicked aside and trampled upon?"

"Plenty of times. I'm not sure that I haven't helped to do it myself once or twice."

"This is what I'm trying to get at," said the lawyer. "In any big corporation there are plenty of underlings who are ready to take the great man's nod or wink and make it mean anything from assault and battery to first-degree murder."

"Give it a name," said the general manager tersely.

"I will. Yesterday, after I had advised you to serve your little homemade writ of replevin, I went out and hired a detective to keep cases on Dickson."

"Well?"

"There's something brewing. Dickson has had three of One-legged Pete's dive cappers in to see him this forenoon. You know Pete's joint and the breed of villains it harbors. Do you carry a gun?"

This time Burdick's laugh was derisive.

"No, I don't. I didn't even when I was responsible for the company's money in Camp Nugget. And that isn't all, Shapperton; I never will. I'm too hot-tempered."

"All right; then I'll proceed to hire another detective and tell him to shadow you."

"If you do, I'll fire you and hire another general counsel," was the jesting retort. And then: "You've got a plain case of 'rattle,' Shapperton—and I haven't. Suppose we go up to the club and get something to eat. Perhaps you'll feel less nervous with a square meal under your belt. There's only one thing that scares me, and that is the New York wire. If—"

Jimmie Bolton figured as the interruption, and he came in to hand his chief a telegram damp from the copying press. It was from the chairman of the executive board in New York, and was curtly mandatory.

To F. J. BURDICK, G. M., Green Butte: Return immediately all T-C.R. property seized by you last night, with proper apologies. Failure to comply will be cause for your removal. Answer quick.

VAN HIZE, Chairman.

Burdick passed the wire on to Shapperton, and the lawyer frowned over it for a full minute before he said:

"What will you say to him?"

"Listen and you'll hear," returned

the first-class fighting man. And then to Bolton: "Take a message to Mr. Van Hize: 'Your telegrams of Tuesday and to-day. We have no property belonging to T-C.R. Will answer all charges to President Bancroft, but cannot recognize your authority.' Get that off at once, will you, Jimmie? I'm going to luncheon with Mr. Shapperton, but I'll be back in time to let you go at one o'clock."

Halfway down the corridor, Shapperton burst into speech.

"I'm getting on to your curves—a little," he chuckled. "And only yesterday I was wondering if you had the nerve to go and take your engines out of the T-C. roundhouse!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE MERRY WAR.

Contrary to Burdick's expectations, prefigurings which caused him to keep his roundhouse and yard well guarded after nightfall of each day, no move in reprisal was attempted by the T-C.R. during the short period which intervened between the raid and the afternoon of the day before the inauguration of the new time-table on the G. V. & P.

None the less, there were portents of a storm brewing. With every loyal station agent, telegraph operator, and gang boss on the line to keep a sharp lookout and to report the unusual, there were stories of strange men turning up unexpectedly here and there to ask questions; of traffic agents going about among the shippers to offer bribes, or, if these failed, to hint that there would be consequences after the rebellious G. V. & P. had been properly whipped into submission.

Backed up by Burdick, Hazlitt put on a bold face, and assured his patrons that there would be no consequences. The G. V. & P. was in the fight to stay, and it would protect every con-

tract it should make. All traffic agreements with the T-C.R. had been abrogated, in fact as well as in name, and the new outlets by way of Castleton and Copah were to be opened and maintained in spite of all statements to the contrary made by the agents of the T-C.R.

With these disturbances in the home field, there were also indications that pressure was being applied elsewhere. On the last of the days of waiting, a certain high official of the great P. S-W. system dropped from a through T-C.R. train at Green Butte, carefully refrained from writing his name in the Inter-Mountain Hotel register, and in due time presented himself at the G. V. & P. headquarters.

Following the handing of the caller's card to Hazlitt, there was a conference of three behind a locked door in the traffic offices, with Burdick to make the third, and with reporters barred.

At the end of a rather disquieting half hour—disquieting, at least, for the two young men under fire—the visiting official glanced at his watch.

"I wanted to talk it out with you gentlemen face to face before we committed ourselves to any definite agreement carrying a permanent rearrangement of our train service," he said. "We want your business, of course; and we are ready to do anything in reason which will enable us to get it. But I am breaching no confidence in saying that we have been warned off in very positive terms by your late lessors."

"Naturally," Burdick commented. "But we are standing upon our own feet now, and if we wish to share our business with you—"

"That is just the point," was the suave rejoinder. "Are you quite sure that you are standing upon your own feet, Mr. Burdick? Our New York people say that you are not; that your own executive board is definitely op-

posed to your policy of breaking with T-C.R. It may be only an opposition rumor; you know best about that; but I hardly need point out to you that your struggle is likely to be a very short one, if you haven't the backing of your own people."

Burdick hesitated. Under less biting conditions he would have taken the visitor frankly into his confidence, telling him the exact status of the fight. But he was rapidly learning to be wary and to make the gaining of the point at issue the main requisite.

"That is a matter that I can't very well discuss with you, Mr. Treadwell," he replied, with carefully assumed indifference. "But I may say that the Northern Central has accepted our proposals for an interchange of traffic in good faith and without question. Under equal conditions no small portion of the traffic diverted from the T-C.R. at Green Butte—notably the ores from the Burnt Hills district—would go to your line; but, of course, if you don't wish to give us the through service—"

"Oh, my dear Mr. Burdick, you mustn't misunderstand me," said the visitor blandly. "We were merely hesitating a little on account of that persistent New York rumor. It is no small matter for us to change the arrangement of our trains, and we thought that perhaps a personal conference with you would throw a little more light upon the situation."

It was at this point that Burdick decided to try a bit of the frankness.

"Let us admit that the rumor has some foundation, Mr. Treadwell. T-C.R. has considerable influence in New York financial circles, and doubtless this influence will be used against the independence of the G. V. & P. But when I say that Mr. Bancroft, our president, holds pretty well up to a majority of our stock, and that we are responsible only to him, I think you

needn't be afraid to accept our business."

By this time the visitor was upon his feet and was again consulting his watch.

"We'll join you," he said briefly, and at the handshaking: "It's pretty evident that you are two rather daring young men, taking a long chance for success. In that case, you certainly have our best wishes. Come and see us, both of you, when you are in Chicago."

"That was a narrow squeak," said Hazlitt, when the high official had gone his way to catch the T-C. eastbound train. "I'll admit that you didn't lie to him, Burdick; but you did make him believe that Mr. Bancroft is with us, and that is the one thing that turned the scale."

"Mr. Bancroft is with us—if we succeed," said Burdick. "If we fall down nobody will be with us."

Hazlitt nodded and sat back in his chair with his hands clasped behind his head. Then: "Are we ready to open the ball to-morrow with the new train schedules?"

"As ready as we can hope to be until we can find a little ready money to spend on betterments. Aeklin has been working miracles, but the track is still in wretched shape in some portions of it, as you know. I was talking with Kimberley yesterday, and he has had to pick and choose mighty carefully among the engineers to find enough men who are willing to take the chances on the two fast passenger trains. That's a pretty sorry condition, but it can't be helped."

"Kelso's helping it all he can," Hazlitt put in. "He has had all of his conductors up, one at a time, drilling them upon the necessity of saving every possible second of time at the stops. The other day when I went over the road he was doing the same thing for the station agents, showing them how they

could cut a minute here and there in the handling of baggage and express matter."

The fine lines which the stress of things was beginning to trace between Burdick's wide-set eyes smoothed themselves out when he said: "We have one big asset, Hazlitt, which we have been overlooking, and that is the loyalty of the rank and file. There isn't a man in the train service who doesn't know that we are taking long chances on the fast time; and yet they are with us to win."

"You are right, Burdick. I get a word of it now and then, and it's heartening; the men swear by you, and they know as well as we do that there is a hot fight on. If we fall down it won't be the fault of a lot of fellows who will risk their lives every day to help us make good."

It was on this same afternoon, and by the same train which conveyed the P. S-W. traffic official eastward, that a private car came in from the west and was cut off to be temporarily side-tracked in the upper T-C. yard. Shortly after the placing of this car, Canfield, the division traffic manager, had a call from a gentleman with cold eyes and a projecting under lip; namely, Mr. Mellish, T-C.R. third vice president, in charge of traffic.

Like Hazlitt, when Mr. Treadwell had made himself known, Canfield took immediate precautions against interruption, dismissing his stenographer and snapping the catch on the door.

"I got your wire," he said, when the cold-eyed official was seated, "but I was expecting you on the eastbound mail this evening. Shall I send for Burdick?"

The caller shook his head.

"No, it has got past that. We are very much disappointed in Burdick. He was with us for many years, and so far as I am able to learn, he never before showed symptoms of softening of the

brain. We can't temporize with a man of that sort, Canfield. We must simply get rid of him as easily as possible."

"You have been to see Mr. Bancroft?"

"Yes; that was one of my reasons for going to the coast. Bancroft persists in treating the entire matter as a joke. But he is foolishly stubborn about it, too. I think the New York people have gone at him the wrong way—it would be very much like Van Hize. Bancroft says that he went to the coast for a vacation with his family, and everybody on earth persists in worrying him about the G. V. & P."

"You told him that Burdick was proving himself entirely impossible?"

"I did; and his answer was that when Burdick did something that was sufficiently criminal, or sufficiently unbusinesslike, to warrant interference, he would be promptly removed. But he took pains to say that the charge must be well sustained, and that it must be something more vital than the mere recovery of misplaced property."

"Burdick is a disturbing element in more ways than one, Mr. Mellish," said the division traffic manager. "You have doubtless seen the newspapers. There is no end to the enmity that has been stirred up against us. A thing like this spreads like wildfire, and it is likely to get into politics."

"It must be stopped," was the third vice president's dictum. "We are looking to you and Dickson to find the way. It shouldn't be very difficult. It is your problem, and you must solve it. We can't afford to lose the business from the G. V. & P. lines, and it is up to you to see that we don't lose it. Burdick's record is good, but every man has his vulnerable point. For example: he is twenty-eight and still unmarried. Isn't there a woman in the case?"

The subordinate nodded slowly. "I believe there is. But it is perfectly legitimate. She is the daughter of a

small manufacturer in Ohio, and is out here with her mother and sister—for the sister's health."

"H'm; how far has it gone?"

"I don't know. But I do know that she is a mighty pretty girl and an expensive dresser. You'd think that her father was a millionaire—which he probably isn't."

The cold-eyed vice president was afoot and settling himself into his top-coat.

"I haven't time to work it out for you, but the girl offers one of your chances. Pull her over to our side and let her find out how much better it will be if Burdick can be persuaded to come to his senses. That is merely a suggestion. The point to be kept in view is that Burdick must be eliminated. Confer with Dickson, and get action. Now come with me to the dispatcher's office and arrange to have my car sent east as a special until it overtakes Number Ten."

It was also in this afternoon of secret conferences that Shapperton had a little talk with Kimberley, the meeting synchronizing pretty accurately with the departure of Mr. Mellish's special train for the overtaking of the afternoon passenger. The place was Shapperton's office in the Lawson Building, to which Kimberley had come on a phoned summons.

"Sorry to pull you off your job, but I couldn't get away to go to the shops," said the lawyer. "Sit down and tell me if you have a man on your pay roll by the name of Rodney."

"I have. He is a pit boss in the back shop."

"Know him pretty well?"

"I know that he hasn't always worked at his trade."

"You are right. That little black-eyed beggar was once a most successful hunter of train robbers on the Northern Central. One night he had the misfortune to shoot the wrong man—which

accounts for the fact that he is now wearing overalls and signing his name on your pay roll."

"I see," said Kimberley, who had lived in the West too long to be surprised at the grim bit of personal history.

"I want Rodney detailed for special service. If you know him well enough, you can tell him what's wanted; if you don't, send him to me and I'll tell him."

"I'll tell him—if you'll tell me."

"It's this way. Mr. Burdick has all kinds of sense except one. I can't make him understand that he is in any danger of actual violence. Perhaps he isn't; but I know Barker Dickson pretty well, and I shall feel safer if Mr. Burdick has a bodyguard who will be shrewd enough to keep himself carefully in the background. Rodney's the man."

The young master mechanic was nodding thoughtfully.

"Mr. Burdick is the key to the situation, and the T.C.R. people know it," he said. "I wouldn't like to say that even Dickson would pass the word to have him killed off; but if he should happen to be laid up in the hospital with a broken head for a few weeks, we'd be definitely out of the fight."

"You've hit it exactly," said the lawyer. "Will you commission Rodney to keep an eye on things?"

"I will; and I'll go and do it now."

This was about four o'clock in the afternoon. At six, Burdick, having loaded Jimmie Bolton for an evening session at the typewriter, went to the hotel for his early dinner. On leaving the headquarters building he did not notice that he was shadowed by a small man who wore a campaign hat pulled well over his eyes, nor was he aware later that the same man followed him out to the suburb when he went to call upon Rhoda Clayburn. But the undersized man was there, and when he saw from his spying place that Burdick was

met at the door by a pretty girl who seemed glad to see him, the watcher behind the gate-guarding shrubbery muttered to himself, shivering a little in the cold wind sweeping down from the great bare battle:

"Sufferin' Scott! he's gone to see his girl, and that means midnight 'r worse—an' me without any overcoat!"

Contrary to the small man's fears, however, it lacked two full hours of being midnight when the door was opened again, and the girl who had welcomed the eight-o'clock caller came out to see him safely down the porch steps. If Rodney overheard what was said in the porch pause, it was only because he couldn't help it—his sense of hearing being about the only unfrozen faculty he had left.

"You mustn't be foolish," the girl was saying. "Why can't we be just good friends, as we've always been? Of course, I'm immensely interested, and I'd give anything in the world to see you win. But that doesn't mean that I'd be willing to marry you."

"It's got to mean it," the small man heard Burdick say. "I'm going to be decent about it and not ask you to marry a possible failure. But when you see me winning this fight, you may just as well call in the dressmaker and get busy."

"No," said the girl, and now there was no touch of frivolity in her tone.

The man under the shrubbery lost the next few words, for a good reason. He had suddenly become conscious of the fact that two shadowy figures were crossing the street to lose themselves beyond his line of sight on the other side of the fence. The watcher unbuttoned his coat and shifted the weighted belt sagging over his right hip. By that time Burdick was saying:

"I'm not going to try to argue it out with you now; it's too late, and you mustn't stay out here in the cold. Give me a——"

Rodney's chuckle was soundless but sincere. Peering out from his hydrangea bush, or whatever it was, he saw Burdick's arms close upon nothing, and heard a swishing of silken skirts, a low little mocking laugh, and the click of the front-door latch on the inside. A moment later the general manager came swinging down the path to let himself out at the gate; and Rodney faded silently into the shadows and made a quick dart to a gap in the shrubbery where he could jump the fence.

Halfway down the next block, where the sidewalk cottonwoods were thickest and the light from the street-crossing ares was poorest, Burdick, still musing over the many-sidedness of the one altogether desirable young woman, heard a grunting oath and a smack of fist to face almost at his elbow.

Spinning around, he saw dimly the figures of three men tangled in a sudden street fight; two trying to close with a third, and the third dodging to plant his blows with the skill of a trained boxer. But when the astonished onlooker would have rushed in to play the part of a peacemaker, two of the men broke and ran, with the third, the undersized boxer with a shabby campaign hat pulled over his eyes, spatting the pavement behind the fleeing pair in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER XII.

NO THOROUGHFARE.

As any lover would guess, Burdick had an imperative reason for breaking his evening call in the middle. The interruption was a telephone summons from Hazlitt, who, after trying the hotel and the club, had shrewdly pitched upon Mrs. Clayburn's number as the next most likely hook upon which to impale the missing general manager.

Hurrying to make up for the porch pause, Burdick forgot the curious street fight almost as soon as he had turned

his back upon the three sprinters, caught a car at the next corner, and in due time found Hazlitt, who had phoned from the dispatcher's office in the headquarters building, and who was still there and arguing strenuously with Kelso and Giffard.

"I know I'm a frost for breaking into your evening," the traffic manager began, when Burdick joined the disputants, "but we're in a hole up to our necks, and I had to do it. As you know, our Number Two is the first train to get its rights under the new card, and it is scheduled to leave Copah at twelve-sixteen, fifteen minutes after the P. S-W. 'Nevada Limited' is due to arrive from the east. Kelso and Giffard are trying to tell me that Number Two can't be held, under any circumstances, and I've been telling them that on this one night it has got to be held."

"State your case," said Burdick briefly, and Hazlitt went on:

"The P. S-W. passenger people have started out to be right friendly to us. A couple of hours ago their division man at Denver wired me that he has given us the Gracchi Grand Opera Company of fifty people, ticketing them by way of his line and ours and the Northern Central to Seattle—our crosscut from Copah to Castleton saving them twelve hours and enabling them to play an additional night in Denver."

Burdick nodded. "That is a pretty good send-off for our first fast train under the new card. What's gone wrong with it?"

"The worst that could go wrong," rasped Hazlitt. "The opera company is on the 'Nevada Limited,' and the train is fifty minutes late. At the very closest calculation, that will make our Number Two forty minutes late out of Copah, and both Kelso and Giffard tell me it can't wait; or if it does wait, it can't make the Northern Central west-bound connection at Castleton at seven-five to-morrow morning."

Just here, Kelso chipped in:

"You know where we stand—all of us—Mr. Burdick. There isn't a man in the train service who wouldn't give a month's pay to see the G. V. & P. pull out on top. But Mr. Hazlitt is asking the impossible. The opera company has three special cars, a baggage, a heavy hotel car, and a Pullman. We've been trying to persuade Mr. Hazlitt that it isn't any use to wait when we know we can't make the time if we do wait."

Hazlitt was a traffic man first and anything you please afterward. He made one more effort to portray the disastrous magnitude of a failure to get the opera company through to Castleton on time.

"If we fall down on this, it will set us back a solid year," he protested. "The Gracchi will lose a night's performance, and the manager will tell every theatrical routing agent in the country that we are good people to dodge. Worse than that, if we don't hold the train and at least make a try for it, we'll lose the good will of the P. S-W. people. They won't know the circumstances, and they will say, with some show of justice, that we are too indifferent to our friends to be worth helping."

Burdick was passing the bad track in mental review, recalling the heavy grades in Jack's Cañon, the many coublings and reverse curves in the foothills, and the hazardous slide down from the mesa level through Dead Man's Gulch. Turning to Kelso, he asked where Kimberley was.

"He is in Copah," was the reply. "He went down on Seven, and I think he is planning to come up on the fast train."

Burdick spoke to Giffard: "See if you can get him on the wire, Bartow." And then to Hazlitt and Kelso: "We'll try for it. It is six of one and half a dozen of the other. If we don't wait for the connection we'll get a black eye:

and if we wait and don't make the time, it will be just as bad the other way, only in that case we can say that we did our best."

Kelso's teeth came together with a little click, but he was game.

"If you say make it, we'll make it or break a leg—if the track will stand up under us," he declared loyally.

"That's business," commented the general manager. Then: "You have an hour and a half; have Conley clear the line and wire all stations that Number Two has the rights of an emergency special, and is not to be stopped or held anywhere unless it is to insure its safety."

Kelso nodded and went to sit beside Conley, the night dispatcher, at the train desk. Hazlitt spoke to Burdick.

"Giffard is making signs to you—I guess he's got Kimberley," he said; and Burdick went behind the counter rail and sat in with Giffard at the extra wire.

"Kimberley's at the key," said the dispatcher.

"Good! Outline the situation to him, and tell him that the train must come through on time; that we'll do our part, but it is mainly up to him and the train crew."

It was the dark hour just before dawn. From the station platform Burdick could hear the clashing of cars in the T-C.R. yard. At the station end of the building there was a train-time stir, with early travelers clustering at the ticket window and others pacing the platform. Burdick turned his back on the stir and walked to the upper end of the platform. He was in no mood for mixing and mingling. Over at the roundhouse a hostler was getting out the big passenger machine which was to replace the Three Hundred and Thirteen and take the train on to Castleton. M'Gaffney, the engineer, was coming down the tracks, dinner bucket in hand.

Burdick shaded his eyes from the glare of the mastheads and looked southward. Far in the desert darkness a growing pin point of light flicked into view. Number Two was coming, and it was on time at last, and in spite of its handicaps. The victory was as good as won.

Burdick saw M'Gaffney's engine pull up to the relieving switch. Then Morissey, on his yard engine, came backing swiftly down on the passing track to stop with a jerk when he was even with the headquarters building. A moment later Morissey himself was sprinting across the intervening rails to mount to the platform.

"'Tis a fight they're lookin' for, now, Misther Burdick!" he gasped. "They're blockin' the crossin' up yonder in the T-C. yard, and they're meaning' to hold it ag'inst Number Two!"

That was when the dam cracked, though it did not as yet give way entirely. Burdick crossed quietly to the switching engine with Morissey, and climbed to the footboard. "Let's get up there, Tim," he directed, and the Irishman wondered at the low, even tone and the apparent lack of anger in it.

It took but a minute or two to reach the blockaded crossing, which was at the upper end of the T-C.R. station. Morissey had not exaggerated. A yard crew was shifting the "cut-outs" of a freight train which, when made up, would center itself fairly upon the G. V. crossing frogs.

Burdick told Morissey to close up and whistle for the crossing. It was done, but nobody paid any attention to the signal. The signal was repeated, but still no move was made toward clearing the way. Burdick got down and walked over to the block. A yardman who was not the foreman appeared to be in charge of the shifting. He was a small man with blazing eyes and a curiously protruding under jaw, and he seemed

strangely excited when Burdick accosted him.

"You people have a copy of our new card, and you know that our Number Two will be here in a few minutes. Why are you blocking the crossing?" Burdick asked.

The man made signs as if he were dumb. Then the answer came as a snarling apology: "We fellers can't help it. You'd ought ter scrap th' man that's givin' the orders."

Burdick spun around and saw the pointing of the yardman's retort. A big, two-fisted, bearded man, with a half-burned cigar clamped between his teeth, was coming across from the flagman's shanty. Burdick waited in silence. Down in his own yard he could see two headlights where there had been only one—the one on M'Gaffney's engine. The fast train was in, and in five minutes at the farthest it would be whistling for the crossing.

As the T-C.R. division superintendent came up, Burdick was striving manfully to hold back the fury flood.

"Dickson, you have our card and you know our rights. I want this track cleared," he said, and he tried to say it calmly.

The big man's reply was like a slap in the face:

"You can go straight to blazes with your new card. As I told you the other day, we'll hold this crossing any time we damn please!"

It was the one small push needed to overthrow the tottering dam of self-control. There was murder in Burdick's heart when he hurled himself upon the bully, and the fight, as the two or three up-running eyewitnesses afterward testified, was no fight at all. As for Burdick, he could recall nothing beyond the first tigerlike spring at Dickson's throat. When partial sanity returned, he was kneeling upon the thrown man, and two of the station

policemen were breaking his grip on Dickson's thick neck. After he had been dragged to his feet he had a confused impression that the big man lying across the disputed right of way was only shamming—that he needed to be choked again.

Past this, a sudden coldness came upon him, and he gasped as one facing the winter wind of the desert. Men had come hurrying, among them Morissey and his fireman, and they were saying that Dickson was dead. Somebody ran to the yardmaster's phone to summon help, and beyond that—red rage leaving many benumbed nerve centers in its track—there was more confusion; he heard vaguely the clattering withdrawal of Morissey's engine, the upcoming of Number Two, with M'Gaffney signaling impatiently for the crossing, the clanging of an ambulance gong on the city side of the

tracks, and saw the cutting of the blocking freight train—by whose order he could not make out.

A moment later he had a shock of vast incredulity when he saw the emergency men lifting Dickson to put him into the ambulance. Without doubt the big man was still shamming, but if so, why did he not quit it and try to restore the blockade against Number Two, which was now shrilling around the curves of the crossovers?

It was after the last car of the outgoing train had clanked noisily over the crossfrogs that the two policemen walked the dazed one silently across to the street, and thrust him into the dark interior of a patrol wagon. Then he realized, with a horrified awakening to the dreadful truth, that Dickson had not been shamming; that the fitting moment of red rage had made him, Frederic Burdick, a murderer.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The third part of this novel will appear in the first October POPULAR, on sale September 1st.



OVER THE FENCE WITH TWO ON

WHEN C. E. Stewart, mining engineer, writer, and politician, was the bright particular star of the pitching staff of the University of Alabama baseball nine, he and his fellows decided to take on the professional team of Birmingham for a game. They cherished hopes of coming out of the struggle victorious, and, to insure this result, it was arranged that Stewart should pitch the first five innings, and that a star of hardly less magnitude should officiate in the box for the last four.

Stewart managed to stagger through three innings without being scored on, but all the time he was haunted by the fear that one of the professionals would knock the ball into a little creek that wound its silvery length through a clump of trees about forty yards back of the center-field fence. In the fourth inning, with two out and two men on bases, the official scorer called out:

"Sunday to the bat!"

The first ball Mr. Stewart pitched was caught squarely by the bat of Mr. Sunday, and there were spectators of the game who testified under oath afterward that they saw the water in the brook splash when that terrific drive finally spent its course.

The husky batsman on that occasion was Billy Sunday, now the famous evangelist.

Strangers in Bully Bay

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of "In Dog Seal Bay," "The Missionary," Etc.

One was a man who wore broadcloth and fine linen, but into his cabin nobody was permitted to enter; the other was a seaman whose dark hair was worn long, and who had little rings of gold in his ears—two of the strangest visitors that had ever come to Bully Bay. They both had their parts to play in the drama that threatened the happiness of Molly Nolan and her fisherman lover Tim Finch.

THE story is still told in Bully Bay, though the thing happened sixty years ago. I heard it from old Mother Finch—Mother Finch, who used to be Molly Nolan of the blue eyes and pink cheeks and round, milk-white neck. She is nearing her eightieth birthday now, and has a great-grandson old enough and able enough to go out to the fishing grounds in his father's skiff. Her eyes are not strikingly blue now. Tears have faded them, I suppose. Her neck is hidden now by a folded shawl in which she muffles her sharp chin; and I imagine that it is no longer round or white or in any way alluring. Her voice is cracked, and thin as a nor'west wind over a frosty roof. She uses strange words. She smokes a black pipe charged with rank tobacco.

This is the story that I heard from Mother Finch last winter in Bully Bay, retold in language more intelligible to the civilized public than her own.

All the lads in Bully Bay, and most of them in Squid Harbor, ten miles down the coast, were in love with Molly Nolan; but Tim Finch was the boy who

caught the fancy of her heart and eye in return. Tim loved her to distraction; but he was a lad of spirit and had a thought in his mind to better his fortune before taking a wife. He was desperately weary of the shore fishing and its scanty rewards; so he dreamed some brave dreams and interpreted them to Molly, then kissed her and set out for Harbor Grace. In that fine town he signed on for a voyage to South America. And from the gray wharf of Munison & Co. he sailed away one gray morning in the barkentine *Flora*.

Tim Finch was so little of a scholar that he could not write even his own name. Molly was as ignorant of such things as Tim. Needless to say, they did not correspond. Months passed without any word of Tim being received in Bully Bay. Molly missed him cruelly and worried about him. She lost nights of sleep in wondering miserably why she had let him go. So February, March, and April wore heavily away, dragging every hour across the heart of Molly Nolan like a link in a heavy chain.

Early in May, Skipper Kelly sailed around to Harbor Grace for a freight

of hard bread, twine, salt, and other staple articles of trade in and about Bully Bay. He won back to Bully Bay on the seventeenth day of the month, with bitter news and a passenger. Because of the news but slight attention was paid to the fore-and-afters passenger during the hour of landing. In Harbor Grace, Skipper Kelly had heard that the barkentine *Flora* had been wrecked in the Caribbean Sea, somewhere to the north and west of St. Kitts, with a total loss of vessel, cargo, and crew.

Molly Nolan didn't show herself outside her father's cabin for a week after that.

The stranger whom Skipper Kelly had brought from Harbor Grace was a young man of unusual and distinguished appearance. He did not belong to Harbor Grace. He gave his name as John McGrath, and admitted that he was the son of an Irishman. It seems that he had come to Bully Bay for rest and opportunity for study. He wore broadcloath and clean white linen every day. Though gracious of manner and smooth of tongue, he answered few questions. He had gold in his pocket, and his luggage consisted of several leather bags and two heavy boxes. His manner was detached but courteous.

He rented a two-roomed cabin which stood at the back of the harbor, above and behind the other cabins, from Skipper Kelly; but he never invited his neighbors in to warm his house for him. Outside his own door he was friendly enough, in his own superior and detached way. He frequently entered the huts of the needy with gifts of tea, tobacco, or snuff. He gave three bottles of brandy to old Tom Dodd, whose life was flickering, blankets to Widow Burke, and thirty silver half-dollars to another poor woman. Those thirty big silver coins started the story that he manufactured money in

his cabin, and all the people hoped that he would continue to manufacture it. They did not hold it against him. He was a grand customer for Skipper Kelly.

Skipper Kelly had heard more about Mr. McGrath than he cared to repeat. A goose that laid golden eggs, or even silver eggs, was sure to receive proper attention at the skipper's hands. In Harbor Grace he had been told that the stranger had arrived at that port in a schooner belonging to the southern coast of the island, and he had heard a rumor in Pat Hawkins' shebeen that the stranger had come to Newfoundland from the little French island of St. Pierre. All this the skipper kept to himself. He did not mention it even to Mr. McGrath.

May passed, but June did not awaken Molly Nolan's benumbed heart or solve the mystery of John McGrath; but it was in June that the stranger first spoke to Molly. He met her face to face one morning on the land-wash, halted, lifted his hat, and bowed and regarded her with kind but pensive eyes. They were beautiful eyes, of so dark a gray as to appear black in some lights; but far back in them, deep beneath the clear lights of sadness and kindness, lurked a strange cross-flicker of fire that daunted the girl. Her blue eyes lowered before his unblinking gaze.

"You are sad," he said, in a deep and musical voice. "Your heart is heavy with the misery about you, the misery to which you were born."

She made no reply. She did not understand. He stepped aside and passed her with bowed head.

After that she listened to the nightly talks of her father and brothers about the stranger's affairs. Up to that time she had paid no attention to them. The men were of the opinion that McGrath was not only a coiner, but that he possessed the secret of turning certain materials into the precious metals.

They had seen him wandering among the rocks and over the barrens as if in search of something. Peter Walsh had rebuilt his chimney for him. Heavy blankets were fastened across his windows, day and night, but not so securely but that fingers of violent red light had been discerned about the window casings as late as two o'clock in the morning. And the new chimney had been seen to throw out sparks and flames many times, always after midnight.

"But he be's free wid the stuff he makes," said one of the boys. "He give Peter Walsh three gold pieces for the work on the chimley, an' only yesterday he throwed a dollar to little Bill Dodd."

"I wishes to Heaven there be'd more like 'im on this coast," said the father. "But we'll keep it mum, b'ys. If the merchants i' St. John's an' Harbor Grace heared talk of it, or the governor, the police would be sent round to take 'im away to prison. Aye, that they would. It be's dead agin' the law for any one save the king an' the governor to make money an' the rich merchants to git it an' have the spendin' of it."

Molly's flicker of interest in the mysterious stranger was not strong enough to lighten anything of her weight of grief. Shortly after the first meeting with McGrath, she awoke one morning before dawn, sick and restless with her misery. She slipped from her blankets, dressed, and left the stuffy cabin. The stars were veiled. She wandered aimlessly upward toward the top of the broken cliff and the wide barrens beyond.

She rounded a corner of rock, and halted at the sight of a pulsing red radiance and pulsing clouds of sparks at the crown of the stranger's chimney. She knew that he was burning coals under a forced draft, even as Con Kelly, the skipper's brother, burned them in his forge to bring iron to a crawling

white heat. No doubt he was even now fusing some common earth or rock into gold. She was chilled with awe, and for a little while forgot her grief.

She took another path, and so gave the stranger's cabin a wide berth in ascending to the edge of the barren. From that commanding position she watched the pulsing fire of the chimney with fascinated eyes until it fell at last and failed to flare up again. Then she turned her gaze to the east, and saw the dawn lighten like the opening of a gray eye along the sea's edge. The windows of the cabins winked to yellow in the gloom beneath her. The light in the east washed wide and high and took on a rosy tinge. She scanned the empty sea with longing eyes, then started listlessly down the path. Near McGrath's hut she paused for a moment. The air was heavy with a bitter, stinging odor, which was unlike anything she had ever smelled before.

The men and boys went out to the fishing in their gray skiffs. It was still early in the morning when Molly Nolan went over to a neighbor's hut, where a child of seven years had been ill for two or three days. She heard the sobbing and moaning of women from within; and before her foot had touched the threshold the door opened and John McGrath came out. His thin, clean-shaven face was bloodless, and his wonderful eyes were glowing red at their depths. He gripped one of the girl's wrists with fingers hard as iron.

"He is dead!" he cried passionately. "Dead! Dead of a little cold, because he had no strength to fight against it. He has been starved since he was born—and before he was born. Some of us live and grow strong on starvation, but most of us die. But the sun is rising—the world is awaking—the starved and the downtrodden are beginning to wonder, to question, to turn their hungry eyes toward the gilded sources of their misery! When I was

a child I saw my mother die for want of food! I saw the police, officers of the law, tools of the rich, lead my father away to prison because he had taken bread from the rich with which to feed his starving wife and children. But the poor will arise and strike! The monsters of greed and selfishness who grind us down and starve our bodies and our souls will be dragged down from their high places! Nay, rather will they be sent higher—scattered, dismembered, uncrowned!"

He laughed wildly, bitterly, and shook the girl in the violence of his agitation. His eyes were terrible to behold.

"And I am one of the chosen instruments of their undoing!" he exclaimed. "I have the brain and the heart for the task. Little do they guess the fate that is even now being shaped for them here in Bully Bay!"

Molly was afraid. She pulled herself free of him and ran home. He did not follow her. He did not even look after her. It would almost seem that he was unaware of her agitated departure.

It was mid-afternoon of the tenth day of July when Molly Nolan saw the answer to her prayers. She was mopping in the cabin. The men were away at the fishing, and her mother was down at the drying stages, turning over the split fish in the wind and sunshine. Molly had been excused from work that day, for the misery of her heart was affecting her bodily health.

She heard a step on the stone before the door, and turned in time to see the door open and Tim Finch enter the room—Tim Finch, her lover, who had gone down with the *Flora* in April in some surf-smoked corner of a distant sea. She did not see the other man at Tim's shoulder, for a black curtain fell before her eyes. She screamed and sank to the floor in a swoon.

When she regained consciousness

and opened her eyes, she felt Tim's arms around her and looked up into his face. She saw that his cheeks were thinner than she had known them and that his whole face was aged and care-worn. But it was Tim—Tim in the flesh—and not a ghost from some weltering sea cave! His eyes were brighter and hungrier than of old, but no less tender. The old light of love was in them. She put up a hand and touched his face.

"I feared ye were dead," she whispered. "They told me as how ye were drownded."

And then, for the first time, she saw Nicholas Barrow, the man who had entered the cabin at Tim's heels. She gazed up at him in wide-eyed dismay and inquiry past Tim's lean jaw. Tim twisted his neck to follow her glance. His face flushed darkly.

"Can't ye wait outside a minute?" he exclaimed fretfully.

The other smiled, turned slowly, and left the room. He was a tall man, lean and well built, and maybe a few years older than Tim. His eyes were dark brown, his face was long and warmly tinted, his dark hair was worn long about his ears. He had little rings of gold in his ears.

"That be's Nick Barrow, a shipmate o' mine," said Tim. "We was wrecked together an' saved together—an' he come home wid me—blast 'im!"

For a week Molly was happy, and the bloom returned to her cheeks and the color to her eyes. Her lost lover was alive and at her side again. The hungry, cheating sea had been cheated of him. Tim's story of his escape from death was that he and Barrow only of the barkentine's company had won ashore from the breaking wreck.

They had fought gigantic walls of green water and hissing foam, been rolled and beaten upon reefs of coral, and at last had been tossed unconscious upon a thin strip of spray-veiled sand.

They had snatched a little oaken breaker of water and several packages of food from the surf.

Slowly and painfully they had made their way from one seething reef to another, from one smothered cay to another, until they had reached at last an isle of sand and coral rock upon which grew half a dozen coconut trees, a few whitewood saplings, and a thicket of sea grapes. There they had existed miserably for ten or twelve days, at the end of which time they had been sighted and taken off by a Spanish brig bound for Bahia.

Having no power of choosing their course, they, too, had gone to Bahia—and they had worked like dogs for their passage. After assisting in the unloading and loading of the Spanish bark they had obtained berths aboard a big American schooner freighted with coffee and bound for New York. From New York they had worked their way northward, and here they were in Bully Bay. That was the story as told by Tim Finch and agreed to in silence by Nicholas Barrow.

Tim was an orphan. Nick Barrow lived with him. Tim owned a skiff, and in it went out to the fishing; but Barrow remained ashore and smoked his pipe in idleness like an old woman or a gentleman. And yet Barrow was as able to work as Tim or any other man in the harbor; and the folk considered Tim a fool for supporting his shipmate in idleness. They wondered if the poor lad had suffered an injury to his head when the surf was knocking him about on the reefs of coral. They thought it likely.

Nicholas Barrow was never without a few coins to jangle in his pocket. He spent most of his idle hours close to Molly Nolan, entertaining her with stories of ships and cities and strange seas. Sometimes he even helped her at her work on the drying stages. Molly was interested in his stories, but

she would have been better pleased had she heard them from Tim.

Molly was happy for a week, and then Tim's manner toward her and toward the world began to change. He avoided her. Of that there could be no mistake, for she was not the only one to notice it. His face became thinner and more haggard day by day. He looked as if he carried the black weight of all the world's care on his shoulders and the tears of all its griefs in his breast. When she first saw this change she clasped him in her arms, clung to him, and questioned him.

"It bain't nothin'," he groaned. "Sure I loves ye, Molly—an' may the divil throttle me else! I bain't feelin' jist right, girl."

She saw torment in his honest eyes—torment writhing under a film of tears. She kissed him. He crushed her to him, pressing hot lips on her mouth and eyes.

"I loves ye," he whispered violently, despairingly. "I'll watch ye safe if they kills me for it!"

Then he freed himself from her embrace and fled.

Fear, anxiety, and bewilderment kept sleep from Molly's humble couch that night. Early in the morning she was down on the land-wash, waiting for him; but he did not come to his skiff that day or go out to the fishing. He wandered far about the barrens through the bright and empty hours, and did not return to his cabin until late at night. That was the commencement of his mad and mysterious behavior, and that was the way he carried on day after day, week after week. Molly could only think that his mind had given away, and others were with her in that belief. Nicholas Barrow expressed himself as being of the same opinion, and told Molly of a day on that sandy, sun-beaten patch of sand and rock when Tim had raved like a maniac for hours.

"It was the sun hit him," said Nick.

"an' he ain't bin the same since. He gits queer every now an' ag'in. The sun got clean into his brain, I reckon. I've knowed other men who was sunstruck like that—an' they never got better of it. That's why I come to Bully Bay with him; to see him safe home. Some die an' some go ravin' mad. There was one lad I used to know, from my own town in Nova Scotia, who come home from a v'yage an' killed his own wife. He'd bin sunstruck, same as poor Tim."

Molly's brain accepted this, but her heart refused it. Her heart told her that something more terrible than sunstroke was ailing Tim Finch—something more terrible but not incurable. Her heart distrusted Nicholas Barrow.

Nicholas divided his time and attention between Molly Nolan and John McGrath. He courted Molly openly and McGrath covertly. He listened keenly to all that was said in the little harbor about the strange young Irishman and his stranger works and ways. He believed all that he heard about the manufacture of gold and silver. He was only an able seaman, after all—and this happened sixty years ago. So he spied upon McGrath, usually devoting the small, black hours of the morning to his spying. He could see nothing through the blanketed windows.

One morning, as chance would have it, the Irishman opened his door suddenly and discovered Nicholas skulking against the side of the cabin. The sailor caught a brief glimpse of an interior as red as a furnace—and then he caught McGrath's fist on his ear. It was over in half a minute, and that was not a second too soon for Nicholas Barrow. The alchemist slipped back into the cabin and bolted the strong door, and the sailor slunk away to his bed, wiping blood from his face and vowed vengeance.

Nicholas remained in retirement throughout the day and bathed his face

and head frequently. He was still determined upon revenge, but he would not lift his hand against McGrath until he had discovered McGrath's secret. He sat alone in Tim's cabin, for Tim was wandering abroad on the barrens behind the harbor. The dusk of evening thickened at the window. Suddenly the door opened and John McGrath himself stepped into the room. Nicholas jumped to his feet.

"Sit down!" said the visitor coolly. "I've come to warn you that if I catch you spying around my cabin again, day or night, I'll kill you. I'd be sorry to have to do it, but the world can't afford to have my great work interrupted or endangered. Remember!"

II.

By this time it was the belief of every man, woman, and child in Bully Bay that Tim Finch was insane—with the exception of Molly Nolan—and of Nicholas Barrow, perhaps. They believed the story of the sunstroke. Tim continued to keep away from Molly, but he made no effort to leave the harbor. He did not fish now, but wandered about the coast and abroad on the barrens, more idle than his shipmate. On fine nights he lay out, in the woods of var and spruce above the bay or among the rocks down by the tide. On foul nights he took shelter in his cabin, but he never exchanged word or glance with Nick Barrow. His attitude seemed to amuse Nicholas.

One evening Molly lay in wait for her mad lover in a little patch of spruce tuck on the barren and caught him fairly. She clung to the front of his rough coat with both hands and held on desperately.

"Be ye mad, Tim?" she cried. "Be ye gone ravin' mad? Have ye forgot how to love me? Look me in the eye, lad—an' tell me true!"

He looked her fairly in the eyes. A

tortured soul looked out of his. She shuddered and hid her face against his breast.

"Mad!" he cried. "Holy saints, but I'll soon be ravin' mad! But if he don't go away—if he don't soon—mad or sane, I'll have his life!"

"Drive him out o' the harbor—an' come back yerself," sobbed the girl. "He be's wantin' me to—to go away wid him. An' they all says as how ye be's mad, Tim."

"Not yet, for the love o' Heaven," he replied harshly. "I bain't mad yet—an' maybe he'll weary of it an' go away of his own free will. But he'll never take ye wid him, Molly! I'll kill him first—aye, murder him!"

He kissed the top of her bowed head, then suddenly gripped her clinging hands in his, and loosed their hold and fled from her into the dusk and vague shadows of the barrens. She flung herself on the moss and lay there sobbing for several minutes. Her brain was numb with the mystery of it all, and her heart was torn with pity for Tim and for herself. At last she got to her feet and returned to the harbor and her father's cabin; and slowly a little spark of hope brightened and grew to a flame in her heart. Tim was not insane! And he still loved her!

Nicholas Barrow did not waver in his determination to discover the alchemist's secret, but he went about his spying even more cautiously than before. He felt that the gray-eyed one had promised no more than he meant to perform when he spoke of killing. On the second, third, and fourth days after his beating he followed Molly Nolan like her shadow, whispering to her what a rich man he was and begging for her promise to go away with him to his fine home up along in Nova Scotia.

The girl pretended to listen, for she was afraid of him—afraid of him for Tim's sake. Her love and her woman's

wit told her that it was this tall sailor and not a stroke of the sun that was playing the devil with poor Tim. She smiled and blushed at his talk and avoided his kisses and embraces by only fractions of inches—and all the while hate rankled in her and her fingers twitched to be at his throat,

On the fifth day after the violent meeting between John McGrath and Nicholas Barrow, a schooner from the Labrador fishing grounds went on the outer fangs of the Figgy Duff Rocks, in a fog and a heavy run of sea. She had fisherman and their families and their fortune aboard—a dozen men and lads, five women, some children, and a season's take of fish.

They were strangers to the folk of Bully Bay, but at the first distressful cry from the breaking schooner, every able-bodied human in the harbor turned out to the rescue. John McGrath locked his door behind him and hastened to the scene of the disaster. Tim Finch heard the cry and answered it. The little harbor emptied itself of all its inhabitants save the old, the very young, the sick, and Nicholas Barrow. In the excitement, no one gave a thought to Nicholas.

After three starts and three failures, a broken skiff and a broken arm, five men got a boat to the rocks and from the rocks got a line to the schooner. It was John McGrath who pulled stroke in that boat, and it was Tim Finch who steered her safe through the churning and sloshing of the surf.

Nicholas Barrow made his way through the fog to McGrath's cabin without loss of time. He carried an empty sack and an ax. With half a dozen well-placed and vigorous blows of the ax he drove the frame of one of the windows inward. He crawled into the cabin, glanced quickly around him, then replaced the window. The air of the cabin was heavy with a strange, bitter smell. A forge built

of scraps of iron stood in the chimney, and on it glowed a deep, still fire of coals. Near by stood a roughly constructed bellows.

No gold was in sight; but in a corner far from the fire a stack of short, grayish-black sticks lay on a folded blanket. Those queer sticks caught Nick's eye and attention sharply. He did not doubt their significance for a moment, but stepped over to them, examined them closely, weighed them in his hands, sniffed at them.

He knew that this gray-black stuff was the gold—the wizard gold of John McGrath's manufacture, but he was not so sure whether it lay in his hand in a state of incompleteness or simply in a state of disguise. He would make it answer that question for itself. He put all of it in the sack except one stick, and carried the sack over to the fire and laid it on a corner of the makeshift forge.

For half a minute he stood and examined the little gray-black bar which he held in his hands, turning it over and over, as if he would tear McGrath's secret from it with the pull of his eyes. At last he leaned forward to put it to the test of fire. His right elbow pushed the sack and toppled it over on its side, and a corner of it fell on the still, deep fire. A little flame shot up.

John McGrath was on the deck of the straining schooner, busy with the work of rescue, when the sudden, smashing report shook the clinging fog, and for a second drowned the bellowing of the seas. Never before had such a terrific sound been heard on that coast. McGrath held a child in his arms—arms strong as seasoned ash-wood, but white of skin and curiously scarred about the wrists as if by fire. His embrace tightened convulsively upon the child until it cried out in pain.

His face went gray as the dripping canvas above him. He laughed bitterly—and that sound brought the others out of their trance. Some of the women went fearfully back to the harbor, but John McGrath and Tim Finch and the fishermen continued at their work aboard the stricken schooner until every soul aboard was safe on the land-wash.

III.

They found nothing but wreckage where McGrath's cabin had stood—wreckage of timber, of iron and stone, and of the body of Nicholas Barrow. John McGrath refused to answer any questions.

"The great work is put off for a little while," he said; "but, even so, there is one knave the less in the world."

They had to make what they could of that. They pitied him, seeing his suffering in his eyes; but there was no pity felt in that harbor for Nicholas Barrow. And it was then that the madness and strangeness passed away from Tim Finch. He looked at the shattered timbers of the cabin and the thing that had been his shipmate. For a second wonder held him, and then he turned and went to Molly Nolan. The light of torment was gone from his honest eyes, and the shadow of fear from his face. He took her in his arms and held her close while he whispered to her the truth of his madness.

Four men, not two, had saved themselves from the wreck of the *Flora*. Two had gone temporarily insane on the little island, with fear and the unrelenting torture of the sun, and Nicholas Barrow had been poisoned by something he had eaten. Tim alone was left whole of mind and body. They had refused it to Tim and the sick man. Then they had suggested the killing of the sick man, so as to save provisions. More than that, they had

attempted the murder twice before Tim had killed them both in a fair fight.

Barrow had seen the killing of the two, and had always kept it bright in his mind. He had seen the bodies buried—and had noted a wound in the skull of one that would last until the Day of Doom.

For his part he had entertained no fear of the opening of those graves and the telling of the truth, for at the time of the rescue he had been found too weak to lift his hand and worn to a skeleton by the wasting of the poison. So he had held tight to Tim, and Tim had worked for both of them. And so he had followed Tim to Bully Bay, pleased with the easy life and the sense of power.

He had desired Molly Nolan for himself before he had seen her many times, and had promptly told Tim to get out of the game or be hanged by the neck for the murder of the mate and cook of the *Flora*.

Tim had not wanted to hang for the killing of those two madmen in fair fight; and he had not wanted to hang for the murder of Nicholas Barrow, if it could be avoided. So he had waited, hoping and praying that Heaven, or maybe just sailorman's luck, would take the decision and the execution out of his hands. And his prayers had been answered!

"But why didn't ye tell it all to me, instid o' hidin' away from me an' tearin' me poor heart?" she asked.

"I knowed the grand spirit o' ye too well, Molly," he answered. "I feared

as how ye wouldn't wait—but would up an' kill the false beast wid yer own two hands. So I hid from ye, girl, an' I waited—all because o' me love for ye."

John McGrath went away, taking the blessings of Bully Bay with him, and was never again seen on that coast.

To this day old Mother Finch, who used to be Molly Nolan, is firmly of the opinion that John McGrath made gold out of stones and earth, and that he lost the trick of it when the devil, in the person of Nicholas Barrow, exploded his cabin and his gear with a blast of hell fire. But she is puzzled to know why Nicholas Barrow permitted his own destruction.

I told her what I know of John McGrath. I told her that it was not gold, but a terrible explosive that he had manufactured in Bully Bay; that something he had learned in Bully Bay had changed his views as to the best way of relieving the sufferings of the poor, and that by kindness and the power of the tongue and pen he had lightened many a rich man's pocket and many a poor man's heart. And I told her that he had died only a few years ago, beloved and respected by thousands.

But Mother Finch paid little attention to what I had to tell. Her mind was back sixty years in the past, and to her it seemed that the story had known its beginning and its end in Bully Bay.



A POINT WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION

FRANK BRUNER, the dramatic press agent, was having a heated argument with an acquaintance regarding matters in the theatrical world.

"I know what I'm talking about," said the acquaintance. "I'm right. You can take it from me."

"I'll take it from you," retorted Bruner quickly, "but look where it comes from."

The Twisted Skein

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Stroke Oar," "The Fugitive Freshman," Etc.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Four.)

CHAPTER XIV—(Continued).

IN the afternoon Karl went early to the boathouse and sprawled on a runway, in the sunshine, while the other men were sauntering in. Presently Mr. Ingram's automobile crossed the bridge. With him were Miss Janet, her aunt, and Stanley Foster, whom they had evidently picked up on the way. Karl shaded his eyes, and perceived that the handsome Stanley was using his most engaging manner, the sort of playful devotion that seemed to please the girls. Mr. Ingram escorted the ladies to the overhanging piazza of the upper story, which commanded an agreeable view of the river. Karl heard him explain that he wished to do a little pair-oar work before the launch arrived.

When Stanley Foster came downstairs, after changing his clothes, the coach addressed him with a shade of brusqueness which Karl was quick to notice.

"I want you to come out with me and work until the eight is ready, Foster. You were rushing your slide badly yesterday, and dropping over on the reach."

"Yes, I know I was," easily replied the dashing number seven. "Learning a new stroke is confusing at times. I'll soon iron out those little kinks."

"They are serious faults, Foster.

We'll not refer to them as trifles, if you please."

Stanley glanced up at the piazza. He was concerned lest the ladies might have overheard the reproof. Your good-looking young man is apt to play to the grand stand. The observant coach was nettled, but held his peace.

"I need another man to row bow in the pair-oar while I try to teach Foster a few things," said he.

Karl Truman leaped to his feet and ran forward. This was better luck than he had expected. After tricking him with marked cards, destiny had relented, and was about to deal him an honest hand.

"I'll be glad to go out with you, Mr. Ingram," he exclaimed, the light of battle in his blue eyes. "My crew has to wait for two of the men who had class work to make up."

"But you row on the starboard side, Truman. It will be awkward for you to shift over."

"I used to do it right along in the pair-oar," was the quick reply. "It helped limber me up. My waist muscles needed it."

"Jump in, then," amiably commanded the coach. Stanley busied himself with his foot straps and did not look at the volunteer in the bow. Mr. Ingram took the tiller lines, and the boat was shoved off. A strong tide was ebbing, and the two men leisurely dipped their oars

to give steerage way as they made for the harbor. Then, with patient intelligence, the coach began to show Stanley wherein his style was wrong. Karl did no more than swing in time, and steady the boat with his blade. He was keenly interested. This was like a private performance for his benefit.

As a spectator, he enjoyed it much more than did Stanley Foster, that lithe and graceful number seven of the varsity crew. During the year before this his oarsmanship had been admired. He had been quick to learn, and this natural aptitude had spared him the hard discipline dealt out to men who handled themselves with less ease. It was difficult for him to unlearn, to admit mistakes, and labor to correct them, because he had never been compelled to endure rigorous supervision of any kind.

He was at his worst in this pair-oar excursion. Henry Ingram's admonitions were blunt and direct, and it was irritating beyond measure to have Karl Truman present. At length the coach spoke hastily, and he showed a brutal lack of tact.

"You simply must stop letting your body drop forward as you reach for the water, Foster. It cocks your blade up, and you miss the first few inches of your catch. And it breaks your swing. There is no excuse, for you have a longer slide than last year. Hold yourself together. No, you don't get it! Here, pull your oar inboard and turn around while Truman shows you what I mean. That part of his stroke is just about right."

"He can't teach me anything about—" began Stanley, forgetting himself, but Ingram checked him with the stern rebuke:

"None of that, do you understand! Do as I tell you, and keep your mouth shut!"

Sullenly, Stanley obeyed orders. The spoiled child knew his master's voice.

With a twinkle, Karl painstakingly rehearsed the beginning of the stroke, bending cleanly from the hips, applying his power without that instant of hesitation which marred Stanley's catch.

"Good enough!" cried the coach. "You hammered away at it until you got the hang of the trick, Truman. It was the most important thing to learn."

It was a bitter dose for Stanley, and he swallowed it with a very wry face. Karl could not very well laugh in his sleeve, for his raiment was excessively scanty, but his candid countenance expressed more amusement than sympathy. Stanley was requested to try it again, and he shot his oar into place with a nervous jerk. His composure was sadly ruffled, and he rowed with a careless, slam-bang air which caused Henry Ingram to say:

"Perhaps a pull as far as Long Wharf will steady you down a bit. I'm afraid I shall have to sweat the temper out of you, Foster."

Stanley chewed his lip, and drove the boat ahead with a long, smooth stroke which would have looked like perfection to the unpracticed eye. Karl kept in time, his exertions more labored, but his powerful muscles putting on their power at the right place. Without letting himself out, he discovered that he was holding his own on the port side of the boat, but he assumed that Stanley was saving himself for the afternoon's work in the eight. However, he felt more confidence in himself, and he noted that Mr. Ingram was letting the tiller ropes hang slack.

Abreast of Long Wharf they rested a few minutes. Stanley was silent, gazing at the bottom boards, wiping away the perspiration that trickled into his eyes, his posture relaxed. The coach scrutinized him intently, then glanced at Karl, as though for the first time weighing the two men, one against the other, possibly in the scales of manhood

as well as oarsmanship. He had no more remarks to make while the small boat quietly drifted with the tide. This puzzled Stanley, who had expected to hear more about his faults. Perhaps the coach regretted hurting his feelings. It was pretty raw to ask a veteran number seven to watch a dub of a beginner like Karl Truman.

At length, Henry Ingram issued his orders. They were brief, but significant.

"Turn around. I'm going to give you two miles of it. Show me what you can do. You will both be excused from the eights to-day, so don't spare yourselves. Now lick into it!"

Stanley Foster looked angry and startled. Then he laughed with pointed contempt. Karl Truman grinned, as if he had heard good news. He would try to make Stanley pay for that laugh. Both comprehended that this was to be a duel, a contest momentous and unforeseen. The weapons were one oar to port and one oar to starboard. Over two miles of harbor and river it was to be shown which was the better man.

"Are you ready? Row!" said Henry Ingram.

The water boiled past as the two twelve-foot sweeps ripped through. Sitting at stroke, it was for Stanley to set the pace, and at once he shoved it several notches higher per minute than Karl was accustomed to row. It was unfair, in a way. His purpose was to kill Truman off in the first mile, rush him until he lost his form and floundered all over the boat. Henry Ingram saw through the stratagem, but made no comment. They were to fight it out for themselves. Karl was splashing badly, but he managed to swing in accord with Stanley's straining shoulders, although he had to rush his slide and shorten his reach. Slowly the boat veered to port. This meant that in the first half mile Karl's work was less efficient than Stanley's. The latter

smiled, and tossed his head. This was going to be a picnic.

But the wide pair-oar was by no means so sensitive and responsive as a shell. Stanley's rapid stroke was tiring him. It was poor judgment to use it. He was compelled to drop it, point by point, and as he did so Karl regained his full reach, his slide was under control, and his oar flung no more spray. They were now matched on even terms. Each man was ready to row himself to a standstill. His only prayer was that he might last the full two miles. Stanley Foster had never rowed in a close and punishing race. The ordeal of the supreme effort had been denied him. At New London he had sat in a crew that was hopelessly beaten in the first mile. For Karl Truman, life had always been a battle, in which the man who knew when he was whipped was bound to go under. Herein was a vital difference.

The boat veered no more to port, and astern of the rudder the wake rippled in a straight path. Stanley read this sign, and it dismayed him. He had lost his advantage. He raged with unspoken rebellion against this ridiculous test of strength and skill. It was a humiliating insult to submit him to it. His mind was more concerned with a sense of grievance than with the work in hand, and he forgot to watch that costly habit of lurching forward a trifle on the full reach and missing the first and precious inches of the catch. Karl was racking back and forth like a reliable machine that is roughly put together, but which, nevertheless, can be depended on to develop every pound of its rated power. And he was thinking of nothing else under the sun than how best to get his beef into the next stroke. In a word, he was strictly and emphatically on the job.

They were nearing the bridge when he became convinced that Stanley had begun to falter. Stanley was still able

to hold the boat straight on its course, but it required terrific effort. He was like the runner who comes into the stretch with bared teeth and gasping breath, and the final sprint yet to make. A little more and the dashing number seven would feel the breaking strain. He glanced over his shoulder, and Karl saw that his face was white and drawn. They were soon to pass the boathouse, where an audience was waiting. Both men thought of this.

They knew that the finish must come within sight of that overhanging piazza where stood Janet Ingram. This duel had taken on the color of medieval romance. It was a tourney, in which two rivals gallantly fought for the applause of the lady fair. She was looking down upon them, a smile for the victor, a sigh for the vanquished. Quite unwittingly, Henry Ingram had shown excellent talent as a stage manager.

As the boat shot under the bridge Karl felt certain that he had the more endurance left. He determined to expend it, to the last ounce, to force a finish then and there instead of saving himself for the end of the two-mile tussle up the river. Henry Ingram, subtly comprehending what was about to happen, muttered to himself:

"Truman will try to put the gaff to him, and Foster can't stand it."

The crowd of oarsmen in the boathouse ran to the edge of the float. They were quick to see that this was no commonplace pair-oar practice. It was man against man, the trial by ordeal of physical prowess that is as old as the world, that thrills the blood of the Anglo-Saxon breed as nothing else can. The two contestants were bathed in sweat. They bore every mark of the fatigue that tortures, and yet they were still pulling for their lives. Truman against Foster. Who could have believed it possible?

And the new recruit was the better man. Look how he was splashing into

it! And he was holding himself together, too! Wow! Did you see that oar buckle? Nothing slow about the way he was getting his hands away, either. By Jove! Stanley Foster was in trouble! He was wabbling. Rowed off his feet? Absurd! Why, he and Carter Avery were supposed to be the backbone of the varsity crew! But he was flopping about like a sick chicken. He was about to crack, to blow up!

Stanley's friends were dumb. Like a judge, grim and inexorable, Henry Ingram sat in the stern sheets, his arms folded. The boat was describing a wide arc, as though he guided it with the rudder, but the power which swerved it from its path was the swing and surge of Karl Truman's puissant oar, and Stanley Foster was unable to hold it in check. Like a bird with one crippled wing, the craft was heading for the mud flats of the shore above the boathouse.

"That will do," exclaimed the coach. "Paddle back to the float. Are you all in, Foster?"

"I—I don't know what's the matter," was the sobbing reply.

"Better lie down in the dressing room while I go out in the launch. I'll be glad to take you to the campus in my car. Sorry you feel so groggy."

"No, thank you. I'd rather not ride back in your car," faltered Stanley.

The coach splashed water in his face, and he took hold of the trailing oar. It was like a nightmare, every bit as unreal and fantastic. To think that he had been rowed out in less than two miles when he knew that he could stand the grueling strain of the four miles against the watch in a varsity eight! It was a cruelly unfair thing for Henry Ingram to do, miserably reflected Stanley, who refused to acknowledge to himself that he had been outfought. His own mistake in judgment had been responsible. He should not have set so high a stroke at the start in this slug-

gish scow of a pair-oar. Truman had been foxy enough to let him take the weight of the lift, and break his back in the first mile.

Karl's emotions were chiefly concerned with trying to recover his wind and sitting as straight as his aching muscles would permit. He was tremendously pleased with the result. They couldn't very well help keeping him at the training table after this afternoon's work; but, of course, rowing in an eight was a different matter. It must be. The idea that he was actually a better, pluckier oarsman than Stanley Foster was too daring to be entertained in that modest noddle of his. Well, anyhow, there was honest satisfaction in rubbing it in. A fellow ought not to gloat, but Stanley had been ungrateful and disloyal, and this dose of humiliation was coming to him. The issue was more personal than Mr. Ingram knew.

CHAPTER XV.

It was on the day after this that the wife of a distinguished member of the faculty gave a tea in honor of Mrs. Bancroft, better known as Aunt Kate. Among the ladies invited were the Misses Carbury, because it was considered a privilege to meet them. Belonging to one of the oldest and most dignified of New Haven families, their social position bore no relation to the size of their income or of the immaculate little house on York Street. Mrs. Bancroft, a woman with a presence, and a cosmopolitan experience of society, found the gentle spinsters charming, rose leaves and lavender, and all that sort of thing, and promptly lost her heart to them. They felt a particular interest in her for the reason that she was the sister of the gentleman who was so kindly teaching the young men how to row. Later in the afternoon, when the pleasant rustle and chatter had

subsided with the departure of most of the other guests, these three found opportunity for more leisurely acquaintance.

Miss Elizabeth had been eager to ask a question that was very close to her heart.

"Have you been down to the river to see the crews at practice, Mrs. Bancroft?"

"Yes; several times. I don't pretend to understand what it is all about, but I take Henry Ingram's word for it that the lingo he hurls at those devoted youths is frightfully important."

"Do you happen to know by sight a Mr. Karl Truman? He is a dear friend of ours, Mrs. Bancroft, and we are so interested in his progress as an athlete."

The sister of Henry Ingram was too well poised a person to be easily dismayed by the unexpected, but this announcement appealed to her as so wildly incongruous that her face expressed curious surprise. Everything that she had heard about Karl Truman made him out as quite impossible—a racketing, roistering son of a gambolier, whom she, as the chaperon of an Adorable Problem, could not receive into her own house. A dear friend of the Carbury sisters! Innocent souls, thought Mrs. Bancroft, it would be cruel to wound them by disclosing the truth. They desired to hear praise of Karl Truman, not censure. With a clear conscience one could say something favorable of his career as an oarsman.

"My brother thinks he is coming on famously," she replied.

The sisters beamed at this. Bless their hearts, it was a pleasure to look at them, and Mrs. Bancroft resolved to lay on the whitewash with a lavish brush. Animatedly she continued:

"I happened to be at the boathouse yesterday afternoon, and an exciting episode occurred, very much out of the ordinary. You will be interested, I'm

sure, for Karl Truman was the star actor. My brother saw fit to put him in a little two-oared boat with Stanley Foster, and make them row a long distance against each other. It was a sort of test, do you see?"

"Oh, yes. Terisina and I used to go rowing in a skiff on Lake Whitney, when we were girls!" exclaimed Miss Elizabeth. "And sometimes we each took an oar and tried to pull the other around."

"You always won—that is, most always," devotedly murmured the other sister.

"Our Karl was thought worthy to sit in the same boat with Mr. Stanley Foster!" cried Miss Elizabeth.

"He proved it," answered Mrs. Bancroft. "It seemed cruel of my brother to compel them to work so terribly hard, but he is always preaching the doctrine of Yale sand, and you know what men are, even the best of them—the product of centuries of struggle for survival—the primitive streak, and all that—they hark back at times."

"I admire their superior strength and bravery. They are our protectors," breathed Miss Terisina, who was thinking of Karl and the hypothetical burglar.

"Please go on," urged Miss Elizabeth. "What was the result?"

"A Waterloo for Stanley Foster—though Trafalgar is the apter word, I fancy. We were looking on, my niece Janet and I, in at the death, as my brother put it. Mr. Foster almost collapsed. I had to turn my head away. It was too pitiful."

"But he was fairly beaten," declared Miss Elizabeth, her eyes flashing. "It must have been fair! Karl could do nothing unsportsmanlike! What about him? Was he suffering?"

"To quote my brother again, 'he finished like a thoroughbred, and never turned a hair.' Henry Ingram is more

forceful than elegant when he is discussing oarsmen."

"To think of his surpassing Stanley Foster!" rippled Miss Terisina. "How wonderful! But we believe that Karl can accomplish anything that he seriously attempts."

"And so he is a dear friend of yours?" quizzically observed Mrs. Bancroft.

"Yes. He lived in our house until recently," returned Miss Elizabeth. "He was the greatest comfort. It is very much to his credit that he should be rowing so splendidly just now, for he has been through very trying experiences."

"Enough to discourage him utterly and make him lose heart," said Miss Terisina.

"You refer to his arrest and appearance in court?" queried Mrs. Bancroft, with a marked absence of sympathy. "I should say that he got his deserts."

"Oh, but that is not what we mean at all!" protested Miss Elizabeth. "Karl was a victim of circumstances. He called last evening to tell us about it, although he did not have to vindicate himself at all. It was like him to make no mention of his victory over Stanley Foster."

"Mrs. Bancroft appears to have believed that Karl was really guilty of that escapade," anxiously whispered Miss Terisina. "It may have given her a wrong impression of him. Perhaps we had better tell her about Cousin Jonathan."

"I think we ought to, sister. That wicked newspaper article portrayed our Karl as a spendthrift, or worse. It was at our suggestion that Cousin Jonathan came into Karl's life."

Between them the sisters told the story to Mrs. Bancroft, who found it more than amusing. Artless and simple were their words, and thereby the more effective. She had glimpses of the boy as he really was, shabby, wistful, high-

hearted, sentimental, stoutly bearing a man's burden. It was vouchsafed to her to understand the bargain he had made with Jonathan M. Carbury, old and rich and hard, looking backward on a life which had been sterile of human joys, moved to envy youth its radiant opportunities, responding to an impulse of whimsical generosity.

"And you say that this pretty romance is ended?" softly commented Mrs. Bancroft. "Mr. Carbury was angry with Karl Truman? They quarreled?"

"Karl returned the money, most of it, for he had not been at all extravagant, and he is working again to earn his board, helping at the training table. Our Cousin Jonathan was aware that he had acted hastily—he confessed as much to us—but it was one of those things that could not be undone. We can all recall them in our own lives."

"And it was Mr. Truman's sudden change of circumstances that may have caused gossip about his habits—the contrast?" shrewdly suggested Mrs. Bancroft.

"Possibly, but we cannot imagine how any unfavorable gossip could have arisen, for we know Karl," answered Miss Elizabeth.

Henry Ingram's sister debated with herself before she launched the interrogation:

"Has he been in society at all, here in New Haven? Is he the sort of fellow to like feminine diversion, or does he confine his interests to the campus?"

"We have heard him mention only one girl," confided Miss Elizabeth. "He told us last night that he thought your niece, Miss Janet, was the loveliest creature he had ever seen."

"Janet will be flattered, I'm sure," was the noncommittal reply.

They remembered that they were not expected to spend the entire afternoon in a corner of their hostess' parlor, and straightway made their adieus, Mrs.

Bancroft insisting that the Misses Carbury be taken home in the Ingram automobile.

When she met her brother and Janet at dinner the topic of Karl Truman was uppermost in her mind. Her vigorous mentality perceived that certain mistakes of opinion had been made, and she proposed to sift them to the bottom. No one human being could be so praiseworthy and so disreputable as conflicting reports alleged of this perplexing Karl Truman. The Misses Carbury idolized him, and he had dwelt under their roof for two and a half years. It was also news to Mrs. Bancroft that no student of his class had maintained a more brilliant record for scholarship.

"Henry, I am in a sad muddle," said she. "I came away from the Marquands' house in a state of mind."

"Too many cups of tea, Kate. You can't dissipate and keep a clear head."

"Don't be silly! I want to talk to you about Karl Truman."

Janet bridled, and loftily interposed: "You will please not discuss him in my presence. He may pull a very strong oar, but otherwise he is most decidedly objectionable. I waved my handkerchief at him when he did his stunt in the pair-oar yesterday, but I was carried away by the excitement of the moment."

"Pay no attention to the child, Henry," resumed Aunt Kate. "She is vain enough to assume that you arranged that contest for her special delectation. I wish to tell you the one thousand and second tale of 'The Arabian Nights,' how the cross-grained Caliph Jonathan M. Carbury was touched by the magic wand of youth, and saw a vision; and what befell the Poor Young Man who played chess exceedingly well."

"Jonathan M.?" cried Henry Ingram. "I met the old codger right here in New Haven, the other day! What kind of a riddle have you dug up, Kate?"

"Did the old codger mention Karl Truman to you, Henry?"

"In a casual way—asked a question or two—not at all as if he knew him."

"He was too sharp for you, O wise brother of mine! And did you blacken the young man's character?"

"No more than to say what I honestly believed to be true. Why this virtuous air? Heavens! You and Janet have said rougher things about the lad than I ever thought of! You chucked him up as an outcast. It influenced me."

"Blame it on your helpless females, dad! So like a man!" scornfully exclaimed the Adorable Problem. "You are getting ready to squirm out from under. Aunt Kate's superior intuition has discovered something, I can guess that much."

In a businesslike manner Aunt Kate related the details of the interview with the Carbury sisters, and he was made so uncomfortable that he blurted out in stentorian accents:

"How the deuce was I to know what old Carbury was driving at? And so I helped to queer Truman! How rotten of me! And I had a hand in knocking 'The Arabian Nights' sky-high? But part of what I told old Carbury came from you two women—what you overheard in the department store—"

"Henry, if you try to hide behind my skirts I shall be vexed with you!" chided his sister. Janet giggled. She knew her father's perfidious sex.

"I am blaming nobody," said he, with an injured air. "It was unfortunate all around. I had no intention of stabbing Truman in the back. I really owe him an explanation. If we have been so mistaken in him, Kate, what do you say to asking him to dinner soon, just to get better acquainted with him? What I mean is that it will give us a chance to study him from this new angle of viewpoint, to reopen the case. Give a

dog a bad name, don't you know, and you can see no good in him."

"I think you are rushing from one extreme to another," came from the coldly disapproving Janet, whose intolerance was justified by her years. "Much remains to be explained. I am not at all satisfied—"

"But I talked with the boy myself," said Henry Ingram, "and I had to believe him. He gave me his word that he would do nothing whatever that I could object to. And now you have heard your Aunt Kate's yarn, and it looks as if Truman had been as straight as a string all the time."

"You forget that deplorable attachment of his, father! What did I hear with my own ears—joy rides and quaint little taverns? And you were simply furious when you found him holding her hand and blushing like a turnip—like a tulip—when you called to find old Martin Delaney. It seems to me that you and Aunt Kate have quite lost your heads!"

With this, Janet withdrew from the conversation, and presently betook herself and her hauteur to the seclusion of her own room and the company of a volume of essays on life which was said to improve one's mind and broaden one's outlook. Glancing up at a framed photograph of the Yale crew of the preceding year, she fixed her pensive gaze on the young man at number seven and remarked to herself:

"You are a perfect stunner, Stanley Foster, and you have made my heart go pitapat, but— Father says you have a yellow streak. I wonder. Karl Truman made you quit, and we women admire the manly virtues, but that doesn't excuse Mr. Truman for his perfectly odious— That is enough from you, Janet Ingram. You are a goose!"

For reasons which she dissembled with no small art, the Adorable Problem expressed the wish next day, and the same was law, to enjoy the afternoon in

the launch while her father made several boatloads of young men unhappy. He consented, with the warning that it must not happen again for at least a week. As a habit, she was not to be encouraged. Aunt Kate was more than willing. In the light of revelation, she was curious to look at Karl Truman again.

At the boathouse Henry Ingram found an unlooked-for visitor in the person of old Martin Delaney, who was joyously putting about among the shells and squinting at their workmanship. The familiar atmosphere gave to his bent frame and rheumatic gait a touch of sprightliness. It seemed to him but yesterday that he was fitting slides and outriggers, and shaving oar handles, for one of Pop Ingram's eights before they went to New London to lick Harvard again.

"But I promised to send for you, Martin," apologized the coach. "I thought you might like to see the boys when they were going smoother than now."

"They'll look good to me," chuckled Martin, his eyes wandering to the river, framed in the open doorway. "It was just Yale luck that a friend of mine was drivin' to East Haven in a spring wagon this afternoon to fetch back a load of window sash. 'Hop in, old sport,' says he, 'and I'll dump you off at the boathouse, and pick you up in a couple of hours.'"

Carefully Henry Ingram helped him to board the launch, and with a sigh of contentment the old man joined the ladies under the awning, aft. The cushioned seat eased his aching joints. He sniffed the salt smell of the flats, and desired no more potent elixir. Garrulous was his tongue, tenacious the memory that recalled the men and the crews of another generation, even to the minutes and seconds in which they had made their fastest records over the harbor course, which finished at the

red buoy, where the breakwater meets the Sound. He was a veritable rowing almanac, of an ancient and obsolete edition.

A little ahead of the launch moved the first and second eights, shooting along side by side, while Henry Ingram stood in the bow and scanned them both. He had not yet begun to try to develop speed. He had first to make sure that he had found the right men, and that they were getting hold of the fundamental principles which he believed to be sound. After all, building a crew was a good deal like constructing a bridge or a dam. If the design, the material, the workmanship were right, the finished job would stand up under the test.

He was teaching the stroke that old Martin Delaney knew by heart. The superannuated janitor of the boathouse knew little of the theories which had been tried and discarded in more recent years. This was coming into his own again. He could not help forsaking the ladies under the after awning and crawling forward to join the coach, who gave him a camp stool, and bade him say what he thought of the two tentative eights which were skimming down the harbor in short flights. Martin grasped a pair of binoculars and rested his elbows upon the coaming, his kindly, wrinkled features singularly alert. He was like a much younger man. It elated him to find that his eyes had not forgotten the differences between good rowing and bad. As though talking to himself, he began to make comments, and Henry Ingram listened, and approved.

"Your number three yonder is rigged a couple of inches too far aft, Pop," declared Martin, after careful scrutiny. "He loses power. His leverage isn't quite right. And the bow man's outrigger ought to be raised a teenty bit. He has trouble whenever the boat rolls on him."

"I'll have those changes made," promptly agreed the coach. "I have had to work out the rigging measurements by rule of thumb. I begin to think you used to know more about that than I did. Make any other suggestions you like, and I will jot them down."

"Then let the launch run up close to them, if you please," proudly replied Martin, "and let them rest on their oars. There, let her stay as she is, with her nose on a line with the rudders of the two shells. Or maybe you can shove ahead a little and lay between them. The closer I am the better it is for my old eyes. Now I can see how you have 'em rigged."

The two long shells floated motionless as the launch stole in between the ranks of oars. Slowly Martin Delaney studied the men, and how they sat, until his gaze rested on Karl Truman. With an emphatic nod he turned to say to the coach:

"You didn't ask my opinion about the lads themselves, but there's one that has the stuff of a real Yale oarsman. He caught my fancy as soon as I saw him swing away from the boathouse. I mean the tow-headed lad at five. What's his name?"

Henry Ingram looked astonished. Martin's voice had carried to the stern of the launch, and Janet forgot what she was saying to Aunt Kate.

"What is his name?" echoed the coach. "Your eyes are not as good as I supposed, Martin. You don't know Karl Truman twenty feet away? Hasn't he been at your house often enough for you to recognize him now?"

"Never saw him in my life!" was the positive reply, a trifle peevish, for the old man resented the aspersion on his eyesight. "You mean that he's been paying attentions to my granddaughter, Hazel? Now whatever put that into your head, Pop Ingram? There's only one college boy been coming out there

this year, and I had plenty of chances to see him, afoot and in his big automobile."

"But you told me about him when I found you in your workshop!" persisted Ingram.

"I never mentioned this Truman boy. How could I? I never heard of him, I tell you!"

"But I met him myself, that same day, in your house, Martin."

"Come to think of it, I did hear something said about a youngster that came out to look for Stanley Foster with a message or something."

"To look for Stanley Foster!" ejaculated the coach.

"To look for Stanley Foster!" excitedly repeated Janet, seizing Aunt Kate's hand and holding it very tight. "Oh, have we stumbled into a *situation* in real life?"

"Sss-sh, my child! I must hear every word of this. Of all the extraordinary situations!"

The oarsmen were staring curiously at the launch. Across the few yards of still water the voices of the coach and Martin Delaney were distinctly heard. In the first eight most of them were slouching carelessly over their oars during this respite from toil, but Stanley Foster sat rigid, tense, his face averted from the launch.

"We can talk about this at some other time," said Ingram, with an anxious glance in the direction of his daughter. "This ought to teach me to leave her at home," he grumbled to himself.

"I don't have to talk about it again!" rapped out Martin, oblivious of the coach's warning gesture. "There's Foster himself, at number seven in your first boat, Pop. Of course I know him. Did you ever see two lads that looked less alike than him and Truman? Why, Foster was comin' out to see Hazel as regular as a clock. I didn't like it, and I told you so. I didn't mean to

lug in personal matters to-day, but you sprung it on me yourself."

Henry Ingram's gaze was rather wild as he found presence of mind to sing out:

"All ready, there! Go ahead,coxswains! Take it easy, and do a half-mile stretch. Keep the stroke at thirty, and watch your time carefully, now."

The two shells skittered away from the launch. From directly astern of them, Ingram watched the alignment of the flashing oars that rose and fell in measured cadence. On the starboard side of the first eight one blade spoiled the rhythm, like a discordant note in music. It was ragged, uncertain. Henry Ingram saw, and understood. The oar told him that Stanley Foster had overheard the chance revelation of Martin Delaney. The launch was following at half speed. Ingram took this opportunity to go aft, leaving Martin entranced with the binoculars and mumbling sage criticisms.

"We are perishing to talk to you, dad!" imploringly exclaimed Janet. "I am trying to be perfectly calm and collected, but I was never so near hysterics. Do you feel quite sane? I'm sure you don't look it!"

"I feel like an ass!" was his lugubrious confession. "You two women poisoned my mind against poor Truman. What have you to say for yourselves?"

"Don't be a gump, Henry!" was his sister's spirited advice. "You tried those tactics last night, at dinner. Let us start with an honest confession all around that we put our foot, or feet, in it."

"And it was Stanley Foster all the time!" almost wailed Janet. "He has been leading a double life!"

"Well, hardly that, but he didn't play a square game," said her father, and in his code there was no condemnation more severe. "He must have known that Truman was getting a lot of blame

that he didn't deserve. And you know that when Foster has been at the house he has never stood up for Truman, who had been a loyal friend to him, so I hear on the campus. There was the one incident that we know all about, at the Delaney house. It stands to reason that Truman told Foster of accidentally meeting us there, and of the possibility of your misunderstanding it, Janet."

"I—I told Stanley Foster that I simply detested Karl Truman," said Janet, "and he sort of shrugged and smiled. His silence was louder than words. It confirmed my suspicions."

"Truman kept silent, but in a very different way," affirmed Henry Ingram. "I accused him to his face of this very thing, and he was mum—refused to squeal on Foster. I made a sorry joke of myself."

"Then I must have been guilty of a very sad mistake," murmured Janet. "I mean the time I saw him in the store. He and that girl must have been talking about Stanley Foster, and Karl Truman was just harmlessly buying a pair of gloves."

"I was there, too, and I am old enough to have known better," confessed Aunt Kate.

"See here! I am going to run back to the boathouse and set you ashore!" abruptly declared Ingram. "How in thunder can I coach a couple of crews with your gabble driving me distracted?"

He returned to the bow, and Janet sweetly observed: "Isn't he delicious, Aunt Kate? He is the only person who understood Karl Truman all along, and we are a pair of naughty scandalmongers."

"Your father prides himself on his keen judgment of men, Janet. We must be tactful. This has upset him badly."

"And what about me? Think how I have treated Karl Truman, and how nice I was to the other one."

CHAPTER XVI.

A solitary freshman might have been seen on Hillhouse Avenue, in the proper attire and at the proper hour for a formal evening call. This was he who has been hitherto known as the Prune. In the college catalogue he was enrolled as Coleman Selfridge Tressler. As a rule, freshmen are fearfully bored by invitations to call, but there are exceptions. Mr. Henry Ingram was a friend of the Prune's father, hence the invitation. What made it exceptional was the fact that Coleman Selfridge Tressler had beheld Janet in the gallery at chapel—he could have told you precisely how many times.

Outwardly valorous, as became a full-fledged Yale man, he swaggered up to the door and sent in his card. The ladies were at home. For some odd reason this made him nervous. While waiting in the reception room he cleared his throat, sidled to a mirror, and adjusted his tie, and tried to remember some of the bright things he had expected to say. When he was with the fellows he was the life of the party, but girls, and pretty ones, especially, made a man feel all fussed up. Awfully queer. He felt like running away.

Fortunately, Janet appeared without delay, and calmed the incipient panic. She was fast learning how to handle freshmen, and had undertaken a conscientious study of this timid species. One had to play up to their sense of their own importance, ask their opinions about things, and be very careful not to laugh in the wrong place. One could tease a junior, or even a sophomore, but it was unkind to take any liberties with a freshman. Janet and the Prune were about of an age, but she felt immeasurably older.

He was an attractive infant, with the nicest pink-and-white complexion, which he dutifully scraped with a razor every other day. The shaded lights

baffled Janet's curiosity. Was it a shadow on his upper lip, or a mustache? It would be insulting to ask.

"Do you find college as much fun as you expected, Mr. Tressler? I suppose you are working tremendously hard."

This was the stereotyped opening. Janet managed to make it effective by a subtlety of intonation which seemed to convey her belief that the youth in question was an intellectual steam engine.

"They do manage to keep us busy, Miss Ingram. I'm not trying to stand at the top of the class. A man doesn't want to be one-sided."

"You could be at the top, if you wanted to, I am sure, Mr. Tressler. My father agrees with you that the all-round Yale man is the best type. Have you gone in for athletics?"

"Well, I was with the freshman football squad for a while, but I strained my shoulder and had to quit. I'm too light to row. They are taking heavier men this year. It looks as if my only chance was to try for the chess team. Ha! ha!"

"I have the highest respect for the chess team," said Janet, and she was so serious that the Prune was disturbed. He must have made a break. His guilty mind connected chess with Karl Truman, and thence sped to the iron dog and Commodore Forbes. His thoughtless remark had foozled the conversation, for instead of countering with some bit of airy repartee he was wondering if his face had turned as red as it felt. He would pick the safest sort of a topic.

"I suppose you know a lot more about the stroke the varsity crew is rowing than any of us fellows on the campus?"

"I could hardly qualify as a coach, but I learn a little more every time I go out in the launch," said she.

"Does Mr. Ingram think we have a

good show to beat Harvard, or is that a question I shouldn't ask you?"

"He hopes to win," answered Janet, "but he does not want the college to expect too much this year. Yale rowing has been very much demoralized, you know. It is a bigger task than bringing back the old Yale stroke. It means also bringing back the old Yale spirit, in the boat, and in the college, which must give its faithful support."

The Prune was duly impressed. She was taking him into her confidence, and words of wisdom from such lips as hers were precious gems.

"We think there is a pretty fine, manly spirit here now," he replied, "but we can't compare it with the great old days, because we don't know. We were not here. Just what does Mr. Ingram mean by the old Yale spirit?"

"Perhaps you can persuade him to tell you himself, Mr. Tressler. I am sorry he is not at home this evening. He went to the training table for supper with the crew, and stayed to talk things over with Captain Avery. And he particularly wanted to see Mr. Karl Truman. He said something about going to his room this evening."

"Has Truman made the crew?" spoke the Prune, in hurried accents.

"Not yet, but my father is seriously considering him. There is one secret of state for you, but it isn't official."

"Er—I say, is Truman a friend of yours, Miss Ingram?"

"I have met him only once, at the boathouse, Mr. Tressler. I admire him very much. He deserves to make the crew, you know. He has shown what I should call the best kind of Yale spirit; the sort that would make him a fine influence in the boat."

"A fine influence? Oh, certainly—why, yes, indeed!" exclaimed Coleman Selfridge Tressler, whose very stiff collar was choking him.

"He has had a great deal of trouble lately," resumed Janet, who thought it

her duty to sing Karl's praises by way of making amends. "He was working his way through college, and denying himself everything, and a good-hearted millionaire befriended him, and lent him enough money to be comfortable. But when Mr. Truman got himself into the newspapers on account of that scrape in East Haven, and he was arrested, and convicted of disorderly conduct, the kind millionaire became terribly angry. And that was the end of Mr. Truman's happy times in college. He had to work for his living again, and he is earning his meals by waiting on the training table, so he won't have to give up rowing."

"Do—do you mind telling me some of that over again?" faltered Coleman Selfridge Tressler. "I—I seem to have a headache. It came on very suddenly. Everything went to smash for Truman? Do I get you?"

"Why, how pale you look! Is the room too warm? Shall I open a window?"

"Never mind, Miss Ingram. I must have been studying too hard. And you say that Mr. Truman has shown a sandy spirit? And this shindy with the commodore really put him in all wrong with his backer?"

"It was a catastrophe, Mr. Tressler," solemnly affirmed Janet. "And my private opinion is that he had nothing whatever to do with the East Haven affair. He was a scapegoat. And when Mr. Jonathan M. Carbury, the millionaire, turned on poor Mr. Truman and spurned him, think what it meant, much more than this present misfortune. He might have made him his heir. Stranger things have happened."

"Yes, much stranger, Miss Ingram. I am awfully interested. My sympathies are all harrowed up. Pardon me for staying so long, won't you? So delighted to meet you."

"But you have made a very short call,

Mr. Tressler. And my aunt, Mrs. Bancroft, will be downstairs shortly. She was detained at the telephone."

"Please give her my regards. I have four recitations to-morrow morning, and a fierce lot of grinding to do."

"But you should go straight to bed if—"

He was in full stride for the door, still uttering apologies, while Janet gazed after him and said to herself:

"The more I see of freshmen the more mysterious they seem."

The Prune made for the York Street dormitory in which dwelt his wicked comrades twain. He found them together, and snatched them from their textbooks. His excited aspect instantly alarmed them. One ran to lock the door. The other looked toward the fire escape. Breathlessly they demanded to know if all was discovered. It was to be conjectured that black care stood at their elbows. The Prune spoke soothingly. He took command. During the fevered flight from Hillhouse Avenue he had become filled with lofty thoughts. He tried to appear sad and stern and resolute. He must forfeit Miss Ingram's esteem, oh, bitter, bitter price to pay for folly!

"Stop trying to look like a Roman senator and tell us what is biting you," impatiently demanded the Tall One, whose knees were still trembling. "You came clattering in here like a man who jumps ahead of the police."

"My nerves are not what they were," plaintively observed the Runt. "Anything sudden gives me an attack of the yips."

"Fellows, it is up to us," declaimed the Prune. "We have to confess. Our honor is at stake."

They clamored at him, and he told them why. Their escapade was no longer a merry joke on a lordly upper classman. They had been suffering no qualms on Truman's account, after ascertaining that he had gone clear of

trouble with the faculty. But now it was different. There was absolutely no room for argument. They had committed a great wrong against an innocent man, and, as gentlemen, there was only one thing to do. The Prune was dead right. Their honor was seriously involved. They must own up. It was intolerable to think that they had ruined Truman.

"We queered the game just when things were coming his way," dolefully sighed the Tall One.

"Yes, it's all off. It would have been no worse if we had sandbagged him and robbed him of every dollar he had in the world," reiterated the Prune. "Say, you fellows ought to have heard Miss Ingram tell it. I almost cried like a child. Her voice had a throaty. Maude Adams quaver—you know what. It got my goat. I came near giving myself away, but it seemed the fair thing to consult with you two. And I had just decided to fall in love with her seriously. It is all over now. She will say nix on Coleman Selfridge Tressler. Take him away."

"She may be sweet on Truman," commented the Runt. "But that has nothing to do with our case. What is the first move?"

"I suppose we ought to go find Truman himself," said the Tall One, with a shudder. "Miss Ingram told you he was husky enough to make the varsity boat? And he is at the training table? Then he must have been getting stronger every day. Do you think he will try to beat up all three of us at once, or will he lay for us singly?"

"I don't care which," nobly replied the Prune. "The longer we sit here and croak about it, the harder it will be. Let's trot over to find Truman right now."

"Right you are," groaned the Runt; "but imagine what will be left when he lands on poor little me. Do we go to see Commodore Forbes after that?"

"The survivors will decide what to do next. I prefer to die one death at a time."

A few minutes later, Karl Truman heard irresolute, shuffling sounds in the hall outside his door, then a silence oddly prolonged, then a faint tap-tap like the peck of a sparrow. Karl excused himself to his visitor, who chanced to be Henry Ingram, and investigated the phenomena. Pulling open the door, he confronted three youths, strangers to him, who stepped backward, one of them moving so hastily that he fell over his feet. They rallied, however, and advanced to the threshold as though dragged by invisible chains. Two were nudging the third, to wit, the Prune, who had been elected as spokesman. He gulped and endeavored to find his mislaid powers of speech.

"Will you come in? Do you want to see me?" kindly queried Karl.

"We will. We do," replied the Prune, in a very loud voice, assuming a bravado which was intended to hearten his comrades. "May I ask if you are alone, Mr. Truman?"

"Not quite. But I am sure you will be pleased to meet Mr. Ingram," answered Karl, as he shepherded them into the room.

The trio exchanged glances more woebegone than before. This was even worse than had been foreseen. Coleman Selfridge Tressler was particularly affected. Ashen was his damask check. But there could be no drawing back. They had crossed their Rubicon. Gravely they gave their names and submitted their clammy fingers to the hearty grip of the amused Ingram, who presumed them to be merely freshmen in the throes of bashfulness.

"Tressler?" said he. "Why, I know who you are, of course—Fred Tressler's boy. Why don't you come out to

the house? Your father will think I have neglected you."

"I was out there this evening, and—and I met Miss Ingram," returned the Prune. "Awfully sorry I missed you. She—she is responsible for this, you see. You must know all about it, so I suppose we may as well get busy, and explain ourselves."

He turned to face Karl Truman, who somehow looked uncommonly broad-shouldered and square-jawed. Doubtless this was an optical delusion. The Tall One and the Runt moved closer so that they stood three in a row, and in this crisis they were worthy of comparison with the Three Musketeers. None could have challenged their courage. They began to speak in breathless, stumbling chorus, each moved by a spirit of chivalrous rivalry to make himself out the chief sinner. Part of it sounded like this:

"I suggested our making a bid for the Criminal Club, and we talked it over—"

"But I thought of the stunt of trying to pinch the iron dog—"

"And I hired the automobile, and fixed it with Johnny White to have the cash ready to bail us out."

"We had no idea that you were anywhere around, Mr. Truman. We left the commodore and his bunch as if we had been shot out of a gun."

"And first we knew of you was when we read the *Courier* next morning, and it struck us as darned funny. We sneaked the paper into chapel and read it under cover and laughed out loud, and got marked for it. Then we hustled down to court—"

"And it seemed more like a vaudeville turn to us than anything else, Mr. Truman. We heard that you had all kinds of money, and getting stung for a fine and costs wasn't very serious."

"It wasn't until to-night that we learned the truth. We are the most repentant freshmen that ever passed en-

trance exams, and we don't want to hear the Criminal Club mentioned. It has been a most painful lesson for us, and if you will give us a chance——”

“But I have no intention of eating you alive,” interrupted Karl, and the fact that he smiled caused expressions of hope to illumine the countenances of the sin-stained triumvirate. “Were you actually afraid of me when you came in?”

“We couldn't help thinking of what you did to the painter and the carpenter,” reasonably replied the Prune.

“Suppose we ask Mr. Ingram what ought to be done to you,” was Karl's suggestion. “He is unprejudiced, and he knows both sides of the case.”

The coach considered carefully. These had been very foolish freshmen, but their manliness redeemed them. It was easy to see that they were braced to take their punishment, whatever might be decreed. Just then Jerry Altemus opened the door without knocking and drawled:

“I want to borrow a book—pardon me, Karl. I didn't know you were giving a party.”

“Come in, Jerry, please do, and act as a member of the jury. We are trying three freshmen for their lives.”

“All freshmen are a trial,” said Mr. Altemus, as he leisurely drifted to the divan. “What have these three insects been doing? Offhand, I should say they were guilty on every count, and then some. Seldom have I gazed on such debased, low-browed specimens of their kind. And to think that they have parents who are proud of them.”

The Prune could not hide a furtive grin. Such abuse as this was harmless. It was a happier omen than the deliberation of such a man as Mr. Ingram.

“I am given to understand that you are a philosopher, Mr. Altemus,” said the coach. “We have here a problem, not of morals but of ethics.”

“And what are the premises, may I ask, sir?”

“The premises of Commodore Forbes,” answered Karl. “The iron dog has found the right scent.”

“Ah! I get you. It was a true freshman trick. And did you extort a confession from these abject tadpoles?”

“Don't hit them when they are down, Jerry. They toed the mark of their own free will.”

“Sandy little brutes. I apologize. Why not let them name their own punishment?”

Coleman Selfridge Tressler took this opportunity to inform the court:

“We want the college to know the facts. And there is another thing which we have decided to do. We must pay Mr. Truman the amount of his fine and costs. I have the money all ready.”

“You had better take it,” said Henry Ingram. “I rule it as equitable restitution.”

“About his other losses, the big loss that we caused him,” continued the Prune, “we can't make that up to him, and you don't know how perfectly rotten we feel——”

“Let us waive that,” declared Ingram. “I am guilty on the same count.”

In a deferential manner, Jerry Altemus advised the court as follows:

“It was the newspaper publicity that bowled Truman out, and did most of the mischief. Now, if these freshmen are willing to take the same dose, why not let me escort them down to the *Courier* office? I happen to be acquainted with one of the reporters. And he is anxious to square the game for Karl Truman.”

This was appalling, but the culprits were past flinching. Justice should be done though the heavens fell.

“Oh, I am ready to call it quits!” cried Karl.

“I don't know about that,” objected Henry Ingram. “Public defamation

demands public retraction. Lead them away, Mr. Altemus. The court appoints you to carry out the sentence."

That facile and facetious reporter, William Martindale, as soon as he knew their errand, welcomed Jerry's delegation as warmly as if they owed him money. Masterly was the tact with which he managed to make them feel at ease. Their fathers would approve their course, the college would respect them. The *Courier* would see to it that the faculty understood. As for Commodore Forbes, the repentant young journalist straightway rushed to the telephone and delivered himself in this wise:

"I have the confession of three juicy freshmen; count 'em, three—they are here in the office now—the lads who were in the automobile—you know, the night they laid hands on your ossified pup. . . . What is that, commodore? Turn them over to the police? I shall do nothing of the kind. Do you wish to be quoted as saying that? Then you will come in town to-night and have them arrested? Stop a minute. These boys have only one motive, to clear Truman. You got him into all kinds of trouble, and they have just found it out. . . .

"But they didn't steal the dog. And you couldn't identify them to save your soul. Tut, tut, commodore! On the level, I'll quote you verbatim if you don't watch out, and all the dashes and asterisks will give you a lovely reputation, not! Recognizing the manly spirit of these young men, you are willing to drop all further proceedings. That's what you want to say, isn't it? Well, anyhow, I am going to say it for you. I am ashamed to say anything else.

"Yes, I'll fix it up in bully good style. Ten thousand breakfast tables will admire the sterling old naval officer who knows when to be merciful. Now, don't rare and pitch. You'll be sorry.

Turn me down on this, and I'll make you sizzle if it costs me my job. . . .

"Ah, thank you! Then the case is closed, so far as you are concerned? But God help the next crew of Yale ruffians that come within a cable length of the iron dog? Yes, I get that. Help myself to a what? Some other time. Good night, commodore!"

CHAPTER XVII.

After reading the *Courier* next morning, Karl sent a marked copy to Jonathan M. Carbury. Another strand of the skein had untwisted itself. At the boathouse in the afternoon the first eight was ready to embark when the coach called Stanley Foster aside and said, as gently as possible:

"I have concluded to make a change. It may be only temporary. That depends. There may be considerable shifting about between now and June."

"Do you mean that you propose to shift me?" demanded the varsity number seven, in blank amazement.

"Yes, Foster. You will row in the second crew to-day."

"At what seat?"

"At five."

"Where Truman is now? Does he take my place in the varsity boat, Mr. Ingram?"

"I shall try him there."

"But is it because he pulled me around in the pair-oar? It wasn't a fair test. Why, Carter Avery said he couldn't get along without me, when I was barred by those conditions. Mr. Ingram. I was all right last season. And I am older and stronger now, with more experience. I ought not to argue it with you, but— Oh, well, what's the use? It is just one thing after another."

He walked away, hesitated, and then slowly clambered into the seat assigned him. His temper was mutinous, but the personality of Henry Ingram com-

peled him against his will. The bonds of discipline were not easily broken. With listless effort he joined in the swing as the coxswain piped the word. Soon the first crew shot past, outward bound, Karl Truman driving the starboard side and taking the burden off the stroke, oar. It was to be seen at a glance that he fitted into this new arrangement, adding a harmony and balance which had been lacking, eliminating a discord from the stern of the boat. The fiery, light-waisted stroke oar no longer took hold of more water than he could pull through, and his smoother stride quickened the pace all the way to the bow. It began to look like a racing crew.

Through the long, hateful afternoon, whenever Stanley could look away from the back of the man in front of him, he watched the varsity boat. Truman was in there to stay. There was no use in clinging to false hopes. Henry Ingram's voice, as it came booming over the water, sounded less impatient. He was sending the eight over the full four miles against the watch, the first real test of speed as well as form and endurance. It was late when they returned to the river, and Stanley's crew, which he despised, had finished its stint and departed for the campus. He dreaded facing the fortunate ones at supper. He had no desire to eat or talk. It was anything to be alone, away from his friends, away from the college, and, above all, away from the very sight of Karl Truman.

Like a fugitive, he dodged into his rooms to wait for six o'clock. Thankful that Jerry Altemus was out, he passed through the study, took refuge in his bedroom, and bolted the door. There was nothing left to live for. His career at Yale was, in every way, a tragic failure. His star had set. And only a little while before he had been the most enviable man of his class. Upon the edge of his bed he sat, be-

wildered, his face buried in his hands. Until now he had been a stranger to genuine misfortune. Kindly influences had interposed to save him from himself. Karl Truman had pulled him out of the ditch of neglected scholarship. His father had nearly thwarted the schemes of Hazel Delaney's mother. Stanley had called himself lucky and thought no more about it.

To be kicked off the crew was disaster enough, but he had lost more than his place in the varsity boat. He knew that he had lost the respect of Henry Ingram, of his daughter, and of his leal comrades of the oar. That scene when old Martin Delaney had identified him from the launch made him writhe as he recalled it. The other men had asked him no questions, but he felt that they were doubting and wondering. Was he tacitly condemned as having a yellow streak? He vehemently denied it to himself. It was a run of cursed hard luck.

Jerry Altemus came loafing into the study, glanced at the closed bedroom door, and raised his voice in greeting. No response. He tried the knob, kicked the panel, and tried to squint through the keyhole. The silence worried him, but perhaps the weary oarsman was snatching a cat nap before supper. Again, he might be in a desperate frame of mind, being no good whatever as a philosopher. Jerry pounded the door with his fists and shouted:

"Come out of your hole! I would have words with you. If you are sound asleep, say so, and I'll go gently away."

"I wish you would. Please let me alone, Jerry," came back, in gloomy accents.

"Nonsense! You are the worst possible company for yourself, old man. It never pays to nurse a grouch. I know what is the matter with you. I walked up street with Carter Avery just now. You don't have to go over to the train-

ing table to-night, for I coaxed him to let you have supper with me, just us two by ourselves."

Stanley unfastened the door. He had been weeping. Gratefully he exclaimed:

"You knew I didn't want to meet the crowd to-night? You are mighty good to me, Jerry."

The philosopher grasped the derelict by the arm and led him to the campus. Thence they wandered to a small restaurant in a side street where undergraduates seldom strayed. Jerry did not wish to preach, and scolding would be more futile. He knew that Stanley's lane had come to a crossroads. It was for him to choose the one way or the other. One way led upward, and it was very hard to climb, for one whose feet had sought the easiest path.

"Are you sorry for me, Jerry?" said the oarsman, rather wistfully.

"Well, I haven't been really happy about you for some time. You were handed a knock-out blow this afternoon, I realize that. Going to stick along in the second crew, aren't you?"

"Why? I won't get another chance in the varsity. Ingram has it in for me, and he can see nothing but Truman. Of course, I feel like dropping out. I wish I could drop out of college. I'd rather get a job and go to work right away. I shall write my father about it to-night."

"Write him as much as you like, but be sure to tear up the letter before mailing," advised Jerry. "Do nothing rash. Don't boil over. Let yourself simmer gently before removing from the stove."

"I know what is best for me. I must play my own game," was the stubborn retort.

Jerry's forbearance was so sorely tried that he flashed back: "Your own game? A lovely hash you have made of it. What you need is a new set of rules. I intended to handle you with gloves, but it is better to use bare

knuckles. Why, you poor, whining quitter, why don't you take a square look at yourself? Drop your rowing? The trouble with you is that you have dropped your sand. Suppose you are crowded out of the varsity boat by a better man. Doesn't Henry Ingram need the second crew? Why don't you whirl in and make it a corker that will give the varsity the hard practice it needs? Hang to it as a substitute if you can't do any better. Show 'em that you can come back. Leave college? Your education has just begun. Cut out all this blaming everybody but yourself. There is nothing more painful than the sudden reduction of a swelled head to normal size, but it often saves the patient."

"Pound a helpless man, Jerry," sighed the patient. "You don't happen to have a little sympathy concealed about you, do you?"

"Old Doctor Jeremiah Altemus is not mixing that kind of a prescription. I don't know how much you care, but you and I break up housekeeping unless you pull yourself together. I came near packing my trunk when you acted the shyster toward Karl Truman. And if we part company, the class will be apt to guess why. There are a few things I can't stand for, Stanley Foster."

"But Truman turned against me, Jerry. I wanted to slap his face. He picked the quarrel."

"But you didn't slap his face. You took it out in wishing," was the taunting retort. "And you didn't pull him around in a pair-oar. You took it out in explaining, afterward. Truman used to think the world of you. You were his little tin god. I am glad he went after your place in the boat, and got it. And he likes the little Ingram girl, and he has knocked you out there. Justice occasionally gets an even break in this silly old world. Now, are you a man or a mouse, a Yale man or a counter-

feit? Think it over. Chew on it good and hard. I honestly believe you can make good. That is all from me, Stanley."

It was more than enough. Angry and unconvinced, the oarsman abruptly left the restaurant and walked at random until he came to the green and a bench, where he sat alone, with his cap pulled over his eyes. At length, two conclusions shaped themselves in the welter of his mind. He would delay a day or two before writing his father, and he would row in the second crew until the end of the week, on the chance that Truman's stock might slump. Jerry Altemus had rubbed salt in his wounds. All he could think of was the smarting, stinging hurt of it. He hated Jerry. He hated Karl Truman. And he had begun to hate himself, which was the first symptom of recovery.

At the training table next morning he was a sulky companion, having nothing to say, and glowering at Karl Truman. Carter Avery, watching him closely, ventured to say, as they left the room:

"I suppose you will report at the usual time this afternoon?"

Fiercely the deposed number seven whirled on him to growl:

"What made you think I wouldn't be down this afternoon? Do you take me for a quitter?"

The captain smiled to himself, and surmised that something had happened to Stanley. The fact was that several things had happened to Stanley overnight. When one lies awake in bed for hours and stares at the dusky ceiling, and listens to the chapel chimes, he can think much more clearly than in the daytime. And if he is on bad terms with himself he may fall to wondering whether the opinions of such a level-headed friend as Jerry Altemus are likely to be wholly in the wrong. There was no wiser lad on the campus than dawdling old Jerry, who sat and looked

on. Then, at breakfast, there was Karl Truman dealing out steaks and chops and potatoes to the other men, as cheerful as a May morning, hiding his own troubles, although financially down and out. Stanley would have liked to punch his head, but he could not help respecting him. Truman was no quitter, one had to acknowledge that much.

The remaining days of the week slid past, and Stanley Foster was not ready to forsake the second crew. Once Janet Ingram motored to the boathouse, but he gave her no chance to ignore him. He was earnestly engaged in minding his own business, the purpose of which was to win back the respect of those who had condemned him as counterfeit. His fellow slaves of the oar accepted him as a sort of unofficial captain, by virtue of his former greatness. He was a veteran of seasoned experience. He bullied and coaxed them into rowing long, severe stretches, and they lost no chance of a brush with the varsity eight.

In the second week three seniors passed him on the campus, and they were tunefully humming the refrain of "Mother of Men, Old Yale." Stanley carried the song with him. He had a glimpse of a meaning which he had not known before. He seldom visited the rooms of his friends. They perceived that he was trying to "come back," but his treatment of Karl Truman had become fairly well known, and they were discussing it among themselves. It was a thing to be kept from the knowledge of the other classes. There was such a thing as the honor of the junior class. Jerry Altemus had said nothing more about ending their partnership. This was distinctly encouraging, and yet Jerry was not quite the same as of old. He gave Stanley credit for reforming his conduct. It had done him a lot of good to be clubbed over the head. He displayed genuine sand in sticking to the second crew, but Jerry shook his head, and silently con-

cluded that he might prefer to room alone in senior year. Stanley had done things which a fellow might forgive, but it was not easy to forget them.

In the pleasant month of May, Henry Ingram discovered that he had a second crew which was fit to send over the four-mile practice course whenever the varsity made the trial, and, better than this, that Stanley Foster's men were keen to make a race of it all the way. By granting them a handicap of four or five lengths, they could be relied on to make a hammer-and-tongs finish of it, both crews pulling for all they were worth. There could have been no finer drill for the eight which was to battle against Harvard at New London. They dared not ease up when those fiends of Foster's were lapping their rudder, yelling to give her ten strokes more, and then another sprint. The coach grinned and trained his glasses, day after day, on the lithe figure of number five in the second crew. He was learning to stand the gaff. Brown and hard and almost gaunt, Stanley was trained so fine that the coach remonstrated:

"You chaps don't have to row your heads off, you know. How many pounds have you sweated off, yourself?"

"Twelve, when I weighed yesterday. But we are all feeling right on our toes, sir. Is our crew to be disbanded before you go to New London?"

"No. I shall keep you together until the week of the race. It means taking eight substitutes instead of three, but as a crew you will be invaluable in pacifying the varsity. You have made yourself very useful to me, Foster."

"Do you notice any signs of weakening in the waist—well, from four to six, Mr. Ingram?" asked Stanley, with a telltale blush, but he looked the coach straight in the eye.

"I should say that every man is doing his work," was the gratifying verdict.

This was what Stanley wished most

to know. He was so much like his light-hearted self that night that Jerry Altemus lazily observed:

"Take it smiling. That's the way. I met the little Ingram girl at a dance last evening. We sat out one and discussed you. They are interesting at the broiler age, so sweetly certain they know it all."

"I am still outlawed, of course?"

"Well, rather! She can't forgive herself for being so basely deceived in you. It was a severe jolt to her faith in Yale varsity athletes. Of course, I don't mean to rub it in. If you really care for the girl—"

"I do care a lot for her," said Stanley, with feeling. "But I suppose I have to pay the price. As for being fired from the crew for lack of sand, I have lived that down. Henry Ingram said as much this afternoon."

"Possibly she is not thinking of that," was Jerry's slow response, his voice a trifle cold. "I inferred that she was thinking of you as the man who had double-crossed Karl Truman."

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the Yale quarters on the Thames, above New London, there was the tense, suppressed excitement of the final days before the race. The college year had ended. There were no more examination papers to harass the devoted young men whose minds had room for nothing else than the problem of propelling an eight-oared shell fast enough to beat Harvard. When Henry Ingram appeared pleased with the day's work on the river, his sunburned vassals were almost jocular as they lounged on the lawn in the long, summer evenings. When he was frowning and absent, the atmosphere turned a darker blue than the Yale colors. It was much like "Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt."

After the last four-mile practice test had been rowed and there was nothing

more to do except keep in trim and be drilled in racing starts, the second crew was formally disbanded. It had served its purpose without hope of glory. Stanley Foster was now a bystander, an idler in the Gales Ferry camp. There could have been no harder part for him to play, but he could still make himself useful by pounding the tin pan of a piano in the parlor, and leading a lusty chorus of college songs. It was anything to make the varsity men forget the strain that pulled at their nerves and broke into their hours of sleep. He had won their esteem for him as an oarsman, and now he was endeavoring to show that one might mend a flaw in his moral courage, a task difficult beyond all others. It cost him an agony of effort to hide the hurts which humiliation and disappointment had inflicted. Often he wished he had stayed behind at New Haven and spared himself this ordeal of being with the crew, and yet not of it, but every morning when he brushed his hair he scowled at the little mirror in the cottage room, and said to himself:

"You will have to pull through another day of it somehow. The days are bad enough, but the nights, whew!"

It was in one of these nights that Henry Ingram sat late on the lawn with Josh Stokes and two other giants of by-gone days, who were guests at the quarters. They renewed their youth, and quaffed good ale from the barrel in the cellar. The air was very still and warm. The countryside was silent, and there was not even a rustle of leaves among the shade trees. Unable to sleep, Stanley Foster kicked off the sheet and went to a darkened window to look out at the river.

The cigars of the party on the lawn winked sociably. Lucky men, thought Stanley, who had gone out into the world and made good in sterner affairs than rowing. They believed that in the boat and on the campus a fellow showed

of what stuff he was made, that it marked him for future failure or success. It was part of their simple, sturdy gospel of life. He felt quite sure that they must have a better opinion now of his college career and of his chances beyond the horizon of the campus. To him it seemed quite clear that he had redeemed himself, and lived down the yellow streak.

Their voices were as robust as their constitutions, and what were meant to be confidential tones carried to the cottage across the lawn. Stanley Foster was sitting on the floor, his cheek against the cool sill, but he suddenly raised his head as Josh Stokes queried:

"And do you honestly think we have an even show for it, Pop?"

"As good as that, and I shall tell the men so before they paddle over to the start. I don't want them to feel that the habit of being licked hangs over their heads. Confidence won't hurt them. That sounds queer of a Yale crew."

"How fast is Harvard going? What do the figures show, now that the campaign is over?"

"With the same conditions of wind and tide, the two eights have gone over the course in what amounts to the same time: Harvard is a beautifully smooth outfit. They expect to whip us, hands down. We have two factors in our favor: One is a tremendous lot of rugged driving power; it has been largely developed since I put Truman in to back up my peppery stroke oar. The other is the ability to race all the way, to meet Harvard sprint for sprint. Whoop it up, and hit her again!"

"That comes of having a rattling good second crew, Pop. They were a bunch of fighters from start to finish."

"Yes, they went at it as if they had a grudge against the varsity. It was for blood every time they met. It is the kind of service that the college

never recognizes, like being hammered to pieces on the second eleven."

"Foster helped put that spirit into them, did he not?" came from another of the group.

"Yes; he has done the college a very substantial service," answered the coach, quick to give praise where it was due. He pulled at his cigar and waited a moment as though reflecting. Then he added, with weighty deliberation: "As I say, Foster did great things with the second crew, but I wonder whether he was working for the college or working for himself? Has he ever thought of anything or any one except himself?"

"A queer case, that!" exclaimed Josh Stokes. "You were telling me something about Foster earlier in the season, Pop."

"The joke was on me," and Henry Ingram chuckled grimly. "I fancied I was a fairly shrewd old bird until, in this instance, I made a goat of the wrong man. The good may be in Foster, but it will take a lot more smelting to convince me that he is, at bottom, the sort we expect to find at New Haven, Josh. I wish I felt more sure of him, sure that he has really learned to serve, that he can master himself."

"But we used to think that there could be nothing much wrong with a man who was game to stand the punishment of a four-mile stretch against the watch," mildly protested Stokes.

"True enough! And yet, did you ever know one of us to turn on a friend, bite the hand that helped him, play traitor to one of the crowd who had been stanchly loyal to him? Why, I would rather have one Karl Truman to work with than a dozen Stanley Fosters. There are other qualifications of a Yale oarsman than pulling an oar."

"And if you should coach again next year, Pop, you wouldn't put Foster in the varsity boat?"

"If I should feel as I do now? No.

If a man is caught cheating at cards in one of your clubs, do you overlook it because he may happen to be a ripping fine athlete? I make large allowances for the habitual asininity of youth, but I—"

This was what Stanley Foster heard from his window. He was condemned by this tribunal, by those whose approval he had greatly desired, by him who was not only the coach, but also the father of Janet. He had expected to receive ungrudging praise for his self-sacrificing labor with the second crew. Henry Ingram gave him credit, but in the same breath he called him a cur. Had he been working for himself, for rehabilitation in the sight of his friends, or had his motive been that of service? Ah! here was the crucial question, the test by which he was appraised.

He decided to leave the crew quarters early next morning. He hated the sight of the place. Before breakfast the crew filed into the country road to walk a mile or so. Captain Avery Carter was in the lead and the coxswain loitered, as usual. Foster followed them until he drew abreast of Karl Truman, who loomed square and solid in white trousers and sweater. They tramped in silence, slowing their gait as by tacit agreement until they fell behind the loafing coxswain, whom Stanley cuffed over the head by way of spurring him to overtake the others.

There had been an armed neutrality at the training table but never a semblance of the former friendship. The generous heart of Karl Truman had wondered and rejoiced during the months in which Stanley toiled with the second crew. It seemed to him that the utterly demolished hero was gathering the fragments together and making himself fit once more to adorn a pedestal. Karl's mental vision saw the best there was in other men and magnified their virtues.

"I wanted to say good-by, and wish

you good luck for to-morrow," began Stanley, as they toiled up a long hill together. "It seemed the decent thing to do, although I suppose you don't care to shake hands with me."

"Why, of course I'll shake hands," was the hearty response. "We fought it out to a finish."

"Thank you, Karl. I guess it is a better varsity crew than if I had stayed at number seven."

"Well, I hope you can sit behind me in the waist of the boat next year, if I can afford to take the time for rowing."

"I don't expect to come back to college next year," said Stanley, with a black scowl. "I thought I had atoned for some things that happened, but it seems not."

"It is all in the discard, as far as I am concerned," Karl cheerfully assured him. "You have done your share for the crew. Every man in the boat appreciates it."

Stanley halted in the road, his manner sad, perplexed, rebellious. He could find nothing more to say, and with the excuse that he must get his luggage aboard the early train, he parted from Karl and walked back to the quarters, turning once to gaze after the crew, a string of white figures outlined against the green trees. He could not bear to wait to see the Yale eight embark in the gleaming new shell at the call of the whistle blasts from the referee's boat, and cross the river to the starting point.

Lost and forlorn, he wandered up the main street of New London later in the morning. The town was all bright and astir with the coming of the annual holiday crowd. It was the welcome visage of Jerry Altemus that greeted him in the clamorous lobby of the hotel where sportive alumni of New Haven and Cambridge backed their opinions with the coin of the realm. The philosopher had abandoned that serene, detached outlook which had been

so diligently cultivated on the campus. His hat was on the back of his head, his collar wilted, and his voice husky. In his fist was a roll of bills, which he held close to the nose of a portly person who wore a red necktie. Him Jerry addressed with bitter, taunting words. Stanley dragged his roommate violently away, and took his money from him.

"You can't afford to risk it, Jerry, you boob! How am I going to borrow enough to get home to Los Angeles if you lose your whole wad? And to offer that fat Harvard man five to four is plain insanity."

"College spirit, my boy. Emotional intoxication. It came upon me without warning. And the face of that Harvard party offended me. The idea that Yale could dream of winning a boat race! What's the latest from Gales Ferry?"

"Truman buried the hatchet. The crew is tiptop. And what does the college think?"

"It stands by Henry Ingram, sink or swim. He has sort of permeated the place. They are beginning to understand what he wants to do. By the way, I came up with the angel child and her aunt this morning, met them on the train. Perhaps she has something to do with my frenzied college spirit. Er—she pervades a chap, doesn't she—gives him back some of the vanished illusions of youth?"

"Did you mention me, Jerry?"

"Not this time, Stanley. I wanted her to talk about me. You will have to be your own press agent hereafter."

"If she would only give me the chance!"

Jerry preferred to evade serious discussion, and he therefore rattled on:

"Snatch the chance, my boy. Now is the psychological moment. Let me give you a straight tip about women: They love to sympathize and console."

"But if the crew is beaten, she will

have to deal out sympathy to Karl Truman."

"But the crew can't lose, Stanley. Now, remember what I say. Listen attentively to the evil old man of Welch Hall. You are right in the picture today, the man who looks on at the race and smiles while his heart is breaking. Do you get me? Yale wins. Thousands madly cheer the victors. They are without doubt the happiest men in the world. Hang it! they have no right to any more happiness. But what of you? Not a solitary cheer. And you deserve a few, if not more. The angel child must have been convinced by this time that you made good with the second crew. Therefore, she will admire you, she will feel for you, she will——"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, chop it! I shall be mighty careful to keep out of her way. You are chattering all this merry nonsense, Jerry, just to pass the time. I want to know one thing, straight. It is very possible that I may not be in college next year. But if I should change my mind and conclude to come back, what about it? I haven't put in my application for rooms yet. I have been waiting to see you again. What are your plans?"

Jerry appeared acutely distressed, but he did not flinch as he answered:

"I am thinking of rooming with Karl Truman next year, Stanley. He really needs a friend who will stand by him, a genuine wise guy. I don't mean that to be as rough as it sounds, about standing by him, you know. But he is too good-natured to make a first-class business man, and I flatter myself that I can look after his interests, in the way of earning money for senior year, don't you know; organize his wonderful tutoring ability, and all that. I propose to manage him. I have found a bully summer job for him, taking charge of a rich kid who flunked his college entrance examinations, and needs coaching. I named the salary. Conscien-

tious Karl all but dropped dead when he heard the figure—called me a robber and a con man. I neatly replied that he had better see the kid first before jumping at the conclusion that he was to be overpaid."

Stanley Foster heard only part of this explanation. Jerry was breaking it to him as gently as possible, but the meaning was that they had come to the fork of the road. Once again was the sentence of condemnation decreed. Like the old rowing men who had judged him on the lawn at Gales Ferry, Jerry held that one who was unfaithful to a friend had committed the unpardonable sin among the confraternity of gentlemen. He could not say as much, but so Stanley interpreted it.

"You—you and Truman will get on well together," stammered the oarsman. "Now I know for sure that there is to be no more Yale for mine."

"Oh, don't spoil the good work," exhorted Jerry. "You have been hitting a bully gait. Come along with me to see the race, won't you? No sense in moping off alone."

Stanley gulped, and nodded an affirmative. It appalled him to think of being alone with himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

Late in the afternoon, these two climbed aboard a gayly festooned car of an observation train. The scene has often been described, but it blossoms afresh each June, a carnival of joyous color afloat and ashore, one of the most beautiful of American gala days. Of the host of girls who wore the violets of Yale or the crimson roses of Harvard, none was fairer to the eye than Janet Ingram. From an upper tier of the open observation car she glanced down and saw Stanley Foster, tall, tanned, handsome, wearing the white flannels of a varsity substitute with the crossed oars on the coat pocket. He

saw her, and waited, but her cordial smile and jaunty wave of the hand were for Jerry Altemus. Now, indeed, did Stanley Foster feel that he was an outcast. There was an empty seat beside Janet, but he followed Jerry to the lower rows of benches, where a party of juniors hailed them noisily, and offered peanuts.

The word had gone forth to the clansmen of Yale in distant cities that there was to be once again a real boat race on the Thames. They came trooping back to show their faith in Henry Ingram and his crew, to signify that the old spirit was not dead. The undergraduates came en masse, like an army with banners. On both sides of the river the observation trains were crowded, and the crimson no longer predominated.

The sun was slanting behind the hills when the contesting eights drifted close to their stake boats, and were coaxed into position for the four-mile journey downstream. The trailing observation trains became curiously silent. The tossing flags were still. It was as if some spell of enchantment had wrought this hush, this breathless immobility. Its duration was perhaps a minute while the bronzed figures in the two shells, straining forward with buried blades, awaited the pistol shot. Then the cheering rocketed across the river and back again, defiant, tumultuous. Side by side the crews were flinging the spray in fierce, lunging strokes before they settled into the long stride.

A hundred yards, and the Yale coxswain flung an arm above his head. It was the signal to cease rowing, an appeal to the referee. There had been a mishap of some kind. The steamer's frantic whistle was calling the crews back for another start. The Harvard men heeded it not for a dozen strokes more. It was hard stopping them, like runaway colts with the bits in their teeth. The coxswain twain were bawling

themselves hoarse. Even in the Yale boat the bow oar still swung like an automaton whose clockwork had been released to run for a certain time. Gradually the rival eights came to a halt and reluctantly turned, to endure again that nerve-racking crisis at the stake boats.

The Yale stroke oar was doubled forward, his idle blade skittering along the water. Had he been stricken with some sudden illness? Ten thousand sad-eyed sons of Eli groaned in spirit. No. He had not fainted or collapsed. He was sitting up again, and shouting some explanation to the referee who had steamed within close range. Now he bent forward, and was seen to be fumbling with something inside the boat. The coxswain wore a small megaphone strapped to his countenance, and the nearest ears of the observation train caught fragments of his excited language.

The Yale stroke oar, Furbish, had broken the lacing of one of the shoes which anchored his feet to the stretcher board. It seemed a trivial accident, but it spoiled his control of body and slide. Not only was his own work ineffective, but the whole machine was thrown out of gear. While he was inserting a new lacing, Stanley Foster, who was studying him through a pair of excellent glasses, anxiously confided to Jerry:

"The very worst thing that could have happened to that boy Furbish. An accident of this sort is like hitting his nerves with an ax. He is trained down awfully fine. Pop Ingram has been worried about him for the last two weeks. He is a great stroke, but keyed too high.

"Pshaw! How can a busted shoe string put him off his game?" scoffed Jerry. "The trouble is with your own nerves. You are seeing things."

"You don't know, and you can't understand," and Stanley kept the glasses at his eyes. "It is no joke to have to

start a race again. I don't like his color. Bully for Karl Truman! He is patting him on the back, and trying to steady him. Lord, how I wish I was somewhere else!"

"In the boat, at number seven?"

"Not if Furbish goes up in the air, Jerry. In a pinch like that, Truman is the lad."

They watched the crews line up again, and Stanley's heart was pounding like a drum. He could not bear to look at Furbish, but fixed his gaze on the powerful, almost stolid, figure of the man just behind him. There was nothing wrong with Truman's nerves. Again the pistol shot sent them away, but this time they surged side by side for no more than a dozen strokes. The nose of the Harvard shell, slender as the blade of a knife, was creeping ahead, inch by inch, driven with faultless harmony and precision. In the aspect of the Yale crew there was something flurried, irregular. It was hard to believe that these were the same men who had shot away from the stake boat before the mishap halted them. The trouble was with the stroke oar. He was trying to do too much. His jangled nerves had thrown his crew out of tune. He was consuming his own energy and wasting theirs. The baseball pitcher, the golfer, the boxer, know such experiences as this, when the delicate adjustment of mind and body is impaired by what is known as "a case of the rattles." The cause may be some small circumstance.

Harvard gained a clean half length. No need of spurting to hold it. Apparently the Crimson eight had only to sweep down the course at this same splendidly efficient pace, rowing well within themselves, while the Blue dropped farther and farther behind, to make another procession on the storied Thames. For another year it was all over but the shouting. The gap widened. Open water gleamed between the

two shells. But Stanley Foster's face lost its black discouragement; he gripped Jerry by the arm, and roared in his ear:

"They're not whipped yet, you poor old fool! Do you see what has happened? Furbish has eased up. He is no more than going through the motions. He has quit trying to pull his head off. He needs a chance to steady himself. Truman and Carter Avery have made him listen. He probably winded himself in that first half mile. I know what it is. I did it myself in a pair-oar. See, he is just swinging in time as a passenger, and Truman is stroking the boat until he comes to and gets a grip on his nerves. *There* is a Yale number seven for you, Jerry! Look at him! He is doing two men's work, and he slams it through every blessed stroke, all the way."

It was a lunatic of a Stanley Foster who snatched Jerry's costly straw hat and pounded a perfect stranger with it. As a philosopher, Mr. Altemus made no remonstrance. There were other hats but never a sight like this, seven men of a Yale crew who had just begun to row their race. They had lowered the stroke a full two points per minute and Harvard was fairly romping away from them, but there were no more signs of flurry. Swinging all together, long and hard and quick, they drove the shell as Henry Ingram had taught them how to drive it. Other beaten crews of Yale had been outclassed in this first two miles. These indomitable youngsters believed that this race was to be won or lost in the last mile. In fact, it was the only kind of racing they knew. In giving their own second crew a handicap through weeks and weeks of practice, they had been compelled to make a stern chase of it. That Harvard had jumped into the lead failed to dismay them.

Five minutes of time, a mile of river,

and the Yale stroke oar was no longer a passenger. Clear-headed, dynamic, he was shifting the burden from Karl Truman, his nerves all taut and ready to respond to the coxswain's call for one spurt after another. The respite had been his salvation. He was profoundly ashamed of making such an exhibition of himself. If Yale were defeated, it would be his fault. They were as good as Harvard any day, and now it was for him to prove that they were better. Up he shoved the stroke where it belonged, and knew by the feel of the boat that his men were holding it with ease. His eyes questioned the coxswain, who nodded and grinned, and up the stroke went another point.

Carter Avery yelled between his teeth: "Hold her there until we pass the navy yard, and then push it up once more, and we'll keep it there to the finish."

"A sprint all the way!" cried the coxswain. "We are rowing thirty-three now and Harvard thirty-one."

"A sprint all the way," replied the captain. "How else can we catch up with the damn' red legs?"

The old navy yard is halfway down the course. Harvard passed it a little better than four lengths in front. To recount the struggle as seen by the frenzied Stanley Foster would be to smear this page with incoherent phrases. The faithful Jeremiah grasped him around the legs and held on doggedly, for several times it appeared as if the oarsman might leap from the moving train and swim after the Yale crew. The gap between the shells was diminishing. The Harvard partisans refused to credit it, saying that the angle of vision was responsible. The Yale cohorts could not believe it because they had been schooled to expect something different. The race was in the third mile, and the Blue was stronger with every flash of the serried blades. At this stage of the contest it was cus-

tomary to sit back, with a long sigh, and try to think of other things, such as the football prospects for the autumn.

Other Yale crews had done well in practice, and failed under the stress of the race. This crew had gone fast in practice, and was upsetting precedent by going much faster in the race. Instead of blaming the angle of vision, the Harvard multitude was now rubbing its eyes. A Yale crew slug into it like so many demons, and overcome a lead of four lengths? They used to do such things in Henry Ingram's time.

The smoke from the cannon of the yachts that formed a lane along the last mile drifted low on the windless water. It rifted here and there and disclosed the struggle in its tremendously moving climax, the gap closed, the Blue grimly fighting to maintain the spurt, the Crimson as determined to meet it, both unfaltering, unbroken. It was not until the last quarter mile that the break came, that the punishment was more severe than could be endured. Harvard was like a finely tempered sword, Yale like a sledge hammer. The sword snapped, the hammer was able to deal the finishing blow. Harvard seemed suddenly to slacken speed, although the men were still swaying together, and the oars left the water cleanly. Yale forged ahead. There was power left, not much, but enough.

The judge at the finish dropped a flag to announce the victor. It was dark blue. Two shells drifted side by side, with trailing oars. In one of them a man fell back into the arms of a comrade, and then pitifully endeavored to sit erect. In the other, the conquerors scarcely felt their weariness. Feebly the crews cheered each other, for they had little breath to spare. And then their coaching launches came hurrying down to lift them from their seats and coddle them tenderly, and take them up-river to the quarters at Gales Ferry and

Red Top. Six months of preparation! Twenty minutes and some seconds of the great test! Labor and sacrifice worth while for those who had won and for those who had lost, if examples of manliness count for aught in a world that follows false gods and worships at strange altars.

The Yale crew went back to New Haven in the evening for an old-fashioned celebration. The undergraduates, alas, knew not the details of the program, for this was the first winning crew they had ever beheld. Riotous alumni, therefore, took charge of the ceremonies. The tallyho and the brass band were waiting, the Roman candles and red fire had been distributed to the populace, and a banquet would be given the heroes if they survived the celebration. Stanley Foster went to New Haven in the same train with the jubilant oarsmen, but in another car. He had no desire to be with them. Jerry's analysis of the feminine temperament had been all wrong. Janet Ingram may have felt sympathy for him, but she kept it to herself. In the railroad station at New Haven he happened to come face to face with the father of Janet, who cordially exclaimed:

"We want you to ride to the campus with the crew and join us at the dinner, Foster. The captain of the second eight belongs in the festivities to-night."

Bitter was the voice and angry the gesture as Stanley retorted: "And so I made good as an oarsman, but you have no use for me as a man! I know what you think of me. I heard you say it up at the quarters the other night. Take part in the celebration? Not for a million dollars! And I hope I never see you or the crew or the college again."

He turned away, and hailed a taxicab, telling the driver to go to the campus, and avoid the parade that was already forming, with two thousand shouting undergraduates as an escort

for the crew. Alone in his rooms, Stanley Foster, once the most popular man of his class, began packing his trunks. There was no appeal from the verdict which made him an exile from Yale. He had made his atonement as an athlete, but it availed him not. The deeper stain could not be obliterated. It was not enough that Karl Truman should be willing to forgive him.

Karl was perilously perched on top of the tallyho, dodging Roman candles, and bowing to the plaudits of the multitude, along with his comrades of the crew. He looked about for Stanley Foster, and felt troubled that he could not find him. Nor did he realize that as Yale men they had met for the last time. At the Chapel Street corner of the campus the victors were plucked from their chariot and borne upon the shoulders of their worshipers from one end of the quadrangle to the other. Karl Truman managed to escape in a rumpled condition, and dodged back to the steps of Osborne Hall, to watch the weaving snake dance of the celebrants.

His hand was grasped, and he beheld the harsh features of old Jonathan M. Carbury, whose expression was almost benignant. He was chuckling in the most delighted manner as he said:

"Didn't expect to see me here again, did you, after that last interview? All but took me by the back of the neck and threw me out of town, you peppery rascal!"

"Well, I certainly am glad to have you come back, Mr. Carbury," cried the smiling Karl. "That parting of ours has worried me more than I can tell you. I seemed such a thankless pup, and I didn't learn until later how much provocation you had. Did you come up for the race?"

Mr. Carbury did not answer this question, but pushed his way to an upper step, where the crowd was less dense, and presently returned, towing

Miss Elizabeth Carbury by the arm. Behind her timidly followed Miss Terisina. They were about to congratulate Karl in the prettiest phrases imaginable, when he created intense confusion by kissing them, regardless of the public, which was otherwise occupied. Cousin Jonathan M. Carbury said, with a grin that was a trifle embarrassed:

"He wants to know if I saw the race, Elizabeth? Shall I confess?"

"It was because of your heart, and the effect of excitement," she replied. "I think you did the wisest thing. And I am sure it was best for us."

"Quite the best," echoed Miss Terisina. "We could not have endured it, Elizabeth, to go to New London and watch Karl engage in that terrific struggle."

"When I left New York this morning, I expected to witness the race," firmly explained Cousin Jonathan M.; "but—er—I was so interested in an ungrateful young person named Truman that my infernal digestion was upset—I had no idea that one could feel so concerned over one of these college contests. I therefore left the train at New Haven and went to the house of my cousins. Our last meeting had been very unsatisfactory. I lost my temper. They, too, had decided not to go to New London, after making all preparations. So I secured rooms at the hotel and arranged for a special service of bulletins from the race by telephone and telegraph. And there we three silly old people fidgeted and fretted and hurrahed at the finish."

"Elizabeth purchased two toy boats," added Miss Terisina, blushing. "She is always so clever. And we placed them on a rug, side by side, and used tiny blue flags to mark off four miles, and we shoved the boats along as the bulletins came in, exactly as was happening in the race."

"On our hands and knees, all three of us," grunted Mr. Carbury. "And

when that false start was made, and at the second attempt Harvard took the lead, Terisina sat and wept, and I swore."

"But Elizabeth remained perfectly calm and collected. She always does," chirped Miss Terisina.

"My emotions were indescribable," said Miss Elizabeth.

"Bless your hearts!" cried Karl, who did not feel like laughter. "It sounds as though the race was more of a strain on your nerves than on mine. What a great little reunion this is! And we must have some more of it to-morrow. You declared a dividend to-day, Mr. Carbury. If it had not been for you I could not have tried for the crew."

"And we know that Yale could not have won without Karl," declared Miss Elizabeth.

Karl was dragged away to the banquet by a searching party, after promising to meet Jonathan M. for a late breakfast at the hotel. While crossing the street, the voice of Jerry Altemus was heard to shout:

"Truman, ahoy! I have glad tidings. Wait a minute, and meet a friend of mine."

Arm in arm with Jerry was a sunburned stranger, with very large hands, who appeared somewhat bewildered by the commotion. He awkwardly stammered something, and Karl fairly yelled:

"You say you have found my flute? Where is it now?"

"Don't rattle him," cautioned Jerry. "He is afraid of your wrath. I captured him while he was looking for your room. We left the flute there, and you can tootle yourself to sleep with it tonight. Now, speak up, John Huddicutt. Mr. Truman won't hurt you."

"I never meant to keep the jigamaree all these weeks," explained the milker of fifteen cows. "I guess I was more'n comfortably soshed the night I picked it up in front of Commodore Forbes'

place. Anyhow, when I got home, I was so worried up about puttin' it in a safe place that I couldn't remember next morning where it was hid. I must ha' wandered into the barn with it, being awful cunnin' when I'm mellered up. Dummied if I didn't bury it in the bottom of the grain bin, and naturally I never come to it till I'd fed out a ton of mixed feed—gluten, bran, and cottonseed meal, which makes as good a ration for dairy cows as any stuff I know about. It was yesterday that I come to the bottom of the bin, and there was the jigamaree. You could ha' knocked me over with a straw. I'd heard some talk of the trouble and—”

“I have paid him a suitable reward,” said Jerry. “You can settle with me, Karl. Now, I propose to buy Mr. Huddicutt one drink, of grape juice, and a large cigar. I want to hear him talk about cows. See you later.”

Karl was still expressing fervent thanks when Jerry and his capture vanished in the crowd. In a window of the hotel Mrs. Bancroft and Janet had been watching the parade. When Henry Ingram rejoined them, the Adorable Problem bade him intercept Mr. Truman, as she wished to offer congratulations. Karl was very rosy and quite overcome, but Janet met him with the most admirable composure, for this was one of her thrilling moments. It had all been so strangely like the plot of the play “The Twisted Skein,” which she had seen on the stage of the Hyperion Theater. She had pooh-poohed the idea that such things could happen in real life. It was assuming a great

deal to call herself the heroine, but the situation had certain resemblances that could not be ignored. She very well knew who the hero was.

“My father tells me that the boat would have gone all to pieces, Mr. Truman, if you had not been quick-witted enough to pick up the stroke and let Furbish pull himself together. Did you tell him what to do?”

“I told him I'd yank my oar out of the lock and beat him to death with it if he didn't buck up and do his work like a man,” ingenuously answered Karl, “and I guess he thought I meant it.”

“It was something like stage fright,” suggested Janet, the drama still in her mind.

“Yes, Miss Ingram. I knew what stage fright was, you see. I had an attack of it the first time I met you, down on the float at the boathouse. And I put myself in all wrong with you. You misunderstood everything I said.”

“Really, Mr. Truman? I had forgotten it. But I'm sure there is no reason why you should be afraid of me any more.”

“Do you really mean that? Would—would you mind if I should call tomorrow afternoon?”

“I shall have no other engagement, Mr. Truman.”

Again the searching party came in pursuit. A crew man was in the hands of his friends on this night of nights. From the banquet hall on another floor of the hotel came the sound of cheering, and the band was playing “Mother of Men, Old Yale.”

THE END.

The first October number will have the longest novel that ever appeared complete in one issue of the POPULAR. It is called “A Man's Code,” and is by W. B. M. Ferguson. We had planned to print it in three parts, but as its central character is a ball player and the baseball season is approaching the climax, we think you will want the whole story right away. Therefore look for that “longest novel” on Monday, September 7th.

The Man Who Disappeared

By Richard Washburn Child

Author of "The Blue Wall," "Jim Hands," Etc.

X.—A THOUSAND FEET OF FILM

SIX hours after John Perriton, captured, had been placed in a cell at the city jail, the district attorney had procured from the grand jury, then in session, an indictment charging John with murder.

Beyond the thick, upright bars of the cell door, John could see that one of the guards had stopped, and, turning his back, had displayed, as if he had intended for Perriton to read, the headlines of an early edition of an afternoon paper.

"This is the second time that I have proved to be worth an extra," said John to himself.

He had passed a sleepless night, reflecting upon the events which had led him to take the responsibility for a killing of which Mary Wales' brother was truly guilty. Mentally he had reviewed the adventures through which he had been since, six months before, though innocent, he had become a fugitive from justice. He recalled the elaborate plans which he had followed to submerge his identity and to make society believe that he was no longer in existence. He had recalled the days in which he had believed that his attempt had been successful, and that, after all, it was possible for a wrongdoer, or one whom society believed to be a wrongdoer, to escape the penalty for his misdeeds. Now he knew that he had been mistaken, for he sensed the presence of the

fate which pursues the little man for whom society reaches out its long and cruel arm.

He had wondered where Mary Wales would be. He knew that she would be loyal to him, but he had no hope that her testimony in his favor would be convincing. Nelson Wales would say that he had seen, with his own eyes, John strike the old butler down. There would be a groom from the Wales' stables to say that he had helped to tie Perriton after he had been subdued. Other servants had seen him; above all, he had for six months accepted the life of a fugitive from justice, and by his own conduct had condemned himself.

Now, in the morning light, he recalled also that a young lawyer had come to him from the firm which for so many years had taken care of his mother's business, but he had no very clear idea of what this lawyer had said regarding the indictment, or what comments he had made upon John's bald statement that he was not guilty. The matter seemed to John of no consequence because he felt that the only way in which he could escape conviction and the electric chair would be by the confession of Nelson Wales. Of such a confession there could be no hope. The instinct of self-preservation was dominant in Wales' character. He had done everything in his power to have John apprehended, so that he could

be assured of his own safety. Nothing would now change him.

As if the newspaper which was held up to the sunlight by the guard outside of the cell affirmed the thoughts in his mind, the headlines said:

PERRITON WILL BE GIVEN SPEEDY TRIAL.

Has Fled From Justice for Many Weeks, and Now Claims Innocence.

Former Fiancée, Mary Wales, Turns From Her Brother in Support of Prisoner.

Having read these words, John dropped back onto the narrow cot, and stared upward at the gray, cold concrete which served as a ceiling of the cell. Until now he had had faith in the power of resourcefulness to get him out of difficulties, but there was a hopelessness in the prospect before him which drew a blanket of insensibility about him, devitalizing his mind and body. He heard, with nervous irritation, the clang of cell doors and the angry outcries of some prisoner who came fighting his way into the building from a patrol wagon.

"With all his clamor," said John to himself, "he has not my distinction of being the guest of honor!"

A quarter of an hour later, two of the guards came to his door and told him that he was to be moved to a different part of the jail.

"The warden wants to see you," said one of these guards. "We are going to take you through the office."

"I shall be very glad to oblige the warden," said John ironically. "I wish to inquire of him as to who is his favorite barber."

"You're in a bad fix," one of the guards said, "and you are a fool to joke about it."

For some reason, this remark filled John with resentment and anger. The man had no right to offer comments, but John knew how foolish it would be

to resent them, and, furthermore, the spirit of any resentment suddenly disappeared in the realization that the officer had been right. Between the two guards, with a tired and drawn expression of countenance, he walked to the warden's office, beyond the double gate at the end of the corridor.

"Stand there!" commanded one of the officers as he entered the room.

John found himself staring into the face of the warden, who was giving him a cold and careful scrutiny; then his eyes, turning to the left, he saw a man who had, a year ago, been pointed out to him in a restaurant as Fobbetson, chief of inspectors. The latter, he could see, was looking at the floor, as if the prisoner was of no consequence to him, now that he had been made captive. The third man in the room was Nelson Wales!

Mary's brother sat with a newspaper opened upon his knees in a way which suggested at once that he had been gloating over the news which it contained. Now he stared at John with an expression which, beginning at defiance and bravado, slowly turned to one of sneers and assumed contempt. Out of the corner of his eyes, John could see that the inspector had raised his glance from the floor, and was studying this play of expression upon Nelson Wales' face.

A sudden fury filled Perriton's body, as if the emotion had been hypodermically injected into him. The injustice of the situation fanned his anger into white heat. That the man who had benefited by all the sacrifices he had made should now sneer at him made him feel that nothing could be sweeter than to do that man damage with his hands.

With these hands clenched to his sides—for he had been spared the humiliation of handcuffs—and with hate showing in his face, he turned, to find the eyes of the inspector upon him. Un-

like the warden's, these eyes of Fobbetson were communicative. They said to John very distinctly: "Do not lose your self-restraint." Perhaps gratitude showed in John's face; perhaps the inspector had witnessed touches of human nature which he had come to see. He was a coarse-appearing man, but his eyes were clear and blue, temperate and kind. Now he motioned to Wales, and the two left the room.

"John Perriton," said the warden, "you know, of course, that except for your counsel I have the privilege of forbidding any one to see you. This morning we have had an application from a person who wishes an interview."

"A woman?" asked John, his face lighting up.

"Yes," said the warden, "it is a woman."

"It is Mary Wales?"

The warden nodded.

For a moment a struggle went on in John's mind between the desire to see her and the feeling that he must involve her no more than she had been involved in his fortunes.

"You have refused this permission to her?" said he.

"I did," replied the warden, "but Inspector Fobbetson thought it would be wise for you to see her."

"For what reason?"

"I do not know the reason," answered the warden gruffly. "She is waiting in there. You may enter the room alone."

Had John been familiar with the devices for the detection of crime, he would have suspected that his interview with Mary would be witnessed secretly. Behind the picture of a former warden a hole had been cut in the wall so that one on the other side of the partition could look within and listen and yet be unobserved.

Unconscious of the fact that Fobbetson was at this point of observation,

John, unable to maintain his resolve to spare Mary any emotional experience, now received her in his arms and allowed her to press her forehead against his cheek. A moment later, John felt her body convulse with sobs, and as he stepped away from her, her tears dropped on his upturned wrist.

"I spent the night with Jenny," said she. "We did not know that you had been caught until this morning. I had waited at the steamship until the boat sailed, and then, knowing that something had happened to you, I went back to Jenny. Isn't there any hope?"

John walked up and down the room for a moment or two because he was conscious of the fact that he must state the truth, and do it in a businesslike and unemotional manner. Turning to Mary, he reminded her that they had often discussed the smallness of his chances, in case he were captured. He reminded her again that even though she were to testify to all that she had seen, there would be little value in the evidence which she could give. He told her again that they must both be calm, and must harbor no bitterness because of the fact that the law would judge him wrongly or society in error deprive him of his liberty or life.

"There is no way out?" she asked at last.

John shook his head. "The chances are very slim," said he, "and it would mean, if I were to go free, that your brother——"

"There is no love left in my heart for him," Mary interrupted. "He is not my brother, and if I had it in my power I should believe it my duty to let him pay the penalties which he deserves to pay."

John, however, shook his head.

"Even then there is no hope," said he. "Nelson is not going to confess. We can expect nothing of the kind. If I accuse him, and if you accuse him, it would injure, rather than help, my case,

for it would seem to be the result of a conspiracy between us to shift the blame. You must not forget that for months I tried to elude arrest, and that you have already done too much to expose yourself to a charge of being an accessory by your efforts to help me."

Mary looked out through the barred windows down into the street below. "But, John——" said she, suddenly turning about, looking straight into his eyes.

"What?" he asked, in a lifeless voice. "I was just thinking," said she, "Jenny has told me that during the time that you and she had need of quick wit, you were accustomed to say that any problem could be worked out by resourcefulness—that any problem could be solved by a plan, and the courage and persistence to put it through."

John admitted, with a nod, that he remembered this attitude of mind which had become characteristic of him. "But resourcefulness implies that one has the chance to work out their own plan of action," he answered. "In this case, everything depends upon what your brother does. I cannot affect the determination which is in his mind."

"Perhaps you can," said Mary, with a kind of hopeless persistence.

He paced up and down the room, and as he walked he snapped his fingers and stared first at the ceiling and then at the floor. At last he turned toward the girl.

"Do you really mean what you have said about your brother?" he asked.

"Of course I mean it!" said she.

"Then listen to me," said John.

As Perriton went on describing to Mary his plan of action, the face of Fobbetson behind the picture of the ex-warden changed its expression; indeed, after a moment he withdrew from his secret observation, and, motioning to one of the jail guards, he said: "Go in there and tell them their time is up. I have got a scheme, but it has got to

be put across in a hurry. Take Perriton back to his cell."

The guard, doing as he had been directed, opened the door and said brusquely: "Come on! Time is up."

Perriton nodded, patted Mary's hand as he said good-by, and went out.

"Wait here a moment, miss," said the guard to Mary.

No sooner had the door closed behind John, when the lock was turned in the door at the other side of the room through which Mary had made her entrance, and Fobbetson appeared, closed the door after him, and leaned his bulky figure against it.

"Excuse me, Miss Wales," said he, "but behind you there is a picture hanging on the wall. Just lift it away and look under it."

Mary Wales did so, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and indignation.

"You have been watching us! You have been listening!" she accused him.

"Sure I have!" he answered. "That's what the place is for; but don't be alarmed, miss."

"I am not alarmed," she said angrily. "I am indignant. Once you arrest an innocent man, he has no chance at all in the midst of such spying and persecution."

"Wait, wait, wait!" the inspector begged her. "Don't forget that sometimes these are ways of finding out that a man is innocent. For instance, look at this case. I am convinced myself already—not that that makes any difference—but there is still a chance of proving it."

"You heard the plan?" she asked, walking toward him.

"Yes, I heard it," the inspector answered. "Why wouldn't I? And we must act quick on it. It's a peach. We must——"

"We?" repeated Mary.

"Yes, yes!" he replied. "I am with you. But you got to act quick. Go to

that telephone and call up twenty-eight hundred Castle. Tell them that you and Chief Fobbetson will be up there inside of half an hour; then tell the telephone operator to get you a taxicab. I have got one letter to write, and then I'll be with you."

"Thank you," said Mary, and she held out her hand.

The inspector took it between his two great palms.

"That's all right," he said. "Don't let's waste any time, and keep your nerves steady, Miss Wales."

He turned away from her, and, going into the next office, he sat down at the desk, and upon a telegraph blank wrote the following message:

John Perriton, the prisoner, has devised novel plan to prove that another did the crime for which he is indicted. Please delay trial until I can investigate. I will telephone you later in the day.

J. R. FOBBETSON,
Chief of Inspectors.

He pressed a button, and waited until a patrolman came in.

"See here, Tim, I don't dare to trust this to any messenger boy—it's too important, see?" he told the officer. "Get it over to the district attorney's office as soon as your legs will go there. And, say! See that the D. A. gets it himself. None of his assistants, mind! It's the D. A. himself. Put it in his own hands."

"Going to pull something off, inspector?" asked the other.

Fobbetson spoke with a suggestive tone.

"Well, say!" he said, rolling his eyes.

The sun, for the second time since Perriton's confinement, made the morning known by throwing upon the concrete floor of the corridor outside his cell a barred patch of light. Rubbing his eyes after a heavy slumber, John wondered how he or any man could, when facing death, receive the call of

sleep and fall into unconsciousness as easily as he had done the night before. It was a great tribute to the kindness of nature, he reflected; and then suddenly he remembered that when he had left Mary Wales she had gone away with a plan to save him from a conviction, a sentence, and a death which, if their last resort should fail, would be his inevitable fate.

But Mary had sent him no word, and he had no means of knowing whether she was still trying to work out the proposal which he had made to her, whether she had tried and failed, or whether, having been successful, she had been unable to communicate with him. He resented the tyranny of the jail which shut him out from all the world, which already to such an extent assumed him guilty that its rules and system hampered his plans to prove himself innocent. The prosecuting law officers might go anywhere they liked to find evidence to convict him; he, on the other hand, could not stir so much as beyond the grim bars of a narrow cell to search for scraps of testimony which might help to secure his acquittal. The man under suspicion was a man under a thousand disadvantages, thought John. A man under indictment was already more than half branded with guilt, and a man in prison awaiting trial was a man whose destinies were no longer in his own hands, but wholly and completely in the hands of others.

With this thought, he called to the guard, whose monotonous tread he had heard, pacing this way and back again since the first gray light.

"What time is it?" he asked.

The keeper, without a word, pulled out a watch and held it up for Perriton to see. It was already after seven!

"Any one been to see me?" John asked.

No sound came from the other taciturn man; he merely shook his head from side to side. John sighed, and re-

turned to sit on the edge of the narrow cot, where he had spent the night; he rubbed his aching forehead with his open palms, and speculated on what the day would have in store for him. The one terrible thought was that hour after hour would pass, bringing no event, that dusk and another night would come without any change—that he would have to go on wondering, thinking, brooding, until the blood would be surging in his head and his nerves would be shrieking out in protest against the nothingness of the mere passage of time.

He was spared, however, the torture which he feared. Not an hour had gone before he heard a heavier step on the concrete floor which ran in front of the tier of cells. A low, deep voice engaged in a short conversation with the guard, and the lock at the turnkey's gate was thrown back into place.

"You've seen the warden about this, inspector?" the guard asked.

"Surest thing you know; and I'm goin' to see him again when I go out!"

The voice John recognized as that of Fobbetson, and a moment later he saw the bulky figure of the detective chief between his cell door and the barred window beyond.

"Come here!" commanded the inspector. "Now, listen to me: If you know what's good for your health, you'll walk out of here with me, and if there's any talkin' done in the mix-up I'm goin' to pull off, don't you open your yap. No matter how long this takes, you keep your mouth closed to everybody but me, see?"

John was suspicious. He feared some trap, some form of the police third degree, of which he had heard so much, but after he had looked back for a moment into the clear blue of the official's steady eyes, he felt again that he read in them a second message of friendliness.

"I don't know what you plan to do,

Mr. Fobbetson," said he, "but I am wise enough to fall in with it without advice of counsel."

"I was half afraid you'd want to consult your attorney, at that!" replied the other. "Open this door, Joe! I've got two of my own men in the outer office, and this prisoner is in our custody."

John turned toward the big man at his side as they walked toward the turnkey's cage. "Do you mind telling me where we are going?" he asked.

The inspector smiled grimly.

"On an automobile ride with Miss Mary Wales," he said. "Ain't that enough for you at present?"

The two men walked into the jail keeper's office, where the warden sat before his desk and looked up at Perriton with the same cold, noncommittal form of scrutiny with which nearly twenty-four hours before he had suspected him.

"This is very irregular, inspector," he said.

"Irregular!" exclaimed Fobbetson. "Don't I know it's irregular? It has the customs and rules and religion of the department smashed into a wreck, a ruin, and a subway explosion—I know that. But that ain't the point. Who has custody of this man? The court. Who's the court's officer? The district attorney. Haven't I given you an order from the both of them two authorities to deliver the prisoner into my custody? That lets you out, don't it?"

The warden wiped the lenses in his glasses.

"All right," he said at last. "It's up to somebody else beside me. You get custody of this prisoner for twelve hours. Am I correct?"

"You're more'n correct—you're accurate, and make a bull's-eye," Fobbetson replied, jamming his derby hat onto the back of his head. "Come on, there, Perriton. This is going to be the queerest day that the head of my department ever put in."

Two of the inspector's men followed the prisoner and the chief down the steps of the jail and around the corner.

"What is the plan?" John asked again.

"You ought to know," replied the other. "It was your plan, and not mine. I'm seein' it through, that's all. And that game little lady who is sticking so close to you when you are in trouble has made the arrangements."

As he finished his sentence, he pointed to two automobiles in one of which there sat half a dozen men and Mary Wales and in the other three men, who carried in their laps or had placed on the seats beside them devices which suggested immediately cameras and photography.

"That's enough," the inspector whispered to John, as he saw that the two lovers were exchanging glances which might attract attention; and then he waved his hand to the man at the wheel of the first car. "Shoot!" said he. "Beat it for Briarwood!"

Perriton, when he heard this direction, knew that the plan which he had outlined to Mary was to be tried, and that however it had been accomplished, the best ally who could be had for the attempt had been procured in the person of the chief. He spent the time on the road to the Wales estate with his eyes on the floor of the car in which he rode, digging out of his memory the details which he knew would be necessary for the attempt. The inspector no doubt knew what was going on in his mind, for he leaned over once to say into Perriton's ear that the matter must be carried out faithfully to the exact truth.

When at last the party stood on the terrace in front of the Wales home, Fobbetson, who had much agility for a large man, sprang out from the group and addressed himself in a tone of authority to all of the party.

"This man is to be in charge of the

production," he said, pointing to John. "And he plays his own part, see? And Miss Wales plays her own part, and shall have to change her dress. There's only two more characters. One of them is the butler. That's you, Mr. Actor, ain't it? Luckily we've got an old photograph of the butler. And the other plays Nelson Wales. That's you, Mr. Epping. You've got his picture already."

"I've been practicing the make-up since five o'clock this morning," replied the actor.

"Where's the torn dress suit for Mr. Perriton?" Fobbetson went on. "We haven't any time to waste. Here, you, Joe and Henry, take the prisoner—take Mr. Perriton where he can get into the glad rags."

Twenty minutes later, the players in the drama had reassembled on the terrace. Two of the camera men, skilled in the production of films for moving pictures, had stood their machines where a good view could be had of the hedge at the edge of the roadway, and also of the approach to the Wales home.

"I've got to hand it to you," said the chief of inspectors to the actor who was playing the part of Nelson Wales. "Ten yards away from you, I couldn't tell you from the original. Now, all you men get back while Mr. Perriton, here, lies down by the hedge where he was thrown after the automobile accident."

John rose to his feet and staggered forward as he had done on the night of the crime. He followed the actor, who was playing the part of his enemy, around the corner of the porch. The actor dropped a glove. When Perriton reached it, he picked it up, and, as in the case of the original action, the glove was still warm from the hand of its wearer. Perriton walked around the corner of the porch, and, peering through the glass, tried the long French

windows. He pressed his shoulders against one of them, and burst into the house, as he had on the fatal night. All during this time the pur of the cameras signified to those who stood about that this action was being recorded. At the moment that Perriton disappeared within the house, Fobbetson slapped his hands together.

"All right!" he roared. "That looked good to me. The next scene is inside the house. Here's where you appear, Miss Wales, when the time comes."

The party met again in the library. Here arc lights had been attached to the ceiling and were sputtering, as they threw their garish light upon the details of the apartment. The camera men had taken a position where they could cover as wide a space as possible so that the action could not be restrained more than was necessary. Perriton, by the direction of the chief of inspectors, was once more telling Mr. Epping, step by step, the action of Nelson Wales.

And now as the cameras whirred again, Epping cautiously opened the library door.

"Wait a minute," said John. "The light should be out."

The cameras stopped. Some one turned off the arcs and the action began again. Again Epping entered. He moved across the library toward the strong box which occupied a space in the brick beside the hearth.

"Butler!" Fobbetson bellowed.

The actor who had made up as the old Wales servant opened the door on the other side of the library. He felt along the wall until he had found the electric switch.

"Lights!" shouted one of the camera men..

The man who controlled the arcs turned on the full flare. The butler stepped back as he saw that the man who was trying to open the strong box was Nelson Wales. He moved toward

him, with his hands raised in horror. The two men met, and from the table Wales seized the paper cutter. He brought this weapon down upon the bald head of the other actor, putting enough spirit into the action to cause the other to twist his countenance with real pain. Down went the man who had been attacked, and as Wales stood over him the door opened, and John Perriton, in a dress suit, torn and covered with mud, ran forward into the center of the improvised stage. Five minutes later, Fobbetson was sitting on the edge of the sofa beside Miss Wales, rubbing his knees with delight.

"I tell you, Miss Mary," said he, "I tell you if this thing works, I am going to pull it off again whenever I get into a tight pinch. The idea is great. It goes to show what a man can think of when he really *has to think!*"

That afternoon at three o'clock Fobbetson entered the office building where Mary's brother had his desk. As he went out of the elevator, he stopped for a moment to think, and then walked rapidly down the corridor to the office that he sought. The inspector was not a man who went on uncertain errands; he had had one of his men watch the building until Wales entered, and he knew that the man he wished to see was in his office.

"Good afternoon!" he said, as Nelson looked up. He believed that in the face of the other man he saw the sudden fear which his presence had excited, and he knew that he must calm this fear.

"I just dropped in to ask if you would do a favor for the district attorney and for me," he said. "There are one or two things in connection with the Perriton case where we need your help."

Wales smiled in his relief.

"Glad to help you any way I can, inspector," he replied. "When do you want me to go?"

"Why don't you walk along with me

now?" Fobbetson suggested. "Ain't this hot weather? Say!"

Together the spider and the fly walked over to the city jail.

"I've got a request to make of you," said Fobbetson. "Some of the things which you may notice will be kind of queer, so take a tip from me, and just look on and say nothing, and if you do that I'll give you my word that everything will be all right."

He took Wales through the waiting room and into a long chamber which was used ordinarily as a lounging room for visitors and jail attendants. Now, however, there was no furniture in the room except one wooden chair of the kind that is commonly found in kitchens. At the far end of the room, a sheet of white cloth had been hung over a pole which stretched across from wall to wall near the ceiling.

"Don't go near that," said Fobbetson; "sit down in that chair and watch what you see."

But Wales was not pleased. "I don't quite understand what this means," he said.

"Sit down!" repeated the inspector, in a tone of authority. "I'll tell you again, if you know what's good for you, you won't leave that chair!"

He opened the door, as Nelson sat down with his back toward him, and when it closed Wales thought that he heard the key turn in the lock. And now behind him he heard the curious clicking whir of a little machine in motion. He wheeled about, but except for a round hole in the wall nothing appeared. Suddenly the lights went out, and the unfortunate man gave a gasp of surprise.

From out of the darkness there now sprang a picture which moved uncertainly from right to left, and then settled on the screen. It was a picture of his own home!

Wales could see that the picture had been taken as if by moonlight. A dark

figure was moving up the lawn toward the terrace of the house. From beneath the shadow of the hedge, a second figure arose, the figure of his friend, John Perriton, clad in a dress suit, and this figure staggered forward toward the terrace. Suddenly, in one of the windows, a light sprang up, and, thrown against the curtain sharply defined, were the outlines of two men. The first struck the other a smashing blow upon the head with some instrument. The figure which he had identified as that of Perriton, who had been watching from without, rushed forward, and, throwing his weight against one of the long French windows which opened onto the porch, entered the house.

Nelson Wales turned from the moving drama, rose from his chair, and, running through the darkness to the door, he tried to open it. It would not yield, and he turned his back to it again, panting with excitement.

A new scene was on the screen in front of him. It was the library with which he had been familiar since childhood. It seemed to be dimly lit by such moonlight as came through the windows. He saw himself fumbling along the mantel above the fireplace. Suddenly the light sprang up. The old butler came toward him with hands held up in horror and indignation. He reached for the heavy paper cutter on the table! He struck the old man down with one blow! He stood over him, trembling with anger and the overpowering instinct for self-preservation! He had killed a man! He must escape!

But the door across the library was opened suddenly. He had been discovered! It was John Perriton who stood staring at him with accusing eyes out of the moving picture.

Wales, staring at this representation, snatched up the kitchen chair in which he had been sitting, and, rushing forward, hurled it at the photographic fig-

ure of Perriton. There came a ripping of cloth. Wales seized the sheet in the convulsive grasp of his two clawing hands as he fell. Down came the pole, the screen, the chair, and Wales himself in a mass of wreckage!

Some one turned the electric light on in the room, and in the space which had been behind the screen, Mary Wales, Perriton, the chief of inspectors, and two of the jail guards, who had been in hiding, were now revealed.

"Get up!" bellowed Fobbetson, shaking Nelson Wales by the shoulder.

But the man on the floor did not move. His eyes were rolled back, and he was gasping for breath, as if he were a fish in the bottom of the boat. The two guards lifted his inert body onto the table in the corner. Wales opened his eyes once and looked about him for a moment, and then said between his gasps for breath: "You've got me, inspector! You've got me! I did it!"

One of the guards put his arm underneath the neck of the unfortunate man. The only other words which he uttered were: "It's my heart. The doctor said—"

A moment later, Fobbetson turned toward one of the guards and whispered: "You'd better take the lady out. This man is done for."

Then he turned to John and grasped his hand with both his own.

"It won't even come to trial if the D. A. and I can fix it!" he said.

On the hottest day of the summer, a transatlantic liner pulled out of her slip in the North River with little tugs busying themselves about her great sides like ants running around the gigantic carcass of a bumblebee. The usual fanfare of such a departure was in progress; music was wafted across the undulating waters of the river toward the New York shore; toward the receding stern of the great ship cries of farewell in many tongues were directed; upon the pier, Jenny Horn clung to the arm of her husband with one hand while she waved at two figures in the stern of the ship with the other.

When acquaintances could no longer be distinguished, John Perriton turned to his wife and held out an afternoon paper.

"Not a word about *our* wedding!" said he.

"Then it was a *great* success!" said Mary, with a little laugh.

"The greatest success in the world," said John fervently.

He knew that his adventures were at an end.



THE REAL BAEDEKER

A N Englishman tells this incident of a trip he took to Russia. With him in his compartment on the train was an exceedingly well-informed German, and the two grew very friendly. Each was a stranger to the other.

They had talked for four hours over a wide range of topics when the Englishman asked the German if he happened to have a Baedeker with him.

It was too much for the warm-hearted Teuton. Bursting with a sudden and overwhelming enthusiasm of friendship, he beat his breast with both hands, exclaiming: "Gott in Himmel, I am it!"

It was none other than Karl Baedeker himself.

The Packer

By George Steunenberg

WE'RE the boys that packs the rations when the army hits the trail
And you'll always find us ready for a hike;
And no matter how you hit it up we're never known to fail!
To be with you when you finish down the pike;
Chase yourself across the mountains till your men are droppin' dead—
Pitch your camp a thousand miles from anywhere;
But when you're pitchin' shelter tents and rollin' out your bed
You can bet you'll find the pack train there!

Naw! I wouldn't be a soldier if they made me brigadier
And I'd die before I'd wear a uniform;
Give me the old blue overalls for twelve months in the year.
And a slicker when we chance to strike a storm;
No, we ain't so much to look at and our ways are rather slack
And along the trail you're apt to hear us swear;
But when you're out of rations and your belly rubs your back
You can bet you'll find the pack train there!

Want to see us pack a mule? Clap the blind across his face.
Give the rope a simple, scientific twitch;
Now we heave the sacks and boxes up and butt 'em into place,
And in half a shake we've got the diamond hitch;
Sixty seconds to a mule and we beat it down the trail
To the tinkle of the old bell mare—
Hit the grit for all you're worth—chase yourself around the earth!
But you'll always find the pack train there.

There's a string of fifty mules good for seven tons of freight—
Sacks of flour, slabs of bacon, bales of hay.
Grand pianos, kegs of whisky (though it may evaporate),
And we never kick at thirty miles a day;
Over snowy peaks and cañons where a slip is *Adios!*
For you'd drop a half a mile through empty air—
Lead us anywhere you please, over rocks and fallen trees.
But you'll always find the pack train there.

When you're stationed in the firing line along a rocky crest
And you're diggin' like a gopher in the dirt;
While the chunks of lead are hummin' like a hummin' hornet's nest
And you're tying up the wounded with your shirt;
When you've searched the dead for cartridges and shot 'em all away
And you feel yourself beginning to despair—
Then you yell for ammunition—oh, you needn't holler twice!—
For, you bet, you'll find the pack train there!

Where did we learn the business? Not at any army post;
Ask the desert with its wastes of burning sand;
Ask the vast and silent places from Nebrasky to the Coast—
From the Arctic Circle to the Rio Grande;
Ask the miry clay of Cuba or the distant Philippines—
The jungles with their fever-laden air—
The cold Alaska snows—anywhere the army goes—
For you'll always find the pack train there.

The Element of Chance

By Raymond Ward Hofflund

Enos made \$63,000 in the good old-fashioned way, by digging it out of the ground. Then he decided to let his money work for him while he cut coupons. His financial experience in the city to which Scotty brought his Death Valley plunder is worth telling.

HAVING read the morning paper and smoked a cigar in the lobby of a luxurious tourist hotel in Los Angeles, Enos Whittaker proceeded to take his daily stroll down Spring Street. The stroll was a regular event, at any rate, to the extent that Enos had thus found exercise and recreation for five successive days.

The air was balmy, the streets and sidewalks crowded, the shop windows attractive. Enos Whittaker took a deep breath of delight.

"The more I get into this life," he remarked to himself, "the more I can see that I'm a-going to like it." He stood still for a moment, looking down the street. "And now," he added, "it's high time I made a good, careful investment of the money. There's no sense leaving it in the bank."

Enos did not look, at a glance, like a man who was troubled by investments. He was big and full-chested, about forty-five years old, ruddy-faced, with a heavy growth of stubby, untamed black whiskers. He wore a poor-fitting suit of cheap clothes, a soft, black hat, unbrushed during Enos' ownership, heavy shoes, and a shirt with a soft collar. And yet, no Los Angeles man would have been greatly sur-

prised by the figures written in his bank book; for Enos was in the city to which Scotty brought his Death Valley plunder; the city in which oil derricks sprouted overnight in more than one back yard, creating a new capitalist out of a salaried suburbanite; the city, in fact, in which getting rich quick was too common an event to attract attention.

Having made up his mind, Enos took steps to invest his fortune wisely and carefully. These steps consisted in looking at office windows until he saw one with a gold-lettered sign reading: "James B. Dunkhorn; Stocks, Bonds, Investments."

"I reckon," said Enos, having read this sign several times, "that he's the feller I want to see."

Whereupon he crossed the street and placed himself and his bank account in the hands of the most unscrupulous broker and promoter in the city.

Enos entered an outer office, finding a stenographer of radically blond proclivities, who took his name into an inner sanctum, and shortly ushered him into the presence of James B. Dunkhorn. The broker was a tall, thin, well-dressed young man, with prominent, gold teeth; the kind of man who can be placed at a glance as a regular

reader of the sporting editions. To Enos' simple mind, however, this was no drawback; the mere fact that a man had an office was proof enough to him that he knew his business. He accepted a proffered chair and stated his business without preamble.

"Mr. Dunkhorn," he said, "I've got sixty-three thousand dollars in the Bank of Commerce that I want to invest so it will bring me a steady income. Seeing the sign on your window, I thought I'd drop in and talk it over."

"Very wise, indeed," replied Mr. Dunkhorn modestly. "I have a good list of safe investments—a very good list."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Enos; "because I'm no judge of such things myself. So I have to rely on some one else who has had experience."

Mr. Dunkhorn reached down with his left hand and pinched himself on the leg. He wanted to be perfectly sure that he was wide awake.

"May I ask if this sum represents a sale of securities formerly held, Mr. —Mr. —"

"Whittaker," said Enos. "No, I never held securities, whatever they may be. I got this money in the good, old-fashioned way of digging it out of the ground. I found it—that's the plain fact; there wasn't much digging to do."

"Ah!" said Mr. Dunkhorn. "A mine?"

"Something like that," Enos admitted. "At any rate, I got the gold out of the ground. Now it's turned into cash, and I want to make a good investment."

"Of course," said Mr. Dunkhorn, without apparent excitement. "Have you any choice, Mr. Whittaker?"

"What do you mean?"

"Railroad stocks—bank stocks—industrials—mortgages. I would recom-

mend stocks; bonds pay too low a rate of interest to be attractive."

"I ought to get a pretty fair interest," said Enos doubtfully; "but I don't know that I've got any choice. Bank stocks ought to be good."

"Very good," said Mr. Dunkhorn heartily. "Possibly the very best form of investment." He leaned back in his chair and pressed the tips of his fingers together. "Mr. Whittaker, if you are in no great hurry, let me suggest that you come in and see me to-morrow. I have a very attractive proposition here in the office—an unusually attractive proposition. Our intention was to keep the stock ourselves; but it is just possible that we may decide to let in a few personal friends. I couldn't, on my own responsibility, undertake to sell you any; but I will see the other directors to-night, and bring up the matter. You see, I want to do the best I can for you; and it happens that this company, just formed, will place any stock it may decide to sell in my hands."

"Well, now," said Enos gratefully. "that's awful good of you. What kind of a company is it?"

"Oil," returned Mr. Dunkhorn laconically. "Let me tell you, Mr. Whittaker, oil is the most valuable commodity in the world to-day, not even excepting gold. We have twenty acres of the best oil land in the State. The Lady Martha is on the adjoining property—the heaviest gusher of them all. Have you paid any attention to the price of oil stocks, Mr. Whittaker?"

"Not a bit."

"Last month," said Mr. Dunkhorn, "the stocks of a dozen oil companies were listed at around forty cents. Every one of them is selling on the exchange to-day at one dollar or over. Money more than doubled in a month. Last week the Coyote Oil Company's stock was quoted at one-sixty-five. To-day

it is three-fifteen. And I could tell you of hundreds of just such instances."

Enos was puzzled.

"But how does a man get his interest on the money he puts in?" he inquired.

"Dividends," said Mr. Dunkhorn. "All of these stocks advance as the result of earning huge profits for their holders. The Coyote Company pays eight per cent quarterly. Think of it—thirty-two per cent on your money!"

"Sounds pretty big," said Enos. "But ain't a man liable to lose?"

"To be frank about it," the broker admitted candidly, "there is an element of chance. That is to say, in oil-stock speculation. Of course, this company of ours is different; we own the property—we have the oil. We are in the oil business for legitimate purposes, not for speculation. Therefore, each share of our stock represents not only a full dollar's worth of value, but a little more than that. If we offer any at all it will be at par, one dollar a share, which price we will raise to one-fifty at the end of a month."

But why linger over the details? Enos consented to postpone his investment for one day. He was rewarded by being given permission to buy sixty thousand shares of the Santa Luisa Oil Company, for which he gave Mr. Dunkhorn his check for sixty thousand dollars. The broker showed his teeth for a moment by trying to get the whole sum; but Enos decided to keep three thousand dollars for personal use.

During the following month he called several times at the office, usually finding Mr. Dunkhorn out. At the end of that time he called once more. He had begun to have a vague feeling of uneasiness; he had even found himself wondering more than once if a man in such a position could misrepresent stock in order to sell it. Enos did not like this feeling of doubt. He decided that the moment the stock was advanced he would sell out and put his money into

something a trifle more widely known than the Santa Luisa Oil Company.

Mr. Dunkhorn was in this time, and received him kindly.

"We had a directors' meeting last night, Mr. Whittaker," he said, "and voted not to put up the stock for another week or so. Of course, we are not advertising it or trying to sell, so it makes no difference."

"It makes some to me," said Enos. "I've about made up my mind to sell my stock, Mr. Dunkhorn, and invest in something else. So I hoped you'd decided to advance it."

"I would advise against selling now," said Mr. Dunkhorn. "Wait a few weeks."

The feeling of distrust came over Enos again, and he made a sudden decision.

"I reckon I'll sell," he declared. "I'll sell back to you at the price I paid, and you can make the profit."

Mr. Dunkhorn laughed involuntarily. He tried to make it appear a courteous laugh; and explained that it was not possible for him to accept the kindly offer. It would ruin his professional standing, he said, to take so base an advantage of a client.

When Enos got out on the street again he took a deep breath.

"I reckon I'd better investigate this company," he said to himself. "Probably it's all right, and I'm a fool to be scared; but there's no harm in looking over the ground."

In the course of a few days he found that in return for his sixty thousand dollars he was part owner of twenty acres of bare mesa land, worth probably fifteen dollars an acre. There was not a sign of development on the place; not an oil derrick in sight.

"He said the Lady Martha was on the adjoining property," Enos remembered. "Well, well; so it is. For that matter, so is the State of Ohio. They all join sooner or later."

He went back to his hotel and sat down in the lobby to think it over. He was not the kind of a man to waste time in self-pity; his effort was to adjust himself to the new conditions. At the end of an hour his mind was made up.

"Probably I wouldn't have cared for the life for no great time," he said to himself. "I'll go back to prospecting. But I wish I had him out somewhere in the open, where I know how to work."

The thought was pleasant; moreover, it suggested others. Enos went to sleep that night developing them.

For a few days he avoided Mr. Dunkhorn's office. Then he made another visit.

"Well," he said affably, when he got inside, "how's the oil business getting along?"

"Everything looks good," the broker assured him. To himself he added: "It's time to get out. The old fathead is going to be troublesome." And then again out loud: "Yes, Mr. Whittaker, our prospects are better every day. In a few weeks, now, we will advance the stock. Then, if you wish, I will sell out for you."

"I don't know as I care so much about it any more," said Enos. "I've about made up my mind to keep it till we've been running a year or so. By then, it ought to be worth two dollars."

"Easily," said Mr. Dunkhorn.

"So it was about another matter I came up to-day," Enos continued. "I met an old friend of mine last night, and I got to talking to him about this company. Now, he's never had no luck, and he's only got a little money—about a thousand dollars. When I told him about this stock going to one-fifty in a short time he figured it out that if he owned some he could make five hundred dollars. So he's been begging me to get some for him, and I thought

I'd help him out by letting him have a little of mine."

"Very generous of you," said Mr. Dunkhorn; "but it's not necessary. I can get that amount of treasury stock for him, if you prefer."

"Why, of course," said Enos, "if you can do that, so much the better. You make it out to him. Here's his name—Robert H. Winters. Then I'll pay you, and collect from him."

"An even thousand shares?" Mr. Dunkhorn asked. This was so easy that it actually lacked interest.

"I reckon," said Enos. "But just one word first. You're sure this company is perfectly safe?"

"Safe as the United States treasury."

"Well, that's all right, then," Enos continued. "It's important with him, because this money is all he's got. With me, of course, it wouldn't make so much difference; because I could go out and get more any time."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Dunkhorn sharply.

"Out to the mine, you know," said Enos. "If I should happen to get hard up I could go out there any time, of course, and get more."

Mr. Dunkhorn digested this statement slowly. He reached into a lower drawer of his desk, took out two cigars, and offered one to his visitor.

"How much more?" he asked.

"Oh, Lord!" said Enos; "I don't know. I only took a small part. There's a whole lot left."

"More than you brought in?"

Enos laughed.

"I reckon," he said; "considerable more. What's the difference? I'm not likely to want it. I figured on getting a few thousand a year out of my investment, and living here where life is enjoyable. I worked a good many years before I located that mine, Mr. Dunkhorn, and I'm tired of it. But, of course, it's pleasant to have it there; it makes me feel secure."

"But, man alive!" the broker exploded. "Some one else may stumble on it."

"It ain't at all likely," said Enos. "It's in an out-of-the-way place. There ain't many that go that way."

Mr. Dunkhorn's fingers tingled with excitement.

"My dear sir!" he protested. "You are altogether too trusting, too unused to business methods, if you will permit me to say so. The only sensible thing for you to do is to work your mine; work it to the limit, and put your money where it will be safe."

"Oh, I may do it some day," said Enos. "There's no hurry. Now, you fix up that stock so I can get it tomorrow, and I'll come up for it."

"Sit down," said Mr. Dunkhorn. "I'll do it right now."

He busied himself for a time preparing the certificates. When he had finished, Enos gave him a check for a thousand dollars, which he pocketed in an abstracted manner, as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

"Now, Mr. Whittaker," he said, "in regard to your mine. Let me suggest a plan: Realize all you can on it, and put the money in this oil stock. You and I could control the company, and mark up the price as we wished. There would be a fortune in it."

Enos looked puzzled.

"I thought there was no more for sale?" he said.

"I could manage it," said the broker. "Leave that to me. You go out and get the gold, and I'll take care of the stock proposition."

Enos thought the matter over.

"No," he said at length, "I reckon I don't care to go back to mining just yet. Maybe it will seem odd to you, but I ain't ambitious to get no more money than I need, and I reckon I've got enough for the present, anyhow." He leaned back in his chair and smiled complacently.

"Fathead!" said Mr. Dunkhorn, under his breath. "Serve him right if some one finds his mine and steals it."

"If I decide I want more," Enos went on, "ain't there some way I could get up a company to handle it? Couldn't I sell stock, and hire the work done, so I wouldn't have to go out myself?"

"Certainly," said the broker. "That's the only proper way to do it. I could handle the organization for you."

"Well, now," said Enos, "that might be a good idea. I'd be willing to give you a fair share for your work. Suppose you run out there and see the mine, and then let me know what you think would be the best way to handle it?"

Mr. Dunkhorn smiled.

"Utterly unnecessary," he said. "I don't have to see a mine in order to float stock in it. In fact, I couldn't tell a mine from a cistern without expert help."

"Oh, well," said Enos, "in that case we'll say no more about it. I don't want to be bothered myself; and whoever handles it ought to know his business. Maybe I can find some one later."

Mr. Dunkhorn was startled, and plainly grieved. Hitherto his experience with Enos had been of a nature to make him think he had only to suggest a plan, even to the writing of a check, to find it immediately adopted.

"My dear Mr. Whittaker," he protested, "you misunderstood me. When it comes to organizing a company, raising capital for a legitimate purpose like yours, or any such work, I know how to do it. It is not necessary for me to be an engineer in order to finance your mine. Now, let's get down to details: How much do you think we could get out of it?"

"Depends partly on luck, and partly on how much work is done," said Enos. "There ought to be close to half a million."

The broker's eyes glistened; he thought rapidly. Here was the chance for his big killing—the one he had been waiting for. His simple-minded client would be clay in his expert hands; whatever gold came from the mine could be directed into the right channels; the possibilities in the way of heavy capitalization were enormous.

"Mr. Whittaker," he said, "I'll go out with you and look over the property."

"Not with me," said Enos. "I don't care about going; but I can tell you how to get there. You take the train for Yuma, locate the New Palace Hotel, and ask the clerk for Bob. He'll take you out."

"Bob who?" asked the broker.

"There ain't no 'who' to it," said Enos. "His name is Bob; the clerk will know who you mean, and find him for you. I'll write Bob a letter so he'll know what to do."

The prospect of a trip to the desert was not alluring; but Mr. Dunkhorn had more than once accepted the chance of a visit to a much hotter place for a far smaller sum than half a million. It was not the time for hesitation.

"All right," he said. "I'll go in the morning."

II.

In the San Bernardino Mountains, north of Yuma, the sun, always a steady worker, was devoting itself enthusiastically to business. The bleak slopes radiated heat; the rocks that jutted out everywhere were blistering to the touch.

Up one of these slopes there toiled and sweated two patient burros, one patient man, and one maniac. The patient man was Bob; the maniac was James B. Dunkhorn. Never in his life had the broker so regretted an act as he now regretted this move. To a man whose exercise had been confined to

poker and three-cushion billiards for ten years, struggling up forty-five-degree mountainsides in a temperature of one hundred and ten in the shade, with no shade in sight, was, to put it mildly, strenuous. It galled him all the more to think that it was utterly useless, undertaken merely to avoid giving offense to Enos Whittaker. As far as inspecting the mine was concerned, his intention was merely to reach it, turn around, and go home, where he would report favorably, and advise immediate capitalization for two million dollars.

On this particular day, the fourth of his travels with Bob and the burros, he was almost beside himself with rage and fatigue. Every hundred yards he stopped for a drink, gasping for breath as he tilted the huge canteen.

At the end of an unusually severe struggle, which made even the burros pant for breath, he staggered over to his guide and held out his hand, too weak to voice his desire.

"Want water?" asked Bob.

The broker's remaining temper cracked suddenly, and broke.

"You crazy fool!" he uttered thickly. "Of course I want water! For God's sake, don't stand there and grin. Unfasten the canteen and give it to me."

"Sorry," said Bob. "There ain't no more water."

For a moment Dunkhorn did not grasp his meaning.

"The canteen, man!" he repeated. "Quick!"

"It's empty," said Bob; "and it's the last one."

The broker's knees weakened. He sat down on the ground.

"You been usin' too much," Bob went on. "I told you so. You can't carry water out here to pour all over yourself whenever you get a little warm. When you got through last time there wasn't more than a pint left."

"Where is it?" demanded Dunkhorn.

"I drank it," said Bob placidly. "I ain't no hog; but I got to have a drop now and then or my throttle shuts up. I figger a pint out of three gallons ain't no more than my fair share."

Dunkhorn stared at him; then broke into hideous curses. He rolled over on the ground and beat it with his fists. He cursed Bob, himself, Enos Whittaker, and the mine, including the burros in a final summary.

Bob watched him curiously.

"That ain't no wise way to behave, partner," he protested mildly. "I recommend that you try to keep cool."

The broker gave one short, hard laugh, and sat up.

"What are we going to do?" he asked.

"Now, that's more like sense," Bob approved. "We ain't so turrible bad off. The mine is just around that cliff."

"Is there water there?"

Again Bob looked at him curiously.

"Do you reckon I would come out here with only water enough for one way?" he asked. "Sure there's some at the mine. Rest a spell, and we'll make it in half an hour."

"I don't want rest," said Dunkhorn, getting to his feet. "I want water—water—a tub of it! I want to fall into a lake, and drink it dry. Hurry, man—hurry!"

"There ain't no lake at the mine," said Bob; "but there's plenty to drink."

They toiled on; slowly, for in spite of his mad craving, Dunkhorn was too weak to make speed.

At length, after what seemed to the broker an age of agony, they came to a level spot, walled in except on the side by which they had ascended by perpendicular cliffs. In the face of the cliff was an opening shaded like a church door, arched at the top. Bob pointed to it.

"That's Enos' mine," he said.

"The water!" said Dunkhorn pite-

ously. He had lost all thought of gold. "The water—where is it?"

"It's inside," said Bob.

He led the way, lighting a candle, which he held over his head. Dunkhorn followed him along a narrow passage for a hundred feet, then through a wider one branching off at right angles for twice the distance. At the end of the passage the flaring candle showed the figure of a man, seated on a huge boulder.

In spite of his extremity, the broker felt a thrill of superstitious fear. He stood still, while Bob went forward and fastened his candle to the wall.

"Howdy, Enos!" he said. "Here's your young friend, dry as a salt mackerel, accordin' to schedule."

Dunkhorn sprang forward.

"Water!" he begged.

Enos reached back for a canteen, poured water into a tin cup, and handed it to him. The broker swallowed it at a gulp.

"Sit down," said Enos. "I've got a business proposition I want you to figure on, Mr. Dunkhorn."

"First," said the broker, "fill the cup again and give it to me."

Enos did so.

"One more," said Dunkhorn.

"Not now," Enos insisted. "It's bad for you to drink too much at once. Rest a minute, while I talk to Bob."

He turned to the guide, who was drinking copiously from the canteen.

"Bob," he said, handing him an envelope, "here's the stock I bought for you—one thousand shares of the Santa Luisa Oil Company. I paid one dollar a share. As I explained, you ought to sell 'em at one-fifty. Mr. Dunkhorn, here, considers 'em worth that."

"Muck obliged to you, Enos," said Bob. "I'll buy me that blue-skinned jackass I been lookin' at. He's a good animal."

Enos turned to the broker.

"Are you ready to listen to my proposition?" he asked.

"Not now," said Dunkhorn. He had recovered himself to a certain extent. "I don't like to be annoying, Mr. Whittaker; but I must have another drink."

"That's what I was going to talk about," said Enos. "The way I look at it, Mr. Dunkhorn, water is the most valuable commodity in the world to-day, not even excepting oil. I can't afford to give mine away. I'm going to capitalize it, and sell it."

Out of the terrible heat, and with his thirst at least partly satisfied, Dunkhorn felt his nerve coming back. At the first recognition of Enos he had known instinctively that the miner was out for retribution; but, after all, Enos was hardly the man to plan murder, and there seemed to be little that he could do. The broker had less than a hundred dollars in his pockets.

"I'd like to buy a dollar's worth right now," he said genially.

Enos ignored the pleasantry.

"There's a question I'd like to ask you, Mr. Dunkhorn," he said. "Take the case of a man who's worked hard for his money. When you sell him stock like you sold me, lying about it from start to finish, don't it bother you none to think about what he's going to do?"

"I am not in a position to resent that," said Dunkhorn easily, "so I will merely explain that I don't lie about my business, and have nothing to fear."

Enos laughed gently.

"Did you tell me that the Lady Martha was on the property adjoining ours?" he demanded.

The broker was silent.

"Did you tell me that there was what you called an element of chance in oil stocks?"

"I did," said Dunkhorn. "That's not a lie. I was perfectly frank about it."

"Where was the chance?" Enos asked. "For me, I mean. What

chance did I have to get back a cent of my money?"

Again the broker declined to answer.

"Well," said Enos, "we'll drop that. It ain't important now. I just wanted to make it clear why I'm organizing my water company. Mr. Dunkhorn, I own all the water at this place. It comes from a spring; but you could hunt a hundred years without finding it, so, unless you get it from me, I reckon you'll have to go without. I'll sell you a third interest in my water for sixty-one thousand five hundred dollars. That will square me for my oil stock, which I will throw in free on the deal, and give Bob five hundred dollars for helping to promote the company. You see, I've been studying up on this organizing business."

Dunkhorn laughed easily.

"I don't care to buy," he said.

Enos got up.

"Well, Bob, I reckon we'll be going," he said. "Mr. Dunkhorn, I leave you the mine. This don't happen to be the one where I got my gold, by the way; but if you find any here it's yours."

"Just a minute," said Dunkhorn. He turned to his guide. "You are in my employ," he said, "not Whittaker's. My instructions are for you to stay here with me."

"I don't aim to mix in no hostilities," Bob declared frankly. "I wouldn't have guided you around the block if Enos hadn't wrote me a letter. You and him can argue out your troubles; but what Enos says goes with me."

"All right," said Dunkhorn. He had been bluffing, trying to appear anxious to get out of his predicament; but it was hard for him to repress a smile. It was going to be absurdly easy, after all. Payment on a check could be stopped by wire from Yuma, a fact of which the simple-minded miners apparently were not aware. "All right,"

he said. "You've got me, Whittaker. I'll quit squealing, and admit that I'm beaten."

He took a check book and fountain pen from his pocket and wrote a check for the amount Enos had named.

"There," he said. "Now, give me another drink."

Enos handed him the canteen and examined the check carefully.

"Have you got that much money in the bank?" he asked.

"Certainly," said the broker.

"I didn't know but what you might have spent some of it," said Enos. "You want to be sure; because if they don't cash this you'll be in kind of a hard place."

"What do you mean?" Dunkhorn demanded.

"Why," said Enos, "of course you'll have to wait here until I get the money. I like a safe business; I don't care about that element of chance, so I ain't planning to run any. If they cash this I'll send word out to Bob, and he'll bring you in. If they don't cash it, he'll go in by himself, and you can do whatever seems best to you."

Dunkhorn was unable to conceal his chagrin. Enos looked at him critically.

"I reckon I'll take a chance with it," he decided. "I'm going to go up to the office and give my oil stock to that yellow-haired typewriter of yours, and tell her you bought it back. I'm not posted on the law, but if it was all right for you to sell it to me there hadn't ought to be no hitch about me selling it back. Make yourself comfortable, Mr. Dunkhorn. Bob, I'll get word out to you in less than two weeks."

Within the time set by Enos a veteran of the mountains appeared at the mine with a note. Bob read it, and hastened to impart its contents to his guest.

"Enos says he got the money," he announced.

"Well," said Dunkhorn sullenly, "when do we start?"

"Come over here," said Bob. He took him by the arm and led him to a pinnacle from which the surrounding country could be seen. "Do you make out that rocky peak?" asked Bob, pointing to it. "Right around the other side of that is a town. You can go from there by stage to Yuma, and save walking. I recommend that you do it; because I'm aiming to take it easy on the return trip. This man lives there, and he'll show you the way."



THE TRIUMPH OF JUSTICE

JUDGE ROBERT CAREY, of Jersey City, undertook in his younger days to prosecute a trade-mark suit that looked hopeless for his client. The client went abroad, leaving his cable address and instructions to be notified in the event of a decision.

Carey won the case and cabled:

"Justice has triumphed."

The client wired back:

"Take immediate appeal."

A Chat With You

IT nearly always seems that the other fellow has had an easier time of it than we had. Especially is this true in the case of those who have won some sort of a definite success. We read their abbreviated biographies in the paper, and everything has seemed so smooth and easy. Such a one got a job in the bank, and in ten years J. P. Morgan sent for him and told him he was the man he had been looking for, and made him a bank president. Or another man working in an automobile factory sees that there is a future in making light cars in large quantity at a low price. He goes to two or three capitalists, and they back him up and he becomes the greatest motor-car manufacturer in the world. It looks so easy! Anybody could do it—just like discovering America.



MISERY loves company. It isn't a malevolent impulse, but an ordinary human trait that bids a man cheer up and take strength when he learns that his opponent in a race is just as much out of breath as he is himself. We suspect that while the newspaper biographies tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, they never tell the whole truth. How did the embryo bank president call himself to the attention of the great financier, what arguments did the motor-car man use with the capitalists to make them put up their money, and how did he get next to them in the first place? These are the things we really want to know. There is something decidedly uninspiring in an account of uninterrupted, easy success. It doesn't ring true, it isn't in accord with the realities of life, and the character who

has such an experience is too inhuman and unlike mankind as a rule to call forth any warm sympathy. We love our heroes for the sufferings they have borne and the difficulties they have fought against, more than for their triumphs. Any man who has tried to carve any sort of career for himself by his own efforts has suffered so many disappointments and met with so many obstacles as to make the record of an absolutely untroubled career of triumph not only meaningless, but depressing. What we really want to read about is people like ourselves—a little more as we would like to be and less as we are, sometimes—but with our own doubts and fears and difficulties. We can find our own romance shadowed forth for us in the temptations and disappointments and tardy successes of our hero, and it is the story with this sort of romance in it that makes a consistent and eternal appeal to human nature.



IT is such a story that W. B. M. Ferguson has told in the hook-length novel which opens the next issue of *THE POPULAR*, out on the stands two weeks from to-day. It is called "A Man's Code," and is the story of a great baseball shortstop. To reach the highest notch of success in athletics, as in other callings, needs character and brains, as well as physical prowess. Any one at all conversant with the history of sport knows that its course is strewn with the wrecks of men of absolute genius in the physical sense, individuals with everything that nature has to give in the way of bodily strength, nerve, and speed, who were failures because they didn't have

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

enough brains or backbone to keep straight. Baseball players too indolent to work hard, too weak to keep sober, runners without enough persistence to train—their names are found here and there in obscure records, but no one will ever know what human possibilities have been wasted and thrown on the scrap heap. Ferguson's character, Richard Steele, started life with equipment enough, but the unexpected misfortune that befell him at the height of his career, and which Ferguson relates at the very opening of the story, would have been enough to put most men out of the game.



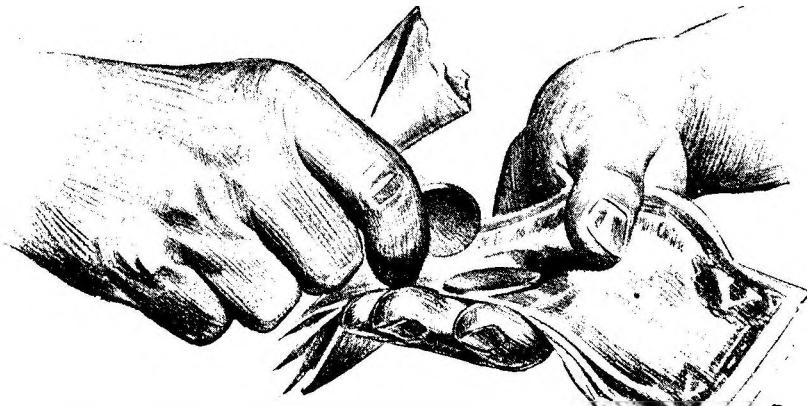
If Steele had behaved with perfect judgment and self-control under this crushing blow, we doubt if we would like him as well as we do. There may be characters of such consistent stoicism as to pursue a steady course in spite of evil fortune, but we have never met them. We have more honest belief in the man with some resiliency and spring to him—who may be cast down, but has enough initiative and courage to start on that hard, slow process known as coming back. It looks for a while as if there was no chance for Steele—he has just started his career, but at the very outset all his chances seem to have been swept away forever. It seemed so to Steele, and for a while he went with the current. Ferguson tells the whole thing, just as it seemed to Steele, in the novel—the first faint stirrings of a new ambition, the discovery of new depths of steadfastness and character that misfortune alone could bring forth in him, the hammering out of a new, higher code of ethics along with a new success in life. A long time ago Ferguson wrote a story called "Garrison's Finish," first published in *THE POPULAR*, and afterward selling steadily

as a book. As a romantic story of the race track it is absolutely unequalled. If you read it, you know it without our telling you so. "A Man's Code" deserves a place beside it. It is a full book-length novel, and, more than that, it has in it a quality of worth and permanence that will make you want to read it more than once. For fifteen cents, in two weeks you will get it complete, together with the biggest and best fiction magazine published anywhere.



FOllowing Ferguson's story in the next issue of *THE POPULAR* is a story of the Northwest by A. M. Chisholm, entitled, "A Thousand a Plate." It is a great contrast to "A Man's Code"; like it alone in its powerful interest, and in the living reality of its characters. The two trappers and prospectors Chisholm describes are about as unpromising specimens of humanity as one could find, but in some magical way Chisholm makes us first sympathize with them, then like them, then really admire them both. There is also another story of the Roy Norton series, "An Angel in Disguise," which is the best yet, and in decided contrast to it, a sparkling, snappy story of law and business by William Hamilton Osborne. There's another story of Harvard by Holworthy Hall, and a tale of the remarkable results of hypnotism by Hugh Fullerton. These are only a few of the good things in the next number, and while we think of it, we would like to call your attention to a story called "Out of the Miocene," which appears in two parts, the first half of which appears in the present issue. Read the first part, and you are sure to read the second. The writer is new to the pages of this magazine, and the story is so unusual as to provoke comment. We would like to know what you think of it.





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Coming Events

The World's Championship is going to be lost by a single play made by a man who will struggle for nine innings *not* to make. The dismissal of the player from the Big League is going to start him on a new life in which tragedy and romance will be found.

Two men, gold seekers, will turn trappers, and despite hardships, will enjoy a meal that cost a thousand dollars a plate.

A Congressman is going to face the keenest temptation of his life when an envelope containing a crisp new bill for ten thousand dollars comes into his possession without a word of explanation.

A man is going to undertake the unique experience of a spiritual flight backward to the cave-man days and live again in the body of his prehistoric ancestor.

An angel in distress is going to win the sympathies of certain big-hearted miners on Willow Creek.

A house on which a lady holds a big mortgage is going to disappear.

A big railroad is going to be set back in its rascally attempt to hoodwink the government by a fake "unscrambling."

Some Harvard boys are going to move heaven and earth to find an ivory skull at the command of a Kentucky beauty.

A professor of psychology who has never seen a ball game is going to leave his guinea pigs and visit a diamond—and as a result will hold the batting record of the world.

There's going to be something doing; and this whole maelstrom of tragedy and laughter, of valor and crookedness can be seen in

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE
TWICE-A-MONTH

Out September 7th

The creators of the incidents are: W. B. M. Ferguson, A. M. Chisholm, Hastings MacAdam, Roy Norton, John Charles Beecham, William Hamilton Osborne, Robert V. Carr, Francis Lynde, Holworthy Hall, and Hugh Fullerton.



IN HOURS OF EASE

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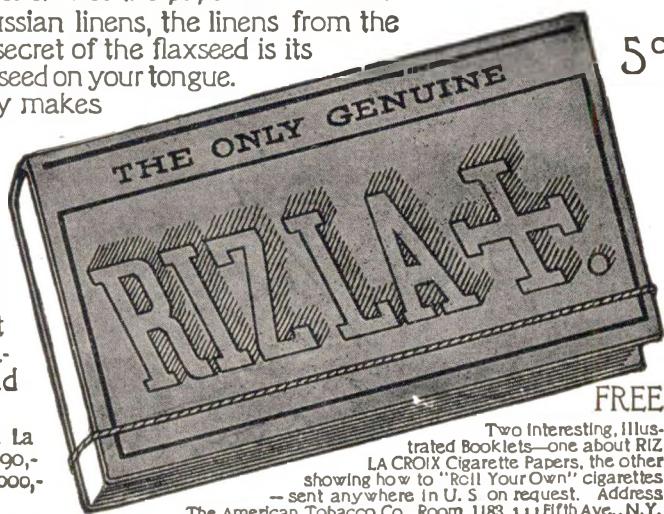
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Is it demoralizing?

Is its influence for good or evil?

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DIARY

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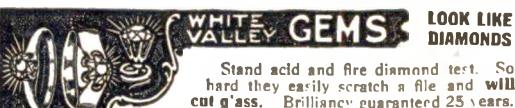
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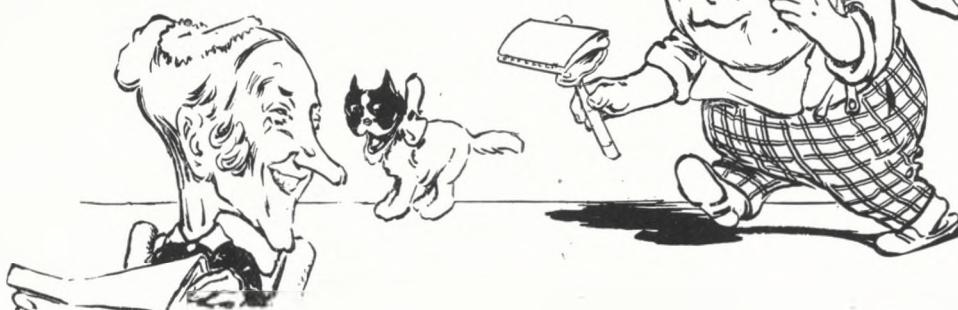
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