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APRIL 20, 1923

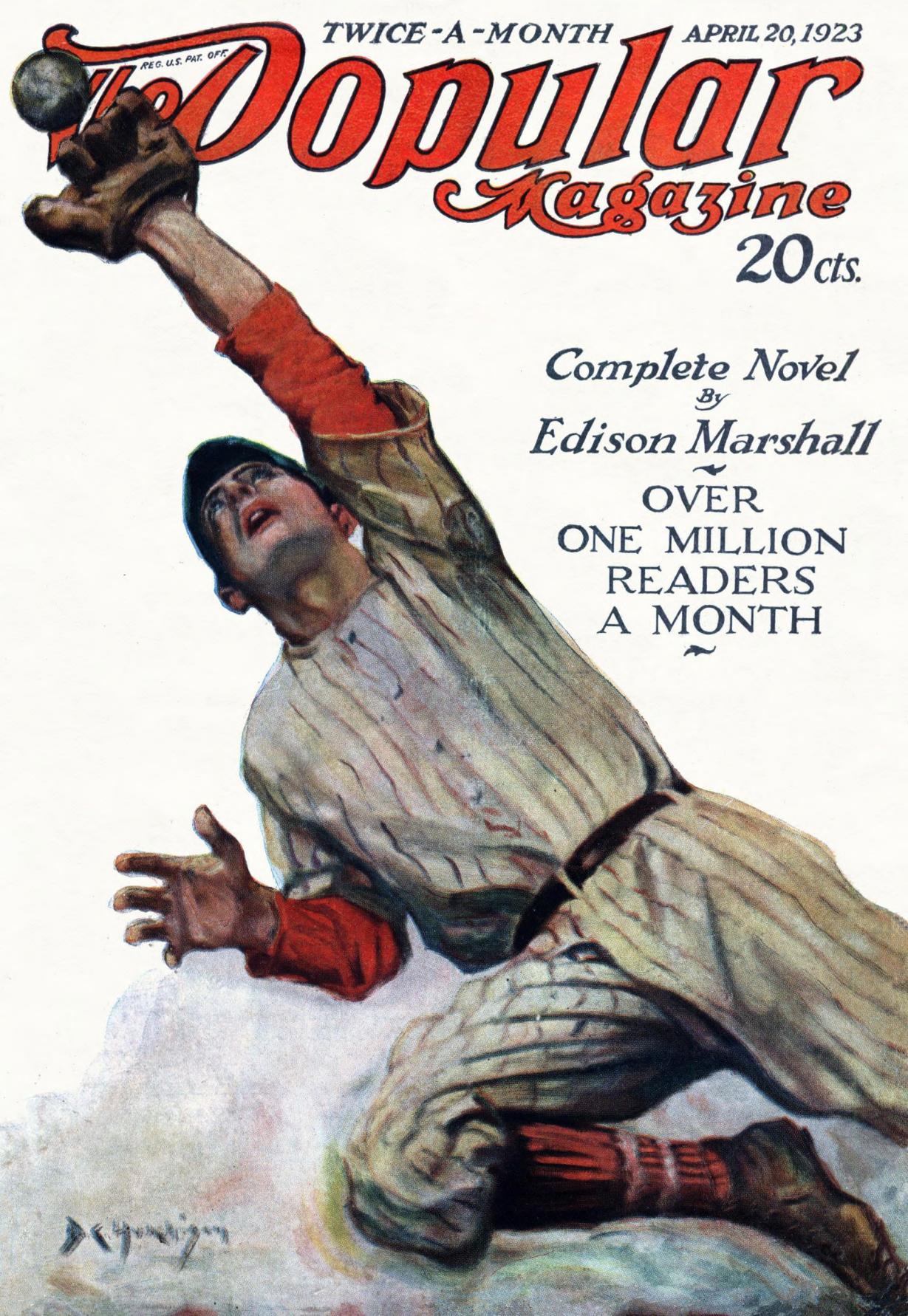
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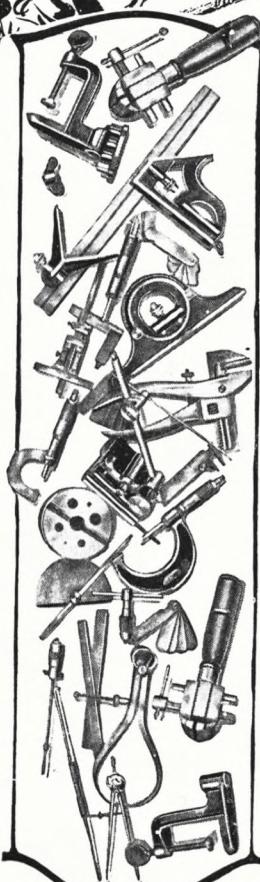
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By
Edison Marshall

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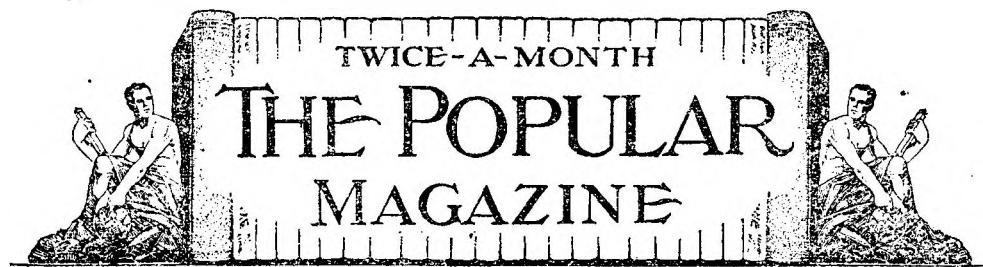
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Vol. LXVIII

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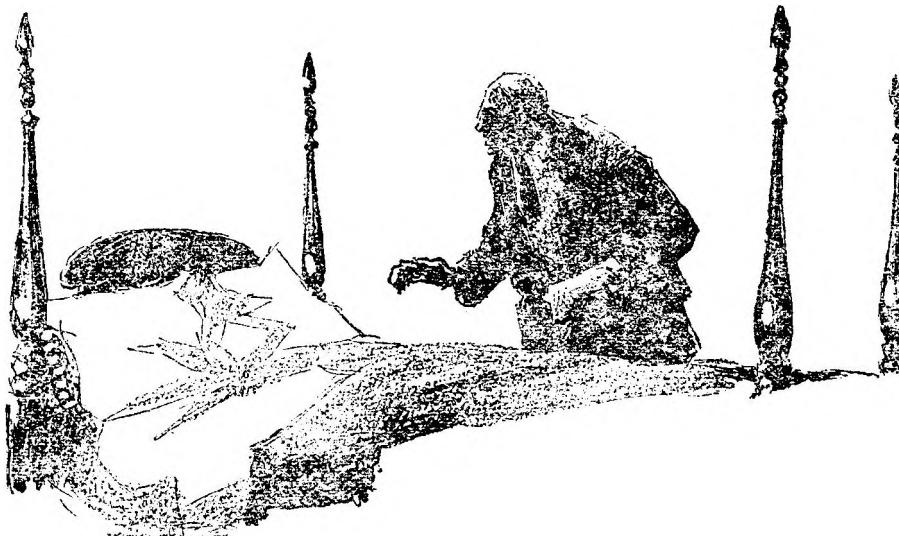
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXVIII.

APRIL 20, 1923.

No. 1



The Halt and the Blind

By Edison Marshall

Author of "The Call of the Blood," "The Isle of Retribution," Etc.

Edison Marshall is no armchair psychologist. His knowledge of the human soul comes not from books but from life itself. East and West, North and South, this gifted author has pursued his researches in his favorite subject—human nature. He knows the men of crowded cities and the men of the vast untracked expanses. He knows them in their strength and in their weakness. He knows them in their virtues and their vices. For he has gone among them and lived their life. From a less authoritative pen than that of Mr. Marshall, this vivid tale of mystery, built upon the interplay of unrelieved villainy and implacable hatred, might fail to carry conviction. But here, as always, Marshall sounds the clear note of inevitable truth. His characters are no light images of careless fancy but men and women he knows with the exact knowledge of experience. You cannot mistake them for anything but living flesh and blood.

(A Complete Novel.)

CHAPTER I.

IT has fallen upon me, at last, to set down in full the account of the affair at Roadturn—that strange case of love and hate that marked the only adventure in my long, gray, uneventful life. It has been said that every man has one moment of great drama; and this that I will tell would seem

to prove that such is true; yet it might so easily have been that the thing that we call drama—excitement, the swift leap of the blood and the wild racing of the heart—had missed me altogether. Suppose old age had claimed me—as it claims so many men of less years than mine—a year, even a month before that queer still night when I knocked

on Mr. Moody's door: then I would have no story to tell at all. The whole course of my life would have been as quiet and as commonplace as that old road that used to wind—and still does, though I can no longer see it from my pantry window—from Sir Stanley Barr's great country house down to Maidstone. But Sir Stanley Barr and Maidstone are far away now, and great seas wash between. I must keep them out of my thoughts and my pen from their names if I am to tell a clear, straightforward story of the Roadturn tragedy.

It will be no easy task. There will be times, doubtless, when my fancy will lead my pen astray; and my thought will carry me from the straight course of the narrative; and for this I must beg indulgence. When human eyes have seen the leaves fall in more than seventy autumns, when human hands have gathered flowers in seventy springs, both are likely to falter and make mistakes; and the mind wanders and the fancy escapes from the discipline of a strong intent. There will be times when I do not remember clearly and in exact detail, times when I am not exactly sure as to the order of events; and there may be even some small phases of the affair that I will not be wholly able to clear up. All I can do is to record what I myself saw and heard, the main events: and thus establish the truth as far as possible for the wondering public.

I think I can fairly begin with the day the employment man sent me out to Roadturn. This is the story of the affair at Roadturn more than it is my story, so there is no need to go back to Sir Stanley Barr, and all my old associations beyond the sea. Of my long year's service in Sir Stanley's journey across the sea—indeed, my emigration to America—there is no need to tell here. The account will be long enough if I begin in the employment office in a large Maryland city, and my application for the position of serving man.

I still remember a girl's smiling face as she looked at me as if she were amused at something I did not understand; and in a moment she had led me to the presence of the man who conducted the employment agency. Perhaps I should say "gentleman"—the word is widely used in this country—yet he wasn't exactly what Sir Stanley would have called a gentleman. He was a large man and he too seemed to be smiling; and I fancied that he and his office as-

sistant must have just had some small wheeze—you call them?—together. I had taken off my hat and he looked me over with considerable interest from my gray head to my black walking boots.

"How do you do, uncle," he said cheerily. "So you want a job as butler?"

Of course I was of no blood kin to him. This was just his cheery way of speaking—common among many men of America—and perhaps he referred in some degree to my advanced age. "Yes, sir," I told him. "If there is a place open." Truly I was surprised that he should know the character of the position I sought and I fancied at first that perhaps this office operated wholly to supply butlers, no other class of servants. But such did not prove to be the case.

"It just happens there is a place open—a vacancy that occurred just to-day. You've dropped in just the right time. But I'm a little afraid, uncle, that Mr. Moody will want a younger man."

These were his words as clearly as I can remember. I ventured that I thought I could give satisfaction.

He sat rubbing his head. "I don't have to ask you if you've had experience," he observed. "Sherlock Holmes will have to hand it to me; you've got all the earmarks." He spoke just this way—I remembered it because it was so odd. "The place, uncle, is a good one, but they want a good servant. He must be unobtrusive, deft—a gentleman's butler in every sense. The house is in Old Town—practically in the country, now—the hours are irregular, and Mr. Moody is an invalid."

He named the wage and it was nearly twice as much as I had ever received from Sir Stanley—and the latter was one of the most generous gentlemen in all of Kent.

"That will all be satisfactory," I commented; and then I named some of the stately houses abroad where I had served.

He looked at me with increasing curiosity. "What's your name?"

"Small—Tubal Small."

"Well, Tubal, I've just got a hunch that you can do it. I've just a hunch that if any one can buttle you are just that little boy. At least you can go out to see him."

It was all very confusing but presently he gave me a card and I rode in a motor out to Roadturn. In truth the big house was practically out of the city. It was not, as I had hoped, an exclusive residence district.

The employment man had spoken of it as being in "Old Town" and I guessed at once that this was at one time the seat of a village, but it had been eclipsed and swallowed up by the spreading outskirts of the adjacent city. Tradesmen and cotters had humble homes in the vicinity; there were green gardens near by and even some extensive tracts of heath. Farther distant I could see the shimmering green of a hardwood copse.

The house itself was built on a low hill and for a moment I was reminded of my own country. This was the first place I had seen that looked like Kent. Plainly it had been built with the noble idea of an enduring family house—the château, as the French say—and indeed I have often been glad to serve in houses not half so stately and splendid. It was an immense structure and perhaps it was what we call of Georgian architecture. Its many gables and dormer windows, its quaint roofs and its great, rambling floor plan showed that it was not a modern house, yet mostly it was well preserved. For all its unattractive neighborhood the house was maintained with pride; well-kept gardens and lawns, a recently painted motor shed at the end of a curving driveway. An old colored man was at work in the rose gardens as I drew near.

I passed through the gate, up the short walk, and knocked at last at the great oaken door. I may say here that at this moment the house seemed to me wholly cheery and attractive. There was no atmosphere of mystery, nothing to carry the fancy out of its usual grooves. It seemed to be simply the great, stately home of some gentleman of large means and elegant tastes—such a gentleman as I had served in my own country.

It might have been, though, that as I waited I had a queer feeling of uneasiness—a single instant in which I was dimly nervous and dismayed. Perhaps it was just anxiety that I would not be able to secure the position; but in the light of what followed I am almost convinced it was nothing less than premonition.

I waited a long time for some one to answer the knock. I rapped again and then I heard impatient steps in the corridor.

It did not surprise me that an old negress, rather than a serving man, should open the door. Unquestionably the house

butler recently had been discharged; otherwise there would not have been a vacancy for me. I guessed at once that she was of the kitchen staff and she was very impatient at leaving her work. For an instant she stared at me with considerable suspicion, almost with animosity.

Rose—I was to learn her name later—might have been close to my own age but except for the deep lines of her black face, and perhaps a dimness about her coal-black eyes, I would have thought she was not past fifty. She was a tall, strong woman; altogether a new type to me. She had huge jaws, sullen eyes, great dark lips, strong big hands and long arms and she was very black.

"What yo' want?" she demanded.

I told her and she looked at me with growing interest. Then with hardly a word she took me down a long corridor to Mr. Moody's door.

The room occupied by the master of the house—if indeed the house could be said to have a master—was in the extreme rear of the structure. It seemed reasonable that he had chosen it because of the view—that opened through broad windows on to the fields. Perhaps it was the warmest room in the house, too, facing as it did south and west.

The negress halted outside the door and in the silence of the corridor I heard the distinct whisper of her troubled breathing. She knocked on the door.

"What is it?" some one answered from within. It was the first time I had heard Mr. Moody's voice; and surely I had right to feel encouraged. It was a soft voice—what could perhaps best be called a jolly voice—affable, even tender.

"Rose," the blackamoor answered. "Here's a man here 'plyin' for de job."

I give her singular accent the best I can. It was unfamiliar to me—I would have almost thought it another tongue than English. And at once, before I could prepare myself to meet the gentleman, the door came open.

There was no hand on the knob. The single occupant of the room—a large man well past middle age—was propped on a great four-poster bed of seeming great comfort and luxury and a book was open at his knees. He had a rather ingenious device arranged, a cord attached to the latch, whereby he could open the door from his

bedside. Plainly he was a man who resented interruption; I guessed at once that the door was locked from within.

"Ah, faithful old Rose," he began in his gentle, soothing, mellow voice, "you find me reading—the only way the old may properly pass the time."

"Yo' ain't old," Rose commented bluntly. "Not as old as I is—"

"Perhaps my affliction adds to my sense of age—but it is not for me to complain, surrounded as I am by loving relatives and faithful, willing attendants." His voice deepened as if with emotion. "And whom have you brought to see me, Rose?"

"Dis 'ere am a man 'plying for de job," Rose told him coolly.

"Oh, it is?" His large, soft blue eyes turned on me. "Ah, Rose—the harshness of the world. 'Long labor urged on aged breath—' so it goes, so it goes. Rose, perhaps you'd better go and leave this gentleman with me."

Some way the words did not put me at my ease. He had called me a gentleman—doubtless with the idea of pleasing me—but really it embarrassed me a little. I am a servant and have done good service; in my country a gentleman would know that I needed no other title.

It is hard to tell in just what way the gaze he bent upon me differed from that of other gentlemen I have served. Other gentlemen have been kind, indulgent, and once in his last sickness Sir Stanley took my hand in his and looked at me almost as one gentleman looks at another who has been his long, sincere friend. Yet even this look was not as familiar—perhaps I should say as intimate—as this from the stranger on the bed. It would seem that he had a great love for all mankind and especial affection for the aged. "How do you do," he said, so very warmly, and he reached out his hand. I took it and perhaps I was not as composed as I should have been. I was somewhat confused and faltering; awkward, perhaps, as no experienced serving man should ever be. His grasp was warm and exceeding cordial and he shook my hand vigorously as he might have shaken the hand of an old friend.

"It pains me deeply to see men of your age hunting work when they should be sitting at ease, served by loving hands," he told me in an earnest voice. "If it were in my power I'd have it that no man past

sixty would be obliged to bend his tired back in toil, but should have a comfortable home—ideal surroundings. I would like to pension all men over sixty; and yet I admire to see, admire to see such men, forced into toil by adverse circumstances, going forth bravely, not whining over their cruel lot but standing up under the hardship like the nature's noblemen they are! It pains me deeply to be served by men older than I am, because my only impulse is to put them in this soft bed, in my place, and serve them instead; and yet, since that is impossible, I rejoice to give opportunity to such pathetic derelicts rather than to younger men who, though they might give me better service, perhaps do not need the position so badly."

I'm afraid I stood staring a little, not knowing just how to answer him. It was almost as if he were making a speech. He closed his large blue eyes at the close and his voice echoed and ceased and he sat an instant with folded hands. "The gentleman is very kind," I told him. "I came to see if you could hire me—as serving man."

He opened his eyes wide. "Not as a serving man—more as a companion," he said. "I don't like to speak of the—assistants in our household as servants—I am a believer in absolute democracy! It is true that you would do the work that servants do in other houses, yet not as servants, if you catch my meaning. It is true we have an opening here for a high-class man, one whom, as it were, will not only give us service but companionship and affection as well. You and I, my good man, who have passed into the twilight of our lives, have learned how dear, how priceless real companionship is. We know that a mountain of gold cannot make up for it—that the love of one's fellow men is worth more than a kingdom. You said your name was—"

"Tubal Small," I replied. And I told him of my wide experience abroad.

He seemed quite interested in the fact that I had once been a servant to Sir Stanley Barr. Perhaps he was somewhat flattered that he could hire as his own servant one who had served such a great and famous gentleman. And now that I talked his eyes dropped down and I had a chance to study his face.

He was quite a heavy man, though not tall, with a large clean-shaven face, a long nose, and large, soft white hands. He

smiled genially almost all the time. He had curly black hair, hardly touched with gray, and he scarcely looked the age I had felt him to be—well past sixty. I could not guess at present the nature of the malady that had confined him to his bed; but his extremely pale face alone would have indicated ill health.

He wore pajamas and a thin dressing gown of black silk; and his smile and good nature indicated that he was taking his confinement with good grace. He had never been an active type of man—such a type as I have seen so many times in my master's house in Kent, sportsmen and explorers, hunters and soldiers—and with his books and papers, tobacco and whisky, he seemed to be wholly content. Crutches leaned beside the bed in easy reach; with these he evidently could move about the room.

"It gratifies me to be able to give you this position," he said at last. "I am hoping that it can be permanent and thus assure you a comfortable livelihood from now on. The duties are simple—to answer the door-bell and telephone and to serve, to the best of your ability, Miss Moody and myself.

"As you have perhaps guessed, I am afflicted with paralysis. It is with the greatest difficulty that I can even move across this room with the crutches. I never even attempt to go farther than the threshold." He smiled and closed his eyes. "Yet I can say that I carry this cross that Providence has seen fit to lay upon me with humbleness and not bitterness, and with great pity not for myself but for those more unfortunate than I! For instance, I forget my own woes in thinking about those of my poor, lovely niece, Miss Moody.

"You must be ready to serve Miss Moody at all times, but this will be a pleasure to you rather than a duty. She is indeed one of nature's purest noblewomen. She is suffering from some malady of the eyes and the specialist I have for her tells me—but I won't speak that thought! Perhaps by keeping it out of our minds and trusting piously we can keep it from coming true. A great part of the time she stays in a darkened room and when she does walk abroad she is obliged to go with bandaged eyes. You must help her back and forth from the dining room or wherever else she chooses to go. Of course you are to serve her meals in the dining room.

"I eat my meals here, of course. Perhaps

soon—who knows?—I can be up and out again. Doctor Hardy is very encouraging. But if not, I hope I can continue to bear my cross as before. I have my dinner about six-thirty, so as to have the dishes cleared away in time for Doctor Hardy's visit, which is usually about eight. Doctor Hardy, you understand, is to have the run of the house. When he comes in the evening let him in without formality. Sometimes he calls on Miss Moody first, sometimes on myself. He will find his way to our rooms without guidance and he comes and goes when he likes. Considering his eminence, we feel very fortunate to be able to command so much of his time. He has absolutely retired but due to his friendship for me he has agreed to give my niece and myself the benefit of his great skill. Particularly we appreciate his willingness to come to treat us in the evening, in the hours that he could rightfully claim for recreation.

"He usually goes about nine, and I read an hour, then seek the blessed peace of sleep. I like to have you stop and knock outside my door about half past nine or ten and see if I want you to come in and straighten up my room for the night. It may be that I won't answer. I am a sound sleeper and if I do not reply to your first call please go away and do not disturb me. This is true at all times; in day or night if I do not open the door at the first call go away and leave me. We all have our little eccentricities, Tubal, and mine is that I resent being disturbed. If I do not care to see any one I will not reply no matter how much any one calls or knocks. You will pardon this childishness in an old man, I know. And when Doctor Hardy is with me I am not to be disturbed under any circumstances."

Mr. Moody excused me then and by means of the rope device opened the door for me to pass through. A very curious gentleman, I thought. It won't hurt, now, to speak this opinion I had of him, considering all that has befallen since. Although he was my employer and his words showed him a gentle, pious man, I couldn't help but wonder at him a little and think him a little different from the gentlemen I had served before.

Old Rose, the blackamoor, was prowling around in the hall when I came out. She seemed like a black panther of which I have sometimes read in stirring tales of adven-

ture. I walked near her and she turned with her dark, sullen eyes upon me.

"Did yo' get de job?" she asked. At least it sounded like that. I told her yes and her big lips curled in a queer smile. "Yo' won't keep it long."

She spoke with such certainty, such assurance, that my curiosity was speedily wakened. "Why not, madam?" I asked her.

She seemed to smile a little, whether at my question or at the respectful way I had spoken I do not yet know. "Because —dis house am *hanted*," she told me. She spoke without emphasis, quietly and calmly, and except for a flash of the whites of her eyes I might have thought she was attempting some droll wheeze. "Dey's a bad mouf been put on dis house. Black de hour it was ever built! Let me show you soimpin dat—"

Somewhat mystified and perhaps slightly curious I walked with her up the stairs. She led me to a little den or study in the rear of the house on the second floor; then stood pointing out the window.

"Look at dat!"

Beyond the gardens I saw a low hedge and beyond the hedge a long sweep of meadowland that ended in a wire fence, evidently the line of the Roadturn estates. Beyond this fence was a small grove of hard-wood trees and in a rift between their wide tops we could see just the green top of a low hill. The thing she had brought me here to see stood on the hill.

It was so sharply outlined against the cold, white, autumn clouds that I did not for a minute mistake what it was. It was nearly a quarter of a mile distant but my time-dimmed eyes identified it at once. The trap was broken and dangling, and likely it was weather-beaten and decaying, yet it was unmistakably an old gallows such as I have seen on some of the hills of my native land.

CHAPTER II.

Quite an odd sight, I thought, for the twentieth century in the State of Maryland —just at the edge of a thriving modern city. The gallows tree itself, supported over the yawning hole in the platform beneath, was in perfect outline against the sky; very black and vivid it looked to me then. Presently I stopped looking at it to look at Rose. She had a queer expression that puz-

zled me not a little; her eyes were very large and protuberant and her mouth was open and round. The fingers of her big black hands were crossed, as if she were suffering from nervous complaint.

"Just an old gallows," I told her. "Why doesn't some one tear it down?"

"Dar you go—what dey all say—why don't no one tear it down? Dat's what I say, too, but no, one year and anuder, and it ain't been torn down yet. Dey say it's a old landmark but it don't mark nothin' I cares about rememberin'. Der was an old jail der once and de gallows stood jes' behin'. Den de jail burned—one night nearly fifteen year ago—and was rebuilt in New Town. But dat gallows never burn up—not dat. Den somebody bought de land—some stranger what lived in New York or London or some sech foreign country and he ain't never had it torn down. He bought de land for speculation, so Miss Alice say, but de city ain't growed out to it yet. Dis is de only window in de house you can see it from and dat's a queer t'ing in itself."

"Not very queer, considering there is a deep rift in the trees."

"Why dem trees grow dat way, chile? It's all right to say dat ain't queer, but it's conjurin' queer to me. And right dar, on dat very gallows, was where James Crockett was hung!"

The story she subsequently told me was grim and unpleasant but nothing to surprise those who habitually read the crime pages in the daily journals. I could fancy, however, that it might have a pronounced effect on such ghost-ritten people as the more unlettered blacks; and indeed her expression and voice showed that it had impressed her very deeply. No white man would guess, to listen to it, that he would ever give the tale a second thought, but who can guess the future?

I could not, if I tried, give the story in the woman's own words. About eighteen years before, it seemed, the house was owned by one George Moody, father of Miss Alice Moody, the present owner of the estate, and brother of Mr. Oswald Moody whom I had been hired to serve. She didn't mention George Moody's wife, Miss Alice's mother, and I judged she had died at the girl's birth. At the time of the crime the house was occupied by George Moody, his daughter Miss Alice, and Oswald Moody, who was then in good health and who made

Roadturn his quarters between his engagements on the stage. George Moody was a man of great estate—Oswald's wealth, according to reports, consisted mostly of a kind, affectionate, idealistic nature. Although he had been a moderately successful actor he was luxury loving and had lived up most of his earnings. George Moody, however, was glad to have him as his guest between engagements, purely for the pleasure of his company. Among the small staff of servants—the Moodys had always lived quietly—was a stable hand, newly come from abroad—James Crockitt by name.

One night George Moody was murdered in his bed. It apparently was not a great mystery; local detectives were soon able to fasten the crime on young Crockitt. In his room, carefully hidden, was found his knife, stained with blood; and certain stained clothes that proved conclusively to them that Crockitt was the murderer. Oswald testified that it had been his dead brother's spoken intention to discharge the man; thus was found the motive for the crime. Although he protested innocence to the last Crockitt was arrested, tried by the local courts and hanged on the gallows on the near-by hill. No one had died on this gallows since, as the jail burned down soon after and it was abandoned.

It was a very commonplace story. Although it was not generally known that George Moody had written a will, a properly signed and witnessed document was produced from the safe of his personal attorney and his daughter, Miss Alice, then an infant, was made the heir of the great bulk of the estate. Every one was much surprised, the negress told me, that an uncle on her mother's side, Boggs by name, had been appointed executor and guardian instead of the affable, affectionate actor, Oswald Moody—no one less than Mr. Oswald himself. Some of the neighboring villagers, and especially the servants, resented this fact exceedingly for, while Boggs was a gruff, severe, cold man, Oswald was quite the contrary, and would have gone a long way, they thought, in affection and kindness, toward taking the place of the murdered father.

Oswald went back to the stage and Miss Moody had to admit that Boggs had made a fair enough guardian and executor. Indeed the girl became very much attached to him and mourned deeply at his death

three months before. The girl was not yet of age and Oswald Moody was appointed by the courts to take his place. This opportunity, evidently, had come none too soon, for the actor had suffered a paralytic stroke in one leg and was in desperate circumstances.

Thus, that first day, I got acquainted with the ugly history of the old mansion and before the night had fallen I had met most of the actors in the drama that was to come. The first was Miss Alice, whom I encountered on the lower floor.

I came upon her rather suddenly and thus I explained the queer little frightened start she gave when she heard my step. Not only her eyes, I thought, but her nerves too were in need of a practitioner's skill; she flung back almost as if in fear of attack. Her eyes were heavily bandaged and she was progressing through the room by groping with her hands.

In my time I have waited on great ladies—beautiful women who were guests of Lady Barr—and perhaps, in my long years, I have learned to judge a lady from an imposture, a noblewoman from a peasant. I tell this so that I may be believed when I saw that Miss Alice Moody was to the manner born. There would be no feeling of descent in serving her nor was I guided in this judgment by the fact that she was my employer. The hands with which she groped through the room were slender and beautiful, like those I have seen on ancient, priceless canvases, and though her face was half masked by the bandage I could not mistake its childlike, pensive beauty. But the nearing darkness had written sorrow on that lovely countenance. No wonder Mr. Moody had spoken in sadness of her.

"It is just the new butler," I told her.

"Oh!" She seemed to struggle for breath, "You have just come, of course—how stupid of me to be startled! I didn't know any one was in the house."

"Your household is small," I ventured, "Naturally you would be frightened at an unfamiliar step."

"Of course. There is only myself, my uncle, and the two old colored people, neither of whom sleep in the house, and a few other colored people that come in for the day. Your step was unfamiliar—since I have been having this slight trouble with my eyes my hearing seems to have quickened wonderfully. If it wasn't for Doctor

Hardy's comforting words I'm afraid I would think that a discouraging sign."

She smiled childishly and I wondered if Doctor Hardy had tried to spare her a tragic truth. "I don't suppose you have been given a place to sleep yet, have you? You are a white man—I can tell that by your voice—and I'm going to let you have a nice room in the house, instead of going to the outhouses."

She called Rose and the latter conducted me to the corner room immediately adjoining the study I had just entered. It was a very pleasant place with every comfort and the windows overlooked the large out-building where Rose and the old colored man had their lodgings.

This appointment of quarters was important only so far as it led to a rather surprising dispute between Miss Alice and her uncle, later in the day. Unaware of my conversation with Miss Alice, Mr. Moody summoned me to his room with the idea of appointing me a room.

"I forgot to tell you where you were to sleep," he began, smiling brilliantly. "We always look out carefully for our attendants. There is a small room just back of the kitchen that will be ideal for your use. Tell one of the colored girls to put you up there."

I begged his pardon and told him that Miss Alice had already designated me a room—the corner room on the second floor just south of the study, I told him. And then I experienced a very genuine surprise.

The gentleman's face suddenly changed expression. It was all smiles before but presently the smile changed to a leering grimace and the pale cheeks flushed with color. I was at a loss to know what unpleasant thought had come to him, but guessed that, although his niece was the real owner of the estate, he liked to have his own wishes prevail and greatly resented being crossed in even petty affairs. His niece was practically blind; perhaps he had come to believe himself the real head of the house.

"Move out your things and take the room I said," he ordered. "Why, that other is one of the guest rooms!"

"I would hardly like to obey, sir, without Miss Moody's consent," I ventured. "May I bring her here?"

He looked at me intently and instantly was smiling again. "Yes, bring her here,"

he said evenly. "She respects her uncle's wishes much more than he deserves. I have no doubt but that she will authorize the change."

In this, however, Mr. Moody was mistaken. I summoned his niece and from the corridor I could not help but overhear a little of their conversation, especially considering that the door was open and that Mr. Moody spoke in an unusually loud voice.

"You surely didn't mean him to take the room next to the study," he began. "You have always been too gracious with the servants, Alice—it is part of your sweet nature—but you must not spoil this Tubal at once by treating him like a guest. Why shouldn't he take the room back of the kitchen or even sleep out with the other servants?"

"The races do not intermingle down here, uncle," she answered sweetly. "The room back of the kitchen is small and dark and stuffy—not fit for any one. Besides, I do feel that the old man deserves a few extra comforts. He is a servant but I think we will find him a very good one."

I repeat her words only because they are properly part of this narrative. But I cannot deny but that they gave me undiluted satisfaction.

"Alice, I command it!" her uncle cried, his voice rising. "You are not of age yet and—"

I was immensely surprised when she cut him rather short. "Not yet of age, uncle, and usually willing to accede to your every wish—but surely I can manage my own servants. There is no need to talk about it any more. Tubal sleeps in the room next to the study!"

When the gentleman spoke again his voice was gentle and soft, no longer touched by impatience. "You are such a generous girl, Alice, bless your heart," he told her fondly. "Forgive me for speaking brusquely. I was merely afraid you'd spoil a servant that otherwise promises you a great deal of comfort. But I do advise you to give him the room north of the study, instead of the corner room. The latter, as you know, is one of the choice rooms in the house and I fear that you'll give him an exaggerated idea of his own importance."

"Let's talk of something else, uncle. I've decided and for once I am going to be stubborn."

I passed out of the range of their voices;

and I was not surprised that I was allowed to keep the room. Miss Alice Moody was a girl of some spirit; yet I could see her uncle's point of view. I have known good servants to be spoiled by less attention more than once.

The remainder of that first day was largely uneventful. As twilight fell I started to turn on the many light switches, only to be stopped by old Rose. "Only dem little lights on de wall," she told me as casually as she could. "De boss don't allow no bright lights."

I obeyed but there was not enough radiance from the small wall lights to dispel the deepening twilight. Indeed, and I can't tell exactly why, I found myself liking Road-turn less and less as the shadows of night dropped over it. This corridor, commonplace enough in the daylight, was long and shadowy and still in the gathering dusk and the faint gleam from the wall lights only seemed to accentuate its length, give queer shapes to its shadows, deepen its unmistakable air of sadness.

"But why?" I asked Rose. "What is there about Mr. Moody that he doesn't like bright lights?"

"Ain't him," she answered with some contempt. "It's Miss Alice—de doctor's orders. De bright lights hurts her eyes, he says, even froo de cloth."

Which was logical enough. I was ashamed that I had ever felt dismayed.

I served Miss Alice her dinner in the large, stately dining room and after the meal Doctor Hardy paid his usual nightly call. I let him in—he was the first caller—and I found him a large, rather stout, professional-looking man, with florid cheeks and heavy dark-brown mustache and beard, and brown hair. He seemed preoccupied with his professional cares and he hardly gave me a word as he passed through the corridor. He went straight to Mr. Moody's room; then later, when I was in my pantry, he treated Miss Moody's eyes.

The treatment seemed to incur considerable pain. I heard the girl moan softly as I was going to my room to read, but the doctor comforted her with a businesslike, even a gruff voice. He had been gone a half hour when, at nine-thirty, I went below again to straighten up Mr. Moody's room for the night. I did not dream but that this was my last office of the first day at Road-turn.

CHAPTER III.

I am a sound sleeper, for a man of my years, and at ten-thirty I went to my room with full expectation of a good night's rest. I undressed slowly, reading meanwhile in a book I had brought in my bag, bathed in the bathroom adjoining my sleeping quarters, and then, sitting up in bed, read until I felt the first sweet drifting of slumber upon me. And presently, half asleep, I found myself standing at my threshold in the open doorway.

I am not a sleepwalker. It was purely habit. In the old manor house where I served so many of my best years I had made it a custom to step to my door just before turning in, to see that the footman had taken care of the lights; and I had done the same here without thinking. The deep-grooved habit of old age—and perhaps it indicated also the absent-mindedness that is properly the trait of the old. Who was there to disturb lights in this almost deserted house? Smiling a little at myself I started to turn back to bed.

At that instant I was wholly wide awake. When I had gone up the narrow rear stairs down which I was now peering I had closed the doorway leading into the large down-stairs room—at least I was almost certain that I had closed it. Now it stood ajar and a faint stream of subdued light poured through.

It looked as if some one had passed through the rooms since I had gone upstairs and either with the idea of going in silence or else through carelessness had not closed the hallway door. Yet who was there in this great house to make such an expedition at this hour? At present, as far as I knew, three human beings were domiciled in the structure itself—the invalid, the half-blind girl and myself.

Perhaps I will not be blamed for being vaguely startled. Miss Moody had told me, distinctly, that these three, plus the negroes, constituted the entire household. I remembered clearly hearing the subdued conversation of the old colored people, Rose and her husband, the gardener, as they had passed below my window on the way to their quarters; I had heard them laugh at my shadow on the window shade as I sat reading. The diseased eyes of Miss Alice, bandaged against all light, could not have guided her through the corridor in stealth and silence. Nor had I heard the tap of crutches such

as would have indicated that Mr. Moody had passed through the rooms. Besides, from his own statement the gentleman never left his immediate bedroom.

I stood listening and looking and then I crept down the stairs. Roadturn was very hushed and queer at this late hour. The lights were dim, the shadows heavy and of evil shapes. I looked here and there in the corners and behind curtains.

Yet if a thief had crept in he could have found dozens of places in which to hide. The quaint old structure was cut up with closets, corridors and landings, and it would be a long task to search the building. I made the rounds through the downstairs rooms trying the windows and doors, but they all seemed to be securely locked. Then because of the growing certainty that I had shut the door when I came through—I did it with the idea of keeping the lower rooms as warm as possible—I stepped to Mr. Moody's door.

I called softly, but loud enough for him to hear if he were awake. But he did not answer and remembering his explicit instructions I turned back to my search.

Suddenly it occurred to me, with a slight start, that if some one had broken in, he was on the second floor rather than the lower floor. Whoever had passed through the door had come from the outer rooms into the rear hallway; at least this was more likely than that some one had lurked all day in the upper halls and had crept down when the house was still. I climbed up the stairs again, then halted a moment at my own brightly lighted doorway.

The upper corridor was almost black with the darkness of the night. A small light glowed in the main corridor that opened off of it but the wan beams scarcely penetrated to me. I looked about for light switches, found them with some difficulty and pressed the ivory buttons, but there was no burst of light. Evidently the sockets were not supplied with globes.

I think I would have gone back to my room then if I had not heard the faint sound of an opening door somewhere on the same floor with me. Some one had crossed a threshold very quietly and stealthily. I heard the sound of the latch and an almost imperceptible creak as the door moved on its hinges. It was one of those times in a man's life when he knows, not just thinks. There are many sounds in a

big house at night and some of them sound like almost anything under the high skies, but this was not one of these. Some one on the same floor with me had opened a door and slipped through.

I hardly knew what to do. I was unarmed and I did not know that I wanted to chase down this midnight visitor and confront him in the half darkness of the corridor. I could not appeal to Mr. Moody, even if he could have been of aid; a good servant does not immediately forget such definite instructions as I had received from him. Miss Moody was a woman and half blind; and the negroes were fifty yards away in their quarters above the stables.

I had a queer feeling of helplessness and indecision. And presently as I waited I heard some one walking.

It was not a man on crutches. It was not a half-blind girl who gropes for her way. Whoever shared this second floor with me had his full powers. It was a very slow, cautious step, over boards that creaked faintly as weight was laid upon them. Indeed, the footfall itself made no noise—it was only the old, creaking boards beneath.

Step—step—step—at intervals of perhaps two seconds. I stood quite still and listened. Then, not because I was brave but simply because I was the servant I went down the corridor in pursuit.

I did not try to go silently. It did not seem the point of wisdom to try to encounter this stealthy intruder in the darkness. My hope was to frighten him away with my own loud step. Instantly the other sounds ceased. He was either lurking in the shadows or else had passed to some part of the corridor where he could walk in silence.

I ventured farther and farther down the shadowed hall, turning at last into the wide main corridor that opened off the passage where I had stood. Yet all the doors along it were closed. I mounted a half flight of stairs, followed a hallway and in imminent risk of losing my directions descended again to the main floor.

Sometimes I paused in the shadows, peering, and sometimes hurried swiftly from room to room, but the search came to nothing. At last I stood again at my own doorway.

Here I waited a long time but the only sounds were the small hushed noises of the night and perhaps the whisper of my own breathing. Whatever I had heard it was

silent now. And perhaps it had all been unimportant after all—perhaps merely a strange echo from some distant step. I could not see how I could do good by appealing to Miss Alice or even to old Tom, the colored gardener. This work would hardly appeal to a man with African superstition in his veins.

I went into my room at last and lay a long time listening. I heard the usual night sounds that are never lacking in a large, almost deserted house; boards creaking as they cooled, the scratch of a rat in the walls, the gentle flapping of a curtain under the breeze. But I did not confuse these with that which I had heard before.

I think I had drifted to sleep when that grim business of the corridor began again. My first knowledge of it was a slight shock that seemed to carry through the floors and into the posts of my bed—as if some one had set something heavy on the floor. I was startled wide awake and for the space of a minute lay listening in absolute silence. I even tried not to breath.

Whoever had moved the heavy object was grimly silent for a moment thereafter, as if in fear he had wakened me. But presently, this fear removed, I heard a soft footfall as some one crept about a near-by room.

All this did not lend toward peace of mind. I suppose I have never been a very courageous man—perhaps this is true of all men physically small in size, no matter how bravely they try to hide it—and it was upsetting to hear that stranger go tiptoeing about in an adjoining room. If only I could think of *some* person whom it might reasonably be—some one who, besides myself, had the right to creep about the second floor in the still hours of night!

It was here that my fancy began to take an uncomfortable turn. I wondered if some one dwelt in this old house unknown to its owners—some one living a strange, furtive life among the corridors. For months and years, perhaps, no one had slept on this upper floor; perhaps I was the first to disturb his nightly occupations. I could not imagine what he might be doing.

It was no longer easy to believe that this was an ordinary sneak thief. Surely, after I had chased him through the corridors, a common burglar would not have been so bold as to recommence his operations within an hour. It was quite odd to lie still in bed, to know that I was wide awake and still to

hear those creeping feet in some near-by room.

I thought it likely that the sounds came from the study, just north of my room, but I could not have sworn to it. Sometimes, indeed, they sounded in my own room and I would stiffen and strain into the darkness. The steps were intermittent now, as if some one was working at something, his work carrying him a few steps back and forth. And presently I began to hear, so dimly that I could scarce believe in its reality, a faint, queer sound that filled up the intermission between the steps.

Except for the oppressive silence of the night and for my sharp hearing that long years have never dimmed I would not have heard that sound at all. It sounded like something going round and round—a whirling sound I best had call it—and I heard it only at long intervals.

I considered getting up and searching through the rooms; but the more I thought about it the less inclined I was. It might be, after all, some one who had perfect right in the house. I had not yet learned all the history of the mansion; perhaps a moment's conversation with old Rose on the morrow would clear it up. Then again, I was unarmed and any intruder in those long shadows would have every advantage. I had locked my door when I came through; and now I decided not to disturb it again. Strange as it may seem I dropped asleep.

But the moment's conversation that I had anticipated with Rose did not clarify the situation. I found her and old Tom in the kitchen having breakfast; and I thought that both of them eyed me curiously when I came in. It was almost as if they expected me to have some sort of a story to tell.

"I want to get something straight, Rose," I said when she poured my coffee. "How many people sleep in this house?"

Her eyes opened slightly and she spilled a small quantity of coffee on the cloth. "Jes' you and Miss Alice and Mistah Moody," she said. "Dat is—dat's all dat does any sleepin'."

I refused, at first, to let their superstitions get hold of me. "Does Doctor Hardy ever go to the upper floor?"

"No. Doctah Ha'dy leaves about half pas' nine, don't come back no mo'."

"There is no colored help that goes upstairs from time to time?"

"No. Old Tom here and me is de only colo'd help dat sleeps on de place. Why—why you want to know all dese things?"

I got the idea that the question came hard—that she was deeply curious yet almost afraid to ask me. "There's no reason, in particular," I told her as calmly as I could. "Some one was walking about the corridors last night and I was curious to know who it was."

"Some one—some one walkin' around de halls?"

Her eyes rolled and the whites showed as she stared at me. Old Tom grunted and wheezed in his chair.

Then I told them of the night's adventure. It was nothing new to them, it seemed: my predecessor, who had slept on the second floor, had reported hearing almost the same sounds. Indeed, it was one of his reasons for leaving. The whirling sound I described was, however, an entirely new phase of the affair to them and they seemed to enjoy it keenly.

"To-night, Tom, I'm going to ask you to watch with me," I said.

"What's dat?" the old fellow echoed, staring at me with open mouth. "Me?"

"You," I told him as sternly as I could. "Why, Tom, you don't mean to say you'd be afraid—when there will be two of us, both armed?"

"It ain't dat," he replied somewhat abashed. "I jes' thought you'd want some white gen'l'man. 'Deed, if Rose wa'n't afraid to be lef' alone I'd be glad to catch that Jack-the-sneaker, but I's got to stay wif her."

He looked at Rose, imploringly. But the latter shut her jaws tight. "Don't 'spect me to say I's afraid to be lef' alone," she told her husband at last, "jes' to get you out of sumpin' dat oughter been done two months back. No, Mistah Tubal, I is none too brave but I'll be glad to lend you old Tom for to-night."

The old negro sat thinking and soon he came forward with what was really a very good idea. He would take his dog to watch with him and station the animal in the corridor. If any one came through Rover would of course bark, and better still follow him barking through the maze of corridors and thus enable us to run him down. It was a rather creepy business at best and I thought we would both appreciate the company of a courageous hound.

So it was arranged. When another long day had drawn to its close, when Doctor Hardy had come again and gone and I had straightened up Mr. Moody's room for the night, Tom and I climbed the stairs together. It was perhaps eleven then—much after Tom's usual bedtime hour—but excitement kept him wide awake. Rover, a big hound, was stationed outside my bedroom door; Tom and I sat in the darkness inside.

I thought it very doubtful that we would hear the steps that night. Usually, I have noticed, such phenomena occur only at unexpected times, rarely when any one deliberately listens for them. The mystery of Roadturn, however, followed no established rules. After sitting perhaps an hour, when our tobacco had burned out and we were both at the edge of slumber, Rover gave a sharp bark.

Both of us were wide awake at once and Tom reached for his heavy shotgun. By now the dog was making a frightful uproar, barking and leaping in the greatest excitement. But before I was able to reach the light switch and seize my own gun the noise had ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

In the silence that followed I thought I heard swiftly running steps but they were half obscured by the sounds we made in hurrying to the door. The corridor was deeply silent outside and heavy with shadows. We had to glance about some little time before we made out the form of the dog. He was lying against the wall, huddled and queer, and he was scarcely discernible in the shadows.

Old Tom breathed deeply, then bent to examine him. The black face looked gray in the light of my doorway when he stood erect again.

"Good Gawd!" he said, evidently greatly perturbed. "He's daid!"

It was true. Rover's skull had been smashed by a terrific blow.

CHAPTER IV.

It was all very queer and disconcerting. It was hard to determine what to do next. I do remember, vaguely, trying to encourage Tom—to brave him up for the search through the corridors. He had seemingly lost all spirit for the undertaking and when at last I was able to induce him to go with me through the halls he seemed to hang

back, not overly anxious to search the more deeply shadowed places where the intruder was most likely to be found.

There is no need to trace in detail that search we made through the old house. And although it brought us nowhere it by no means concluded the developments of the night. Certainly Roadturn was a house where things happened swiftly and unexpectedly.

We had decided to give up the search for that night and I had walked down the stairs with Tom, who was on his way to his quarters, when we both paused, bewildered, at a sudden, dim sound in the next room.

I think that Tom might have spoken aloud in dismay and surprise if I had not motioned silence. Then we waited while a long moment dragged away. I began to believe we had both been mistaken—that our nerves were playing tricks on us—and we had been startled by some small, natural sound of the night. But presently the sound came clearer and both of us identified it in an instant.

The first sound had been the subdued report of a window being started from the sill. Now we both heard the soft, sliding sound as it was being slowly raised.

Very softly—I had left my boots in the room above—I stole to the threshold and gazed into the darkened room. A faint stream of light sifted through from the doorway leading into the hall, and one glance showed that the room was empty. Whoever was raising the window stood on the lawn outside. And presently, peering closely I saw a streak of darkness widen where the window was leaving the sill.

The window had not been jimmied, as the police reports say; indeed, although I was almost certain I remembered locking it, it seemingly had been unfastened. Holding the gun ready I crept farther into the room. Then, taking my post, I waited. The window slowly opened. Now I could see the white gleam of hands under the casement. It was most disconcerting, waiting there in the darkness, not knowing who would come. The rifle trembled absurdly in my hands. And soon one leg and a man's head were thrust through.

The intruder had passed through the window into the room before he saw me waiting with pointed gun. "Put up your hands," I told him as sternly as I could.

He was a young man, unmasked, and I

had never seen him before to my knowledge. The light was too dim to tell more. Tom, however, seemed to recognize him at once. He uttered a long-drawn, half-whispered sound as if in indescribable relief.

"You ain't no ghos'!" he said as if to reassure himself. "You is Miss Alice's sweetheart!"

It was a very odd little session we had there in the darkened room. It was not at all as I had expected. The young man did not answer old Tom and before I could think of anything to say he had relaxed into a chair and was lighting a cigarette. The match flare showed a rather pleasant, youthful face and a powerful, agile body. He seemed hardly disturbed at all by this unusual situation.

"I wish you'd put down that gun," he said to me. "You don't seem to be able to hold it still and I'm afraid it might go off and kill some one."

"I'll put it down when I know what you are doing here," I told him with some spirit. Tom, behind me, turned on one of the small wall lights so that we could all see one another better.

The young man looked at me keenly. "You are a new one on me," he said. "Of course you are a butler. Your first name will be Henry, or James, or Abner, or something like that. But how do you come to be here?"

"I was hired by Mr. Moody," I told him with some dignity. Then I caught myself, remembering it was my place to question him rather than to answer his inquiries. "Who are you and what are you doing here?" I demanded.

"Old Snowball there has already identified me, thanks—known as Paul Turner to my friends. It is a rather early-morning call, I will admit, but the night has been rather stormy—I couldn't get here before. I had hoped to see Miss Moody but I'll come back later."

He got up, and turned toward the window. "If you start to go I'll fire," I told him. "You haven't explained, as yet, your presence in the house at this hour. Tom, can you hold him here while I speak to Mr. Moody?"

The young man's smiling face instantly changed expression. "Please don't do that," he told me earnestly. "It would only make trouble for Miss Moody. Mr. Moody is

very much adverse to my coming here—because of the advice of the family doctor. You may tell the young lady, if you like—she is the head of the house—but please spare the feelings of the old gentleman."

"And what, if I may ask, were you doing upstairs to-night—and why did you kill Tom's dog?"

"Upstairs?" He stared at me quite blankly. "Kill Tom's dog? I haven't stepped in this house until you saw me."

It all seems like a dream, now, when I think back upon it—the sight of the house breaker in his rain-wet coat, the dim light, the great staring negro standing beside me, and then, the foolish argument that Turner and I had together. I tried to convince him that it was he who had crept through our hallway; he stoutly maintained that it was not. Heaven alone knows to what length of absurdity we would have gone had I not been called away by the sound of Mr. Moody's bell summoning me to his room.

I found the gentleman sitting up in bed, every light on; and he seemed deeply distressed and uneasy. "What are you doing downstairs at this hour?" he demanded. "Who were you talking to?"

I cannot fully explain why I did not tell him the whole truth. "I heard a sound downstairs and went to investigate," I said. "I got old Tom up and we looked around together without any result. We were just going to bed."

He accepted my explanation and excused me at once. When I returned to the living rooms Tom was looking with some bewilderment out the open window and the affable Paul Turner had taken his departure.

CHAPTER V.

What Tom told his mistress I do not know but when another day had passed I had concluded that it was my duty to tell Doctor Hardy, at least, of Turner's visit. I encountered him as he was passing through the hall and he was exceedingly kind and courteous as he listened to what I had to say.

"I feel you ought to know about it," I said. "I understand it was your orders to keep the two apart and I realize that young people sometimes do not know what is best for them."

"That's the case here," he said. He looked rather thoughtful and troubled.

"You see, Tubal, the girl is in a critical state. Her eye trouble seems to come from some unhealthy condition of her nerves—and at present it is our duty to keep her from any excitement of any kind—emotional or anything else. For these two people to get married now, their spoken wish, is out of the question. It would not only mean blindness but probable insanity for that nerve-wrought, delicate girl—and at my advice Mr. Moody has used his authority as guardian to prevent her from seeing him. I wish you would report to me if ever you find young Turner making any attempt to see her."

This I promised to do. Fortunately for my peace of mind the next few days at Roadturn were singularly quiet. If there were intruders in the upper corridors at night I did not hear them; and I concluded that the visitor who had disturbed my sleep the first two nights in the old mansion was no other than Paul Turner, on some business connected with his secret courtship of Miss Moody. It wasn't easy to say why he had killed the dog. The point seemed to prove that he was a desperate, bloody man, ready to go any length to prevent being discovered in his stealthy enterprises. The fact that he had continued to try to see and meet the girl in the face of the practitioner's advice—when he had been told it might easily lead to her total blindness or worse—was enough to prejudice most decent people against him. All is fair in love, is an old saying; but even young, youthful sentiment does not ordinarily excuse this. It looked as if he were a strong-willed, reckless young blade who cared more for having his own way than he did for his sweetheart's health and future.

In the days that followed I did my best to fill the important place of butler in the Moody household; and I believe that I gave satisfaction. My days were fairly full, as I took it upon myself to oversee the work of the outside colored help; and I was always glad to go to my room after the dinner hour for my usual two or three hours of reading. Doctor Hardy was usually with Mr. Moody during these hours but he came and went as he pleased. I was never able to keep very good track of his movements.

I am a rather timid man but not a nervous one and I soon fell into my old habits of sound sleep. The tenth night in the old house, however, was an especially wakeful

one. My dreams were troubled, I wakened frequently; and half the night hours were sped before I guessed the reason. It is curious how our subconscious minds keep watch over us, struggling to offset disaster brought about by the mistakes or the forgetfulness of the conscious mind. About midnight the truth came to me in a flash; that I had gone to bed without remembering to lock my door. While I had not consciously remembered this omission, my subconsciousness had been acutely aware of it and as a result had kept me from deep, restful sleep.

It occurred to me that I should rise and lock the door; but who likes to leave his bed on a chill autumn night? I felt that inner, secret monitors were urging me to do so—good fairies that never sleep—but the base sluggard of my conscious self kept me from obedience. I was reminded vaguely of certain nights in the long ago past when I have been wakened from sleep with an acute thirst for water—especially after Sir Stanley's dinners when I imbibed too freely of the wine left open upon the tables—and how to the injury of my physical self I would disregard this prompting and go back to sleep. Perhaps I should say here, however, that I am not a heavy drinker. Much of the testimony I have already given might be discredited if I were known as an inebriate. Soon I drifted to sleep again, leaving the door still unlocked.

I think it must have been the hours just before dawn that I was startled wide awake. I opened my eyes to find the room dimly alight from the moonbeams that streamed through my window. I could see my foot-board wanly and my clothes hanging on the chair. It was not just a dream that had called me to wakefulness now. After the first instant of startled wonder I knew the truth. Some one in the corridor was trying my door.

I felt quite a little dismayed. At such times even an old brain works nimbly and I thought of many things that gave me no great pleasure. At that instant it occurred to me that in all probability the being who haunted those shadowed corridors had paused at my door nightly to try the lock, that because of my assurance in its stout bolt I had slept soundly as his groping fingers worked at the latch; and that only my restlessness—induced by the realization that I had failed to throw the bolt—enabled me to hear it to-night. In the same instant I

remembered a dog with a crushed skull—and a man who was slain in his bed, long ago.

The knob turned softly. I heard the faint sound of the mechanism of the latch. Then the door began to open.

It opened slowly. I could see the dim shadow of the door as it swung on its hinges and the widening gap where the more intense darkness of the corridor showed through. This was the one chance I had to leap from my bed and prepare to make a defense but seemingly before I could act at all the door had opened wide enough to let some one through.

It was not a reassuring thought to hear the door shut softly behind the intruder. The person who had entered was merely a tall blotch of darker gloom in the murk of the room; sex, identity, even substance I could not distinguish at all. And still I hovered between courses; one to spring up and try to oppose him, the other to feign sleep.

But it turned out that neither of these were in my power. The intruder moved swiftly, softly toward me—easily as a wisp of drifting cloud—and as he drew near I thought that his arm was raised. Remembering again a dog that had been killed just outside my door I sprang from my bed and toward him, intending to oppose him with all the might I had.

I saw the movement of his arm in the dusk. And when I wakened again morning pressed bright against the window, my head rocked with pain and there was a single red stain upon my pillow. My few possessions, however, had been entirely undisturbed.

CHAPTER VI.

If my own curiosity had not been wakened and if other positions had been open to me perhaps I would have resigned, that morning, my position as butler at Roadturn. As it was I decided to stay it through—to see the mystery solved. I did not carry news of the attack to the local police. I contented myself with confiding the whole matter to Doctor Hardy with whom—considering my station in life—I had become on quite intimate terms. He promised me his help in the matter and agreed to talk it over with Mr. Moody himself.

He gave Miss Moody her customary treatment: I went to my room. About ten—slightly past the usual time—I appeared on

the lower floor to perform my last duty of the day, to straighten up Mr. Moody's room for the night. I hesitated, however, in the drawing-room; Doctor Hardy's medical kit still stood on the drawing-room table, indicating that he was still with his patient.

It was somewhat past his usual time. I waited perhaps fifteen minutes more and once during that time I thought I heard some one on the wide veranda just outside. It seemed to me that I heard stealthy steps; and considering all that had happened before, no wonder I was momentarily ill at ease. I resented, that moment, Doctor Hardy's order that all the lights at Roadturn be kept dim.

In imminent risk of being reprimanded I did turn on, for the moment, all the lights in the drawing-room, so that the radiance would pour through the window onto the porch. The veranda was deserted, however, and I convinced myself that I was mistaken.

I encountered Miss Moody in the dining room and as often before she was startled at my step. "I thought you had retired!" she exclaimed.

"Not yet. I haven't made up Mr. Moody's room. The doctor is still with him."

The lower part of her face showed considerable wonder. "Surely not. It's after ten. He rarely stays this late."

"But his kit is still on the library table."

"Perhaps he left it. At least I would go see—knock and see if my uncle is not ready for you."

It is not a servant's place to question, yet she was aware of my hesitation and her kind manner enabled me to explain my reluctance to carry out her instructions. "He gave me explicit orders not to disturb him when the doctor was with him," I told her. "I don't like to risk his displeasure."

At that moment there occurred a small interruption of our talk—an incident that was discussed in full during certain investigations to come and therefore must be included in the account of the mystery at Roadturn. We heard shuffling steps in the rear rooms, followed soon by the appearance of old Tom, the gardener.

He looked considerably upset. "It ain't nothin', Miss Alice," he said in reply to Miss Moody's question, "yet I's perturbated about it jes' de same. Some one's gone and took my shovel."

Miss Alice answered him with a laugh. "Who in the world would want your shovel,

Tom?" she asked him kindly. "You have just misplaced it."

"'Scuse me, Miss Alice," he argued respectfully, "but I never did misplace it. I leaned it jes' outside my do', to remind me to dig up dem dahlia beds in the mornin'—and it ain't der now. Rose, she thought she hear some one outside and made me get up to look. I looked through de window and den I went outside to look and didn't see no one. But de shovel is gone."

Miss Moody's curling lips indicated that she was smiling. "How long after you heard the sound did you go outside to look?" she asked.

Tom looked down. "Wasn't more 'an a minute or two." He shuffled his feet uneasily. "'Deed, Miss Alice, I couldn't go out into dis cold weder wiv jes' my night gahments on. I had to stop and dress, and talking wiv dat old Rose, and back and forth, maybe ten minutes or so. Wasn't a half hour in all."

"Of course you'd expect to find some one, after a half hour's wait. They could have run away with the whole tool house in that time. Go to bed, Tom, and remember the dahlias in the morning."

He went away grumbling and Miss Moody's silver laugh rang through the room. Of course I did not join her—such is not my place—yet it all seemed very companionable in her, as if she thought me a little more than an ordinary servant. And her talk with Tom had been quite diverting. And now Miss Alice and I were left alone again, confronted with the curious fact that we had not yet heard Doctor Hardy take his bag and go.

"He is staying late to-night," the girl commented. "I suppose he and my uncle are having quite a talk. Perhaps he has simply forgotten his bag—since we are his only patients, I don't see why he carries it back and forth every evening anyway. Tubal, what do you think of Doctor Hardy?"

"He has been very courteous to me," I observed.

"He is very dignified and courteous—I grant him that. But I can't say he is helping my eyes a great deal. In fact they have grown steadily worse—no matter how much he tries to encourage me to the contrary. They were never good eyes, but my uncle was so sure that Doctor Hardy would be able to overcome all their defects."

"Mr. Moody must have a great deal of

confidence in him," I ventured, "or he would not have recommended him so highly. Sometimes, however, a man is swayed by a long friendship for another and thus gives him more credit than he really deserves. Doctor Hardy is of course a general practitioner?"

"On the contrary he is an eye specialist, and my uncle says he is a wonder. Of course he is a doctor of medicine as well; and my uncle tells me he is accomplishing wonders with his paralytic leg. I confess I never heard of him until he began to call here regularly to see my uncle. To-morrow I think I'll call in another oculist—it won't hurt to have added help. My uncle says that doctors are very sensitive about such matters, but for once we'll have to risk Doctor Hardy's feelings. I think you had better go now, Tubal, and see if my uncle needs you."

We walked together to the gentleman's door but there was no response to my knock. It was nothing to cause surprise—once before Mr. Moody had dropped to sleep before I could straighten his room and thus did not answer my knock—yet Miss Moody acted as if it were quite a novel situation.

"Nothing to do but wait till morning, Tubal," she told me. And she stood waiting—as if she had business in the library—while I climbed the stairs.

I slept unusually sound that night and waked at my usual time, about six-thirty. Night still lay over the city; I could see the twinkle of its lights through the gloom. I had breakfast in the kitchen and shortly after seven I had prepared Mr. Moody's breakfast tray. Morning had just dawned—a cloudy day, threatening storm.

I knocked at Mr. Moody's door but it did not fly open as usual when I brought breakfast. I started to knock again, so that if the gentleman was sleeping soundly he would surely hear me, but I paused when I remembered his instructions—under no circumstances to disturb him if he did not answer my knock at once.

I did, however, see fit to report the incident to Miss Alice. Considering the gentleman's strange silence of the night before I thought it the only proper course. "He doesn't answer!" she echoed. Her face and hands showed that she was really and deeply startled. "He always answers for breakfast."

She took my arm and we made our way

to the silent rooms again. Miss Alice tapped, still without receiving any response. Then with mounting excitement she put her lips close to the latch and called:

"Uncle—wake up! Uncle—here's your breakfast." Then in a louder key: "*Uncle!*"

She paused in doubt as to her course. Likely before now the gentleman had refused to answer her call—he was rather eccentric that way, if I may say so—but now she seemed to find difficulty in ascribing his silence merely to his odd humor. The fact that he had not answered us the preceding night began to have a sinister significance for us both.

"Uncle, if you don't answer we are going to break down the door!" she said distinctly. But we waited in vain for a voice beyond the threshold.

The girl turned to me. "Perhaps he has had another stroke," she told me hurriedly. "We must get through that door, Tubal. Get an ax—there isn't a key that will fit that lock in the house. Doctor Hardy has a pass-key for it, if we could only find him."

Though perhaps I was somewhat excited too I was able to think of something that Miss Moody had forgotten. "We can break through his rear door more easily—the one opening on the little porch. It's a simple lock."

We hurried around the house. I remember now that cool, dark morning; white winter clouds, the bare limbs of great trees swaying and waving in the brisk wind, the day just waking into fullness. Tom brought the ax from the tool shed.

I could not see through the rear windows. The shades had been drawn and the windows themselves were locked. "My uncle certainly does not like to be disturbed," I heard Miss Alice say, rather petulantly I thought. Then at her command Tom smashed the pane with his ax and reaching through a dark hand unlocked the window.

He stepped back then and allowed me to throw the window wide. A touch of the cord threw the dark shade up with a clatter. I peered through into the shadowed room.

It took quite a little while for my eyes to become adjusted to the deep twilight of the room. I alone must make the report; Miss Alice, blindfolded, could not see at all, and old Tom stood back as if he intended to have no part in the investigations. And as I waited the room seemed oddly quiet and haunted with emptiness.

"Well?" Miss Moody inquired anxiously.

"I can't see very plain," I told her. "I can only see part of the bed from here and there doesn't seem to be anybody in it. It looks as if your uncle is gone."

"Gone! How could he be gone? The man can't walk. Go in there, you men, and find out what's the matter!"

But it came about that I went in alone. Tom pretended to be busy with the door, searching for imaginary keys through his old clothes; and Miss Alice did not press him further. I crawled through the window and then to see better I threw wide the opposite blind.

I looked on the bed first and then under the bed and then about the room and in the closet. The gentleman had gone.

"He's not here," I called out through the window.

The room seemed rather strange and still as I waited for her to call back to me; and after its long occupancy its great emptiness seemed all the more astonishing. My voice rang very curiously as I called.

"Not there!" Miss Alice cried at last, impatiently. "Tubal, are you going blind too? He *must* be there."

"Come in and see for yourself, Miss Moody," was the only thing I could think of to say.

The key of the rear door was missing from the lock but old Tom guided her around the house and to the door, whereupon I pulled the gentleman's latch string and let her in. She could not see, but she groped over the bed with her hands, and Tom, who stood at the threshold, verified the report I had made.

We stood a long time in bewilderment and I heard Miss Moody's deep breathing. There was nothing further to say and it was not immediately evident just what we should do. It was all most extraordinary, if I may say so; particularly now that the morning was advancing swiftly and the light grew in the room. We saw the gentleman's tobacco jars, his books and his bottles of spirits, even some of the medicines Doctor Hardy had left, but the man himself, lying supine in luxury on the big bed, had simply and assuredly vanished. No wonder Miss Moody looked confused and likely enough I stared blankly too.

I do not know how long we had stood there when we heard that very extraordinary sound from upstairs. I do not know how

much longer we would have stood there, looking from one to another and trying to decide what to do, if it had not been for that amazing interruption. We suddenly heard some one cry out as if in great distress, in an upstairs room.

We were all considerably shocked. It had been a trying morning so far and our nerves were already somewhat on edge. The sound was exceedingly loud, nothing less than a scream uttered by a powerful pair of lungs. It seemed to leap down the stairway and ring from every wall at once.

None of them knew exactly from what room it had come. Before we had time to think we heard a second scream, more guttural now, a sound more of terror than astonishment, followed by a third and a fourth in quick succession. Some one was running, screaming, down the upper hall and almost before we could turn we heard the same sounds on the stairs. It was all very confusing and alarming and no wonder old Tom's face looked gray as I rushed past him.

It was not the vanished Mr. Moody who had screamed. It was old Rose and I met her at the foot of the stairs. "Look out de window, look out de window," she was saying. Seeing me, she turned back upstairs and led me into the small, upper study that I remembered well from my first day at Roadturn. Then still yelling in the greatest excitement she pointed frantically out the window.

At first I could not see because of her own bulk. When I did see I was not greatly surprised that she had screamed, considering that she was a colored woman, ghost ridden to start with. If I had come on that sight without warning I probably would not have shouted, and might indeed have come tiptoeing down the stairs; but the shock to the nervous system might have been equally great.

I saw the hedge as usual and the meadow beyond crossed by the fence. I saw the rift in the trees and through it the green top of the low hill. The gallows stood in vivid profile against the white, morning clouds, but they no longer seemed broken and abandoned. They had come back into service. From the gallows arm hung the dark line of a rope, and from it dangled something black, the nature of which, even at the distance of a quarter of a mile, could not well be mistaken.

CHAPTER VII.

I think it was my idea to summon the local police to accompany us on that first investigation. In the first place I would otherwise have had to go alone as far as other eyewitnesses were concerned; Miss Alice was nearly blind and Tom, I felt sure, could not be induced to leave the immediate grounds. Besides, it might save complications later to have official witnesses at that first inspection of the body.

I called the police myself. My voice trembled somewhat, I fancy; at least I had some difficulty in making myself heard. "What's that, what's that?" some officer said. "A man doing what?"

"There is a body hanging on the old gallows out near Roadturn," I repeated distinctly. And then at his question as to who was calling: "Tubal Small, butler out at Roadturn."

"Tubal Small, eh?" He repeated the name in a rather odd tone as if in spite of the urgency of my call it rather amused him. "Well, we'll come out right away."

I ventured out in the meadowland, clear to the wire fence, and Tom, considerably emboldened now that the police were on the way, came out and joined me. In a few minutes two constables came driving along the road and when they caught sight of us stopped their car and climbed the fence to join us. They were huge men, in uniform, and did not seem in the least excited.

The gallows were not in sight from this point, or in fact from any point along the road, due to the heavy copse between. But we climbed the fence, penetrated the wood, and came to an old foundation from which, no doubt, flame had swept the structure that had once been used as the country jail. Then we looked up at something black against the sky.

"Picturesque way for a man to do himself in," one of the constables observed. He turned to me and his face showed that he was somewhat impressed in spite of himself. "Do you know who this is?"

I did not have to look twice to answer his question. The victim of that grim, abandoned engine of death was my late master, Mr. Moody. He wore his black dressing gown over his night garments just as when I had brought him his dinner.

"Mr. Oswald Moody," I told him. "I was his servant—he was an uncle of Miss Moody, mistress of Roadturn."

The policeman eyed me with great curiosity. "You mean one of that family that lived in the castle? Good gosh, McCabe"—he glanced toward his companion—"we've got quite a story for the reporters here, after all. You know that old thing should have been torn down, by the order of the county, years ago. It simply invites suicide." He turned to me and evidently I was a type that interested him, possibly even amused him a little. "What made Mr. Moody kill himself, Tubal?" he asked me. "As his servant you must have been pretty close to him."

I looked him in the face. "He didn't commit suicide."

The man's eyes widened slowly. "Didn't?" he exploded. "Nonsense! You don't mean to stand there and try to tell me it's a murder? Who is going to take the trouble to hang a man when there's a thousand ways easier—"

"It wasn't suicide," I repeated. "You'll believe me when I tell you that Mr. Moody was an invalid—"

"All the more reason to kill himself."

"An invalid who couldn't leave his room! He was paralyzed, and he couldn't walk. Some one must have carried him here!"

I will never forget the bewildered look that overspread the faces of these two officers of the law. They looked at me, then at the body, then at each other. "Perhaps the old man's mind is off," I heard McCabe whisper to the other. "The old mummy has been a butler so long he's begun to see things."

At that moment I received unexpected corroboration. Jenkins, a cotter who lived near by, had seen the constables cross the field and curious as to their business he came over and joined us. "I knew there was somethin' wrong," he began. "I knew it. I says to the old woman—"

McCabe turned to him sternly. "We don't care what you says to your old woman," he began, impatiently, I thought. Perhaps the curious case had begun to trouble him. "What do you know about this?"

"I was goin' to tell you," Jenkins began reproachfully. "If you're so durn impatient I'll save it for the reporters—they'll be gathering around soon. Last night, just as I was going to sleep, I heard some one cry for help. 'Help! Help!' he cried, the most agonizin' scream I ever heard, and my wife, she says to me—"

"Why didn't you run and give help?" McCabe demanded.

"I did get up and look around but I couldn't tell exactly where the sound was comin' from. Last night was cloudy and it was pitch dark and when I didn't hear no more sounds I went to bed."

Both the two officers had begun to look deeply troubled. It was a very strange little session, there in the shadow of the gallows and of that black-robed form. "Just the same I'm not going to give up my theory of suicide without further investigation," McCabe told his companion. "Anything else don't make good sense. Perhaps he crawled out here—who knows?"

"How about the scream?" his companion asked.

"That means nothing. Perhaps he lost his nerve the last minute."

"You'll have to do better than that, McCabe. A man can't scream after he's hanged himself. It's over all in a minute. If he had lost his nerve before he simply would have climbed down; certainly he wouldn't have sat up there and deliberately yelled for help."

"Oh, I admit it's evidence. But you know, every case brings out schools of people who saw loiterers and heard shots and screams. At every reported burglary there is always some one who heard the window open—the next morning."

But by now we had advanced until we were just under the dead man; then stood peering upward. The black dressing gown flapped a little in the wind, otherwise the man hung like the pendulum of a great clock, stopped in the middle of the hour. It was at this point that Muldoon, the second constable, made a remark of far-reaching significance; though at the instant it was only grimly humorous. "He certainly made a businesslike job of it," said he.

McCabe peered intently, then he seemed startled, and I heard the breath surge deeply into his lungs. "My God, Muldoon!" he cried. "They're right, after all."

"What do you mean?"

"It's murder—not suicide; the most fiendish crime I ever was called to. Look at those hands—those feet! Look at that blindfold. A man couldn't truss his hands and feet that way. And he's hanged with the hangman's knot—his neck broken like a match."

CHAPTER VIII.

Muldoon stayed on guard to keep away the curious and McCabe and I walked back to the house. "I'm going to send for Blachford right away," he told me. "He's the lieutenant of our secret service, as keen a detective as most of the big boys from Washington. He'll have head and tail of this mess in no time."

Blachford arrived at the house twenty minutes later; a man about thirty-five, clean-cut, straightforward, likely of German ancestry. We three stood together a moment on the big veranda.

"A case just to your liking," McCabe told him. "Because he's a prominent man the newspaper fellows will make a great deal of it—and it's the kind of a case that makes detectives' reputations." The officer was quite a little excited by now; I could see his eyes gleam under his shaggy brows. Meanwhile he had forgotten me until Blachford questioned.

I have read many detective stories, in my lonely nights, and if I had been one of those ferret-eyed minions of the law I might have thought by this that McCabe was a gentleman who had been disinherited and had thus taken to the force. It is customary for gentlemen, always surrounded by servants, to quite forget the presence of their servitors and take no notice of them whatever during conversation with other gentlemen; but surely I was a man among men here. Perhaps if I had been a younger man and youthful vanity had still been upon me I would have resented being thus ignored. I thought that I would at least be questioned at once and investigated, considering I had been a member of the household if only as a servant, but apparently in McCabe's eyes I was only part of the landscape.

Blachford, however, was a detective of parts and he jerked his thumb at me. "Who's this?" he asked. "A servant?"

"This is Tubal Small," McCabe said, "the servant of the dead man. He was the man who discovered the body. Investigate him carefully, Blachford. Tell him all about it, Tubal."

"It was this morning, about seven-thirty, sir," I began. "The cook, old Rose—"

But Blachford cut me short with a question to McCabe. "Has anybody been bungling around to track up and destroy clews?"

"No, sir," McCabe answered. "Best case that way you ever had. Everything ought to be straight."

"An invalid, you say—couldn't walk—and carried a quarter of a mile to be hanged on that old gallows. How do you know it wasn't suicide?"

"How did he get there? Granting he could crawl, how could he tie himself up that way?"

"The famous case of Oregon *vs.* Brumfield had a counterpart for that. If you remember, he hanged himself in his cell—and his hands were tied."

"But this man's feet were tied, he was blindfolded and he had a perfect hangman's knot. But you'll have to see for yourself."

Blachford started immediately for the scene of the crime and McCabe followed. They had not asked me to go but because of my deep interest in the case I felt I had a right to accompany them. So we tracked once more across the field, climbed the fence, entered the covert and stood at the feet of the dead.

Presently Blachford began a rigid investigation. The rope was cut and the body lowered carefully to the ground. The neck had been broken, just as McCabe had guessed, and minute investigation disposed definitely of any suicide theory—unless, of course, he had received help. The manner in which the hands and feet were bound showed the skillful work of a second person. A great crowd had gathered by now but Muldoon kept them at a distance.

Blachford's next operations were on the platform through which the body had fallen; doubtless he was searching for clews. The rope was removed and put in McCabe's hands. His activities thereafter I did not see, because I went back to the house to be what service I could to Miss Alice. She was deeply shocked, of course, but she seemed much distressed and frightened rather than grief-stricken.

"A murder?" she cried. "How could it be a murder? The door of his room was locked?"

"If some one had opened the front door with a skeleton key it would have locked again automatically when he closed it on going out," I reminded her. "For that matter, he could have gone out the rear door and taken the key with him—locking the door, of course, from outside, to prevent the crime being discovered."

"But he was an invalid," she went on. "It would have taken two strong men to have carried him all the way."

The reporters came soon after and she sent me to talk to them. This was the second time in my life I had ever had dealings with such people—the first time was when Sir Stanley fell grievously from his horse that day at the Willowby Hunt—and these men were quite as adept in securing information as the journalists of my own land. I had determined to tell them very little but by clever questioning they managed to learn a great deal. I was quite a little surprised at the personal questions they asked me and the amusement they seemed to get out of my serious answers. "So you are the butler here," one man said. "I was ready to bet that you were the ice man."

"I have never handled ice at all," I assured him. "Besides, they have no regular ice man here—the ice is procured from a man who comes daily, in a wagon."

They had peculiar strained expressions on their faces when I told them this. "Don't let them kid you, uncle," one of them said drolly. I was glad when they went away.

Shortly after this the detectives came and made a minute search of Mr. Moody's room. Busy with my household duties I lost track of their operations for a short time thereafter but had reason to remember them suddenly when a young man, evidently a constable, summoned me from my work for an informal hearing in the library.

I met old Rose, her eyes very wide and her dark mouth perfectly round, as she was coming through the door. In the room I found Mr. Blachford, Mr. McCabe and another gentleman who seemed to be taking notes, in addition to the young man who had summoned me.

Blachford was smiling a little as I sat down. "You are not charged with any crime, Tubal—as far as I know—but we want to question you a little," he began. "I'm not going to give you an oath but you will find it to your interest to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

His voice was very quiet and pleasant and except for the man with the pencil I might have been perfectly at ease. "Yes, sir," I told him. "I'll be glad to tell you all I had to do with the crime."

I thought that his eyes looked very bright and clear. "So you had something to do with the crime, Tubal?" he asked.

"Oh, no, I didn't mean that." I remember grasping the arms of my chair. "I meant—I meant all that I had to do with the case."

I don't know why the men looked amused. "We are not very prone to believe you were one of the principals, Tubal—it would take several such men as you to carry that two hundred pounds to the gallows, truss him and hang him; but you must understand everybody in this household is guilty until he is proved innocent. What is your full name?"

"Tubal Small."

"Born where?"

"At Maidstone, in Kent, England."

"I suppose you left there early to seek adventure?"

"No, sir." I was somewhat amazed at this question and his expression as he asked it. "I'm afraid I am not of a very adventurous disposition, sir. I stayed there or near there until a very short time ago."

"How did you come to leave?"

"Sir Stanley Barr—I was his man, sir—died; and I thought I would like to seek my fortune in America. I understood servants were very high paid."

"Particularly good servants." Blachford smiled kindly. "Men born with the tradition of service—but we don't see many of them, over here. Tubal, where did you spend the time between eight and nine-forty-five last night?"

"I was reading, sir, in my room."

"May I ask what you were reading?"

"A very diverting book, sir, called 'The Three-fingered Hand.'

"I shall try to get hold of it. Who was with Mr. Moody when you went upstairs?"

"I don't know that any one was, sir, but I think Doctor Hardy was. He had come to treat both Mr. Moody and his niece and it was his custom to spend some time sociably with Mr. Moody."

"Did you see anything suspicious—hear any suspicious sounds?"

I told them of the steps I thought I had heard on the front veranda and McCabe and Blachford exchanged glances.

"In your weeks here have you seen much of one Paul Turner?"

"Not very much, sir." I tried to keep my voice at the same even pitch but I must not have succeeded very well because both Blachford and McCabe leaned forward. "I met him once, I think."

"Under what circumstances. I understood that he was forbidden to enter the house."

"He called one night, sir." And then, because they forced it out of me, I told of Paul Turner's visit. I could do nothing else. It was always my father's teaching—laid away long ago near Charing, poor man—that a man's first duty is to his king and his country, which means to the law. These were the ambassadors of the law.

They questioned me about this visit in every detail. They asked if I had ever heard that Turner had visited Mr. Moody in his room; and whether, on the night of the crime, I had heard a motor car on the road back of the mansion. To both of these questions I answered no.

They told me I could go then; and as I stood up Blachford shook my hand quite as one gentleman to another. "I think I ought to tell you, Tubal," he said dryly, "that I don't believe you will have very much embarrassment about this crime. I wouldn't worry and let it spoil my sleep, if I were you."

"But I was in the house," I told him earnestly. "A servant was suspected of a terrible murder in this very house once before."

"But you have an alibi, Tubal, only you don't know it." He smiled rather broadly. "The coroner—Mr. Prim—and one or two physicians have established definitely that Mr. Moody died between eight and ten last night. The condition of the body would indicate that, even if we have not Miss Moody's testimony that at ten you were unable to make him answer when you called to him and the testimony of several witnesses who heard the death screams. And between the hours of eight and ten you were reading in your room."

Seemingly they had only my own word for this and why should they believe me so unreservedly? But in an instant Mr. Blachford explained.

"Old Rose and Tom have testified for you, Tubal," he said. "It isn't good business to tell testimony before the inquest but I guess it won't do any harm in this case. They saw your shadow against the window shade as they were going to bed."

It was no wonder that my heart was light as I passed out the room. Every member of the household had of course been under suspicion, I among them, but from now on

I could take an untroubled interest in the unraveling of the mystery.

CHAPTER IX.

At the inquest that was held the next day all important witnesses were present except Doctor Hardy. We knew the latter only as a retired physician treating Mr. Moody and his niece because of an old friendship for the former; but his name was not to be found either in the city or telephone directory. "He's probably living at one of the smaller family hotels," McCabe said, "and I haven't time yet to make all the rounds. Old Rose saw him leave the house about eight, so his testimony probably is of no importance anyway, so far as the immediate crime is concerned. He might, however, know Mr. Moody's past life sufficiently well to throw some light upon the crime."

Paul Turner, however, was present and the only change I could see in him was a straight line between his brows. As he moved across the room I was more and more impressed with the gentleman's physical powers; although he looked slender he was muscled like a tiger. Old Rose and Tom were present, not so badly frightened but that they rather enjoyed the excitement and prominence; and Miss Moody made a lovely picture—in spite of her black blindfold, like a domino mask—at the opposite side of the room. In addition the men who had heard the death screams and two or three other individuals whom I had never seen before were present as minor witnesses.

Paul Turner was the first witness examined—if a witness he could be called, for he had nothing of value to testify whatsoever. The attorney, assisted by Prim the coroner and by Blachford, the detective, did the questioning, asking him his name, age, birthplace and so on; and the youth seemed to resent even these simple questions—or else he resented something he saw in the detective's face to which I was blind.

"Do you know anything about this case?" the attorney inquired.

"Nothing that is not known to every one here," was the quiet answer.

"You were a frequent visitor to the Moody home at one time, I understand. Did you ever see or hear anything that led you to believe Mr. Moody had enemies?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Among the colored people, for instance—nothing that looked like prejudice or hatred?"

A queer expression passed over his youthful face. "I can remember nothing of the kind," he answered after a pause.

"Miss Moody—how did she and her uncle get along?"

"Very well, it seemed." He smiled dimly. "They disagreed, perhaps, over small matters that do not concern this court. Mr. Moody was very zealous for his niece's health."

"What were some of those small matters? The only way this court can arrive at the truth, Mr. Turner, is to go to the bottom of everything."

The young gentleman's face clouded. "I answer the question under protest. I can't see that it concerns this court in the least. Miss Moody was anxious to get married. Her uncle opposed—on the advice of the girl's physician."

"I believe, Mr. Turner, you were forbidden some weeks ago to come to the Moody house."

Before he could assent, Mr. Prim, the coroner, interrupted. "In my opinion, it is a doubtful matter whether you are entitled to ask that question, Mr. Fogarty," he said politely. "Mr. Turner, as you know, is under oath to answer your questions, but you have no right to ask what might incriminate the person being questioned."

"I am perfectly aware of that, Mr. Prim, but this question was not meant to incriminate Mr. Turner," was the attorney's reply. "He is acting as a witness only—to tell what he saw and heard—and at present I am investigating the relations between Mr. Moody and his niece. Mr. Turner was a frequent visitor at the house at one time, and if it is true that he was later forbidden to come we might be able to trace down some resentment or prejudice that might give us a motive for the crime. I don't mean that I suspect Miss Moody—I am simply trying to run down the facts."

"Nevertheless, I don't believe Mr. Turner will be obliged to answer that question unless he cares to."

"I don't mind answering him," Turner said, rather contemptuously, I thought. "Every one knows it—other witnesses will tell of it if I don't. It is true; I was forbidden to enter the house."

At Blachford's question he testified that he had not heard or seen anything the preceding night either of interest to the court or that would be of aid in tracking down the murderer. "Not when you were in the house—about nine?" the detective queried suddenly.

Turner made no movement in his place; yet his face showed that he was deeply startled. "I will not—" he began. Here Mr. Prim, the coroner, saw fit to interrupt again. "This is not a grand jury investigation, Mr. Blachford," he said. "This is a coroner's inquest. That question does not go."

The detective asked. "Can't we ask him where he was between eight and ten? I'm anxious to hear what he says."

"No. You ought to know such a question would not be permitted."

Mr. Turner was excused and I was the next witness called. I told of serving Mr. Moody his dinner, of going upstairs to read, and later of trying to gain admittance to the gentleman's room. I told of the steps I had heard on the porch and of our search of the gentleman's room the morning after the crime. Even if I had had any reason to do otherwise I would have been careful to tell just what I told Mr. Blachford the preceding afternoon; I saw that he kept yesterday's notes ready for reference. He asked me to repeat for the benefit of the jury the account of the stealthy midnight visit of Paul Turner some nights before.

The room grew quite still as I told this. I did not glance at Mr. Turner himself, but once my eyes fell upon Miss Moody's face; and this made my duty all the more hard. For the first time since the tragedy she looked drawn, deeply distressed, seemingly almost at the verge of collapse. There was quite a little buzz of conversation and a look of heightened interest in the faces of the newspaper men when I had finished.

Rose was called next and she made a heroic figure as she stood up to be sworn. She was born in Virginia, she said and she had been in the service of the Moodys for at least twenty-five years. Of exact dates, either as to her birth or anything else, she was not very positive.

"You were at the Moody home night before last?" Mr. Fogarty asked.

"Deed I was," she replied with some spirit.

Mr. Fogarty smiled slightly. "Who besides you was in the house at that time?"

"What time you mean? I done went to bed about nine—don't know nothing after dat."

"Just before nine, then?"

"Well—Miss Alice, she was in her room. Mr. Moody—he *ought* to been in his room at dat time, but don't know nuffin about him. He never wanted me pesterin' around and 'cept to sweep out at ten in the mornin' I never came near him. Doctah Hardy had been there but hed gone—I saw him go out de front hall. I was in the kitchen, cleanin' up, and Tom—he's my husband—was settin' back of de stove smokin' his pipe. Mr. Small was there but he was in the room a-readin'."

Blachford smiled at me kindly and wholly to please me—to impress the fact upon the jury and the journalists for my benefit—he asked the question I had been hoping he would ask. "How do you know that, Rose?"

"'Cause we seen him on de shade when Tom and me went out to de stable where we sleeps."

"I believe that accounts for every one. Rose, was there any one hanging around the house—or outside it—that had no business there?"

Rose's tone dropped lower. "Yas, 'r."

"Tell the jury about it, then."

"About eight o'clock I was in the kitchen workin' and I went outdo's to put sumpin in the gahbage. While I was out der de moon was peepin' froo de clouds and I seen Clara eatin' sumpin dat looked a whole lot like a bird—"

"Perhaps you had better explain to the court," Fogarty interrupted dryly, "just who Clara is."

"She's my gray cat. I walked close to her and she scattered and I mus' followed her fifty or a hunerd yahds. Den I saw a big auto'ble settin' in dat old road dat comes up from Mr. Owens' place."

Her voice sank lower and lower. It was plain to all of us she was giving testimony that she would have almost given her life to conceal; yet the court was too much for her. Informal though it was, limited in its power, it must have seemed a terrifying tribunal to this old, unlettered colored woman. She had simply been frightened into telling all she knew.

"Did you go near it?" Blachford asked.

"Yas, 'r." She looked up sullenly. "I ain't goin' to tell no more. Dat's 'crim-inatin', just as it was with Mistah Turner."

"But it isn't just the same here, Rose," Fogarty explained very patiently. "You don't have to answer questions that incriminate yourself—only to tell what you saw and heard. You are obliged to answer those. Besides—why hesitate?—we have it all down in black and white from our talk with you yesterday. It saves time and trouble for you to tell these gentlemen about it now. Was there any one in the automobile?"

"No, sah."

"Whose automobile, was it?"

"It looked like Mistah Turner's, sah. I ain't sayin' it was and I haven't said it was at no 'quiry. It jes' looked like it."

"Did you see anything else?"

"No, sah."

"I don't like to prompt you, Rose. You told us yesterday something you thought you saw."

"Thought I seen somebody slippin' round de house. It was too dark to see plain. Pretty soon he waited behind a tree and den de moon went behind de clouds again and I didn't see him no mo'."

"Who do you think the man was, Rose?"

"Don't know, sah."

"You have no idea, then? Was it a tall man?"

"Yas. It was a tall man."

"You think it was Mr. Turner?"

"Don't know, sah."

She was excused then and Miss Alice was questioned. The detective probed deeply into her family history, doubtless trying to find some old enmity that might explain the crime. This seemed to be a false scent but interest quickened in the courtroom when the detective began to question her in regard to her relations with Mr. Turner. "You and Mr. Turner are engaged?" the detective asked.

"Yes. We were waiting until I am well enough to become his wife."

"You met Mr. Turner rather regularly?"

"Not very regularly. Sometimes he brought notes to me. As you already know, he was forbidden to come to the house by the doctor's and my uncle's orders; yet I continued to meet him from time to time."

"Did you meet him the night of the murder?"

"Yes." She seemed a pathetic figure, blindfolded as she was; but she gave her testimony in a clear voice. We all understood at once that she decided it was to

her sweetheart's best interests for her to tell the truth—that the truth could be established from other witnesses anyway.

"He came at what hour and how long did he stay?"

"He came about eight. He only stayed a few minutes."

"Did he explain why he did not stay longer?"

"No, sir. He said he had several things to do. I met him in the dining room—he came through the French doors and left the same way."

After this she told of the events the night of the crime, how she had stood at my side as I called through to Mr. Moody and the details of the crime the next morning. It was at this point of the inquiry that Mr. Fogarty's manner seemed to change. He became more pugnacious; he spoke more rapidly and sharply and he was evidently trying by bringing forth a flood of testimony to send home his own theory of the murder to the jurors. "By the way, Miss Moody, what kind of a car did your fiancé drive?" he asked.

She answered him—a powerful car of famous make. By questioning her and other witnesses he brought out the interesting fact that Turner habitually carried in his car, with other equipment, a towrope of a certain make, used exclusively in towing automobiles out of the mire. He did not make anything of the point at that moment, however, but called old Tom, the gardener, to the stand.

The latter told nothing new or of interest. Certain doctors and other witnesses testified as to the condition of the body, establishing, as clearly as possible, the time of night the strange crime was committed, as well as describing the peculiar, professional way in which the hands and feet were tied. The man had died of a broken neck, they said, brought on by hanging; and the knot had been the regular hangman's knot that few laymen know how to tie. Several of the neighbors testified that they had heard screams about nine o'clock the preceding night.

The last and most important witness called was McCabe, the officer. The attorney questioned him as to every point connected with the murder but the really interesting part of his testimony was in regard to the clews and the evidence already uncovered.

"Did you find any clews, Mr. McCabe, indicating that any strange or suspicious characters were loitering around the Moody home the night of the crime?" the attorney asked.

"Yes, sir. There was a strange automobile parked for a while in the old road back of the house."

"Do you think you can identify the car?"

There was quite an air of excitement in the room as he waited for his answer. "I have already identified it to my own satisfaction, sir."

"That is not the point. Opinions don't go here—we only want evidence. Did you find any evidence that pointed to it being any car in particular?"

"I found a distinct track of its tires." Then he described all four tires, the kind, the tread, how much worn and so on. From thence he showed that Mr. Turner's car had tires exactly fitting this description, even to an odd-shaped patch on one tire. The room grew very still and I noticed that Miss Moody was leaning forward listening with deepest interest, her little, pale hands clasped tightly in her lap.

"Was there anything to show how long the car had been standing there?" Fogarty asked.

"Yes, sir. There was quite a pool of oil beneath. After examining the oil leakage in Mr. Turner's car I would say that it stood at least an hour."

"We have heard testimony to the effect that Mr. Turner's activities in the Moody house that night were of but a few minutes—while he talked with Miss Moody in the dining room. Could the oil pool have been formed in a few minutes, McCabe?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"McCabe, here"—and he displayed a brown, serpentlike thing—"is the rope with which Mr. Moody was hanged. Have you been able to identify it?"

"I can see that it was originally cut for a towrope—in fact sold for a towrope."

"Testimony has showed that Mr. Turner owned a rope of the same kind, of the same manufacture as this. Did you search his car carefully, after the murder, to see if he still had it?"

"Yes, sir, but there was no sign of a rope in his car when I searched it."

The whole crowd was intensely excited. Sensing the suspense the attorney whipped directly to a very important bit of evidence.

"One of the most important duties of a detective or an attorney, McCabe, in any murder, is to seek out a motive. Did you and Mr. Blachford find anything that pointed to a motive?"

"Yes, sir. We found a letter—an anonymous letter—among Mr. Moody's things."

"A letter written by an ignorant person?"

"It would seem so—or else some one who pretended to be ignorant."

"Is this it?" The attorney held a soiled piece of paper for him to see.

"It looks like it." He glanced at the big, penciled letters, discernible even from where I sat. "That's it."

"I'll read it, if I may. The spelling, gentlemen of the jury is very crude as you will see when you examine the paper." And the attorney read aloud:

"Keep your hands off the Moody fortune. Let Alice and Paul get married."

"K. K. K."

CHAPTER X.

Just before the jury began their deliberations the foreman, a sandy-haired man of about forty, stood up. "If it's right and proper," said he, "I'd like to ask a question."

The attorney looked at him keenly. "That's your duty and your privilege," was the reply.

"Then I wants to know how you gentlemen think this murder was committed—that is, how the mechanical end of it was worked. I heard Mr. Moody was an invalid and a heavy man at that. I'd like to have the detectives review the case—not mentionin' any names, of course."

"As far as I can figure out," Blachford replied, "the murderers—it seems likely there were two in the party, at least, one of them probably a mere thug hired for the job—crept into the Moody house about eight o'clock night before last. One of them worked a skeleton key in the latch—easily done, particularly if it was some one familiar with the house who had had a chance to experiment—and these fellows either knocked out Mr. Moody with a blow on the head or else chloroformed him. I should think the latter; there was no wound revealed in the post-mortem examination. These murderers were not content with killing him where he lay and with insane rage or hatred they carried him out the back door, locking

it behind them, and over to the gallows. Testimony shows there was no key in the door although it was locked; this indicates that the murderers took it with them. I'll confess it is one of the strangest crimes I have ever dealt with, but there must be some sense to it somewhere—and this is as near as I can come to it."

His faltering, his lack of faith in himself expressed in the last sentence had something to do, I believe, with the indefinite report made by the jury. They came back and reported simply:

"We find that Mr. Oswald Moody came to his death at the hands of an unknown person or persons and we recommend that Paul Turner be held for further investigation."

I was looking about the room as the jury-men finished their report and I noticed a very peculiar gentleman who had not caught my eye before. He was sitting rather close to the front, seemingly paying little attention to what was going on; he was leaning back, face lifted, and his lips looked as if he were whistling to himself. He was about my size and I thought possibly about my age, but he had bright, peering blue eyes that gave no sign of the march of the years, sandy hair shot with gray and a sharp face that reminded me of the faces of the ferrets that are used in the pursuit of hares and suchlike in Kent. As I watched him he yawned, stretched his small length almost out of the seat and then seemed suddenly to wake up. He looked about him as if startled and presently marched out with the rest of the crowd.

He was the first human being I saw when I got back to Roadturn. He was sitting clear at the edge of a chair in the big drawing-room and was pawing over Doctor Hardy's tools.

He reminded one of a mole digging earth; but he stopped his eager motions as Blachford and I came in. For a moment he peered at me intently and perhaps I felt somewhat embarrassed. Then he went to digging tools again.

At first I thought that Blachford was also a stranger to the little man with the bright blue eyes and the active hands. They didn't speak; Blachford stood looking, his arms at his sides. As I stole a look at him I saw that he was standing in the identical position that the dragoons and such military folk speak of as "tention"—legs straight, heels touching, shoulders thrown back. I

was to be convinced later that it was merely a coincidence or, which is far more likely, a reflex born of habit. But presently the little man began to speak and I hardly thought of Blachford any more.

"Tubal!" he demanded suddenly. "In Doctor Hardy's treatment of his patients did he ever have use for a hypodermic needle?"

I did not know of any past acquaintance or relationships to justify the use of my given name. "Not that I know of, sir."

"Well, in this otherwise perfect kit—almost brand-new or else mighty well-kept tools—there is no hypodermic needle—and I supposed it was in every doctor's first-aid kit." At this point he quit talking to me, I discovered, and began addressing Blachford, but he looked at neither of us and we had to learn this fact by the nature of his remarks. "A perfectly rotten inquest, perfectly rotten," said he. "You caused a lot of hard feelings, wakened a lot of suspicion, scared that lovely little girl almost to death, and only succeeded in telling a lot of things that will have to be rehashed in the courts. The trouble with inquests to-day, Blachford, is that they think they are trials instead of inquests. An inquest should deliberate over the dead, not the living; find out if it was a murder and get all the details it can—not throw inuendoes at people. Oh, my, my, my! There was only one real clew brought forward and that was the letter—and probably that won't amount to a handful of straw!"

"Clews, man!" I could see Blachford bristling up like an angry mastiff. The angry color mounted in his face. "Don't you count those tracks on that old road a clew; the fact that this man Turner was loitering around—"

"Good Lord, Blachford, haven't you any imagination?" the other cut in. "No romance, no fire? Deplorable, Blachford—that's where the French have it all over us—we Anglo-Saxons and you Germans. Have you forgotten that this boy and that girl are in love—that he was refused the run of the house? No wonder he came creeping around in the dead of night. But that doesn't make him a murderer. I'd do the same and I'm not a murderer, though I feel like it sometimes."

Blachford's jaw began to stiffen. "I suppose you'll see through the whole confounded mess in no time. How about that rope? Turner had just such a rope."

"Yes, and a hundred thousand other automobileists as well. Did they *all* take this poor old man out and hang him up? That rope is a common article in the stock of every auto-supply house. He hasn't got the rope now, you'll say next. Don't ropes wear out and get thrown away and lost? Blachford, that isn't circumstantial evidence—it isn't anything. The trouble with modern detectives, Blachford, is that they have no imagination—most of them. By George, they can laugh at old Sherlock Holmes all they like but he *could* have done just what they say he did, with the brains and imagination he had—only with those talents he would have taken to a paying profession, not to crime detection."

The gentleman seemed to talk almost incessantly, apparently caring very little whether any one was listening to him. Blachford had taken a chair now and was biting at the end of a cigar.

"We hear too much talk about hard-headed men in our profession," he went on. "We don't want hard-headed men always—sometimes we want men who can dream a few dreams, think a few really profound thoughts, take a flight through the sky on wings of imagination. You can sit down and patiently trace, with a paint brush on canvas, every leaf and twig on a tree. An artist comes along and paints the whole with imagination and about six swipes of the brush. His work looks like a tree; yours looks like nothing. He used imagination; you were simply hard-headed."

"Every bit of great achievement ever accomplished was made possible by imagination. By Heaven, Blachford, the reason your country, Germany, failed was that you lacked in this same essential thing; you had plenty of sentiment but no fancy. The worst mistake we can make is to try to discourage imagination in the young—the reason France produces such bully generals is because their military system lends itself to imagination, rather than routine, and dullness and stupidity."

"This is a strange case, Blachford, and don't start grabbing for the first straw of circumstantial evidence you see in order to find a commonplace explanation for it. Let your imagination run riot a little while—don't laugh at things and disbelieve them because they are strange. There are stranger things in the world of fact than the most romantic writer ever thought of. If we are going

to find out who took the trouble to carry that two-hundred-pound invalid for a quarter of a mile and hang him on an abandoned gallows we've got to let our imaginations soar a little. It wasn't a commonplace crime—quit looking for a commonplace criminal and commonplace behavior. I suppose there is no one subject so generally avoided by dictectives, amateur and professional, as poetry—they wouldn't be caught reading poetry, except maybe 'Gunga Din,' 'Dan McGrew,' and 'Omar.' Yet poetry is just what they need in their business. If they've got imagination enough to see the poetry in a crime like this they'll soon see the criminal."

"Poetic justice—many men of our profession, Blachford, laugh at the expression. Yet if a man has imagination enough to see it when it does exist he can see to round out the whole story and chase down the murderer. Let me try to illustrate. Poetic justice—anything poetic, for that matter—is art and because it is art it is easy to piece out and trace down. Why? Because art follows known laws. One artist, looking at one half of another artist's canvas, knows instinctively what is on the other half—at least what ought to be on the other half if it is real art. If one writer reads another writer's story he knows how it ends before he is half through—if the work is real art and they are both artists. It is just like a circle—if you get one arc you can round the whole thing out. In a crime of poetic justice it is the same thing—granting that the criminal is an artist, an artist detective can start with one phase of the crime and round the whole thing out just as one writer guesses the end of another's story, one painter the other half of another's canvas—because it is art and therefore in a perfect circle. Blachford, the man who carted Mr. Moody out and hanged him had poetry in him—and if we had a real poet working with us we'd soon know the truth."

"The way to handle this case is to reason inductively. I'm inclined to think it is the only way to handle such cases as this. Begin at the beginning instead of the end—try to imagine a situation whereby a criminal would want to take a certain person out and hang him. This way, you may solve it; otherwise it is going to be one of the greatest mysteries in the criminal history of this country, never to be explained."

He paused and Blachford dug his hands

deep in his pockets. "Are you through for a minute, Teazle?" he asked.

"I guess so. Why?"

"Then perhaps you'll let me present Mr. Small. I wanted to a half hour back but couldn't get a word in edgewise. He ought to have the pleasure of meeting you after listening to your oration. Tubal, this is Silvester Teazle—one of America's half dozen most famous detectives. The government has got itself all excited about this sordid homicide and it has sent Teazle down to run the murderer to earth."

CHAPTER XI.

We had no more words at the time with Silvester Teazle. He procured from the district attorney the anonymous letter—the one clew, in his opinion, that the officers had so far uncovered—and spreading it out on the library table examined it with the greatest care. He had talked like a chatterbox before but now he maintained the most unbroken silence.

I was anxious to watch him work—it was all new to me—and I kept my eyes upon him as intently as my position as servant could permit. He looked the paper over first with the naked eye, front and back; then he examined it with a microscope. Presently he turned it face down, lighted a cigarette, smoked it until it nearly burned his lips, then whipped the paper over suddenly—as if he thought a sudden look at it after his mind had rested would give him his inspiration. Presently he walked around the room, his hands behind him and playing with the paper in his fingers; and from time to time he put it before his eyes. Finally he stopped before Mr. Blachford.

In spite of Teazle's deprecating words I guessed at once that he had considerable esteem for Mr. Blachford. In fact, both men had quite a little in common; an intense interest in the world of crime besides the traits of keen intellect and sharpened sensibilities that made them successful in their chosen profession. No matter how much they would quarrel and pretend to scorn one another, in reality they had deep mutual respect.

"Blachford, old boy, there's something mighty queer about this letter. I just can't get it, somehow."

"How's that?" Mr. Blachford responded. "I don't see anything queer. It's just a

smart man trying to write like an ignorant one."

"A smart man wouldn't make all his letters of such exact proportions that they look as if they were laid out with a rule! Don't you see—they're the queerest-looking lot of letters I ever saw. I've been preaching inductive reasoning—let's practice it. Let's say I was a smart man and wanted to write like an ignorant one. I would write something like this."

He experimented on a sheet of paper and the finished letter showed a queer mixture of all kinds of letters, some of them capitals, some of them in script, and they wandered all over the page.

"This is what the letter would look like. It would look about the same if in reality an extremely ignorant man had written it. Yet, you see, it doesn't look at all like the original."

"A man who writes a great deal learns to form his letters just alike—that is, his *a*'s always look about the same, and his *b*'s, and so on. An ignorant man, writing only occasionally, has no such habits formed; and as a result his attempt at writing is a jumble. Blachford, it wasn't through ordinary ignorance or an attempt to be ordinarily ignorant that those letters were sketched so perfectly and yet with such imperfection. What have we left? Either a very astute criminal who has thus tried to bewilder us, or a person whose ignorance borders on absolute illiteracy, some one who would laboriously copy or trace the letters." He paused; and winked solemnly at the script. "By George, Blachford, I've got it!"

"What?"

"Traced, by George. Perhaps by an astute criminal who is trying to fool an astute detective; more likely, by some person who has had the merest smattering of a primary education, who can sound out a few words—you remember the old system, the one both of us were taught, of learning to read and write phonetically—and who has almost forgotten the letters they did know. Next thing, from what did they trace the letters? Again we have need of imagination. Imagine yourself a child, just learning to read and write; or, if you like, an old person whose only associations with letters were those such as a child encounters in school. Good heavens, man, have you forgotten your A B C's? Every one of those letters is a perfectly

traced A B C, such as I can remember from some little white cards that my first teacher held up for the students to sound out. All we have to find now are some A B C's, if you know what I mean. Blachford, Blachford, I'm not much of a detective!"

He sent me to summon Miss Alice and his blue eyes were twinkling with amusement when I returned with her.

"Miss Moody," he began at once. "I'd like to go upstairs to the attic. Perhaps to your nursery, if you have one."

She seemed somewhat astonished at the odd request. "Grown girls do not usually have nurseries," she replied. "Of course I used to have one but now it is just a storing place for my old dolls and playthings."

"Just where we want to go," he said, hopping about in excitement. "Nothing very important, Miss Moody—not important at all—but interesting just the same. Can Tubal lead us to it?"

"I don't think he has ever been in it. It is on the third floor—a small room built into the attic."

"Good. Good! We'll find it."

He started off, not waiting for Blachford and me. But we hurried behind him the best we could and soon he led us into a shadowed, dusty room on the third floor. It was a haunted place; the silence was poignant with the ghost of children's laughter, with the echo of little dancing feet. Old toys lay abandoned in the corners; forsaken dolls stared blankly at us from dusty cradles. For a moment we all stood musing, dreaming of a childhood that was departed. Teazle seemed no longer eager and excited.

"It's a holy place," said he. "Why disturb it? I already know who wrote that letter."

"Paul Turner wrote it," Blachford told him stubbornly.

"Nonsense. I see I'll have to prove it to you after all." He began to search through the room and soon he picked up a small object from the floor. It was of wood, hardly larger than a large button, and I thought it was some queer kind of type. It bore the raised letter A.

Teazle laid out the script, then applied this letter to one of the letters on the paper. He smiled knowingly, then continued his search. In a dusty corner he found what seemed to be some sort of a small frame and by lifting an old box he uncovered what

looked like several complete alphabets of the wooden type such as he had found at first.

He turned to us grinning broadly. "Do you see what this is?" he began, holding aloft the wooden frame. "It is one of those old-fashioned letter boards used by children to learn to spell. You've seen 'em—letters slide along in grooves and children can put them together and make words. Every letter on that anonymous message coincides in size with one of these letters—in other words, some one came up here, ripped the wooden type from that old toy and from this type traced the letters we find on this page."

We saw in a moment that this was true. The letters had each been traced laboriously and coincided in size with the wooden type.

"What does that suggest to you, Blachford? It tells me plainly that whoever wrote this message was not merely ordinarily ignorant. He—or she—was practically illiterate. As I said, he could sound out a few words and knew the letters that represented the sounds—knew them well enough to recognize them when he saw them and studied them. He lacked confidence in himself to draw the letters legibly, so he made use of this children's toy.

"You see every word is spelled absolutely phonetically according to his dialect—and these letters fit. That tells me all I want to know. I can guess the rest. For your benefit however, Blachford, I'll go on. Look carefully at this threatening letter."

He spread out the message for us on a table and read it just as it had been written:

"Keep yur hands off de moody fortun let alice and paul git maried K. K. K.

"First look at the word 'de,'" Mr. Teazle continued. "I'll admit that when I first looked at that I thought as you did, Blachford, that some one had tried to write like an unlettered person and overdid it. Yet I'm convinced now that it is absolutely genuine. Do you know any race of people who habitually say 'de,' when they mean 'the?'"

"The colored people, meaning of course the illiterate colored people," Blachford replied. "But the Scandinavian who has not completely mastered English says 'de' too, because he cannot pronounce *th*. Possibly even the German emigrant says it that way."

"Quite right. The *th* sound is extremely

difficult—not a natural ejaculation at all—and it takes time and practice. But here, we can go a little farther. 'Git' suggests something—used for 'get;' and there is some little significance in the fact that the letter *m* was traced, then erased and *a* written in its place, beginning the word Alice. If I am allowed to guess at all I would say that the writer started to write 'Miss Alice,' the name by which he was accustomed to speak of Miss Moody, and changed it because he feared it would bring suspicion upon him. Turner doesn't call his sweetheart Miss Alice."

"He might, however, have started to write Miss Moody," Blachford suggested.

"Good, good! This is making me dig! But at least you'll grant me that this extends the circle of suspicion to others beside Turner—to colored people who habitually call her by the familiar Southern title—Miss, using the given name. Suppose, Blachford, you are an ignorant man and you want to write an anonymous threatening letter to some one. How will you sign it?"

"I don't know. I suppose I'd sign it by the 'Black Hand.'"

"I think that very likely. But suppose you are an ignorant man living in the South—and likely you have never heard of the Black Hand. You have, however, heard of a certain secret society that in popular imagination is supposed to deal secret and terrible justice to wrongdoers. Suppose you are a colored person, brought up on stories of a certain secret order that is more terrible, in your imagination, than the Erlking to the little German boy. Such a society, to the colored people, is the Ku Klux Klan. Don't you think you'd be inclined to sign your anonymous letters with the mysterious and scary letters, K. K. K.?"

"Yes. I very likely would."

"The Ku Klux Klan usually does not scare white people, but considering how it had scared him, the writer thought it would surely put the fear of God into Oswald Moody. Paul Turner wouldn't have searched through this attic for letters to trace, Blachford. This letter I have here was surely written by a colored person—some one who habitually frequents the house and who in all probability adores her Miss Alice. You go downstairs, Tubal, and tell old Rose to come up here."

I was very sorry for the old blackamoor as I guided her, quaking and ashen, into

the detective's presence. Was the crime to be fastened on her—this faithful old servant with the great jaws and the sullen black eyes?

When we came into the room we found Teazle in the act of writing a message in the same rude way he had described—tracing each letter laboriously from the wooden type. He pretended to take no notice of us at first. Old Rose gasped when she saw him, then stood sullenly waiting for him to speak.

Mr. Teazle looked up casually. "Why did you write such a letter to Miss Alice's uncle, Rose?" he asked in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Didn't write no letter," she answered.

"Come, come." He traced out another letter laboriously, looked at it critically, then turned and faced the old blackamoor. "You don't mean to say you've got the brass to stand up here and deny you wrote that letter?"

"Never wrote no letter!"

"Rose, you are getting yourself in a worse fix every minute. It is bad enough to write and send such a note. It might very easily land you in jail. It is considerably worse to deny it to the officers of the law. But to write that second letter—telling him the exact hour he was to be hanged and exactly how you were going to do it—"

She interrupted him with such a wail of terror and despair that both Mr. Blachford and myself were considerably taken aback. "I didn't, I didn't," she told him, sobbing. Then she knelt, her big hands folded to him, her eyes rolling, her dark face inscribed with unmistakable horror and dread. "I did write dat first note! I wrote it so he'd quit persecutin' my li'l' Alice! But I never wrote no second note."

Mr. Teazle looked very sober. "Get up, Rose," he told her rather gently. "Quit yelling and get up. I'll take your word you didn't write the second note, but you mustn't tell any more lies. Come, Tubal—Blachford. We've got some other things to look into now."

As we were filing down the stairs I could not restrain my curiosity and although it was not a servant's place I asked a question of the gentleman. "How do you know she was telling the truth—that she didn't write the second note?" I inquired.

He turned to me, grinning slyly. "There wasn't any second note, Tubal," he replied.

CHAPTER XII.

Silvester Teazle was not like any detective I had ever read of in a book. He seemed to do most of his detecting sitting in an easy chair in the library and talking companionably with Blachford. Occasionally he even addressed a few words to me; yet it did not seem undue familiarity as is always embarrassing to a servant who knows and respects his place. Perhaps the tone he used toward me put me at my ease; it was cheery, perhaps even slightly sportive. Perhaps English servants were a new type to him and like all new things amused him in some slight degree. But it was not for me to question the gentleman and all in all I enjoyed the hours with him very much.

It might be said it was hardly a servant's place to stay near when the gentlemen were talking, but evidently they expected me to do so—to run errands and suchlike. Except for an occasional question I could not restrain I simply stood back waiting for them to speak to me.

"I suppose you've picked on that old colored woman for the murderer?" Mr. Blachford asked Mr. Teazle when he had returned to the library.

"There can be quite a case developed against old Rose, Blachford," Mr. Teazle answered thoughtfully. "That woman frightens me more than any desperate criminal that I have ever had to handle."

This was very interesting to both Mr. Blachford and myself but I hope I did not give sign that I was listening too keenly.

"You astonish me!" Blachford said.

"I wouldn't if you had the least trace of imagination. Good heavens, look at her—that mighty Amazonian frame, those cruel, big hands, that huge, determined, cruel mouth and bloodhound lips—jaws to smash a rock like a stamp mill. Look at those eyes, sullen and smoldering.

"You know the famous poem about the female—how she is deadlier than the male. Now old Tom—he couldn't be guilty of a crime like this in a hundred years. He simply hasn't it in him; but I don't know about old Rose. Did you notice, by the way, how frightened the old colored man is of her?"

"Not particularly."

"The other day at the inquest he looked up at her before he answered any question. Now a court, to a colored man, is a pretty scary thing itself, yet he didn't for a mo-

ment forget the terror he had of that big black panther.

"There is something deadly literal about women, Blachford," he said musingly. "Suppose a man hated Moody, detested him with a fervor such as you and I—associated as we have been with all kinds of people, good and bad—could never conceive of. Suppose he came to the secret conclusion that Moody should be hanged. Still he wouldn't likely go to the tremendous effort of hanging him, even if there was a gallows within a quarter of a mile. He would be content to stick a knife into him or shoot him or hit him in the head with an ax. Likely he wouldn't even take the trouble to warn him first—that is, to gloat over him to give him a few minutes' terror and a few minutes' screaming, to make him understand what was going to happen to him, why he deserved it and who was his murderer—but would simply hurl him into infinity by a shot from ambush. Such is a mighty slipshod way of taking vengeance, Blachford—to strike a man down, killing him instantly without pain and thus never letting him know that his crimes had found him out and done him in at last. I hope you see what I mean. How do we know that death isn't a blessing instead of a disaster? All accepted philosophies teach that it is, and your sentimental murderer—only a sentimental man will do murder, as a rule—will tell you and swear to you that he believes it thoroughly, yet he goes ahead and deliberately gives his enemy this great blessing. I tell you the only vengeance that a man can be sure of getting is what he gets upon this earth, and where's the fun in killing a man when he doesn't know that he's being killed? Is that plain?"

"All very plain," Blachford remarked, rather sarcastically I thought. "But you started to tell the difference between the methods of a man and a woman."

"Of course. I was getting to it. A man might likely dispose of his enemy in this slipshod fashion—shooting him from ambush or some equally silly thing. Women are more conscientious—possibly more dramatic and sentimental, both dangerous traits, by the way—but at least more conscientious, going to a greater effort to see that things are done right. A man might conclude that his enemy ought to be hanged, but he'd be content to shoot him. If a woman concluded her enemy ought to be

hanged—for instance some man who had hurt her babe—she'd hang him if there was the least possible chance to pull it off. She wouldn't stop till she did it and she'd do it right.

"Merciful heavens, man! Imagine lying in bed, an invalid—and seeing the door come slowly open and trying to yell, but no one to hear you—and then seeing that great black she-devil come creeping into your room. There would be no mercy from her. Her eyes would roll but her bloodhound mouth would be set. Then to carry you in those awful, strong arms and put the ropes around you, and hang you, deliberately and carefully, with all the fixings—do you wonder I'm terrified at the sight of her?

"There's something about hanging different from any other death. It grips the imagination—probably because of the fact that hanging, for countless centuries, has been the form of death administered to evildoers. Every man dies—death can't be a very terrible fate, of itself—but there is something damned and awful about being hanged. It looks like a woman's crime or else the crime of a fanatic, a zealot. Blachford, Africa is written all over that dark deed of two nights ago. It seems to me I can smell the jungle in it—see a ring of savages dancing about a caldron—hear a tomtom beating in the distance. We said a few minutes ago that the letter was written either by a very astute, masterly criminal or by some one practically illiterate. I say now that the crime of two nights ago was committed *either by the wildest savage or else by a highly sophisticated gentleman*. There is no middle ground. I can't help but hope, though, for the good of my immortal soul, that it was done by a savage—it would make me feel more at ease.

"With Rose we can easily find a motive—even for such a cruel, deliberate crime as this. Rose would only have to believe that the old man was conspiring against his niece; she would not wait for proof. Rose was Miss Moody's old mammy and not one of us three here, likely, can even conceive of the love that old, savage heart pours out upon the girl. I know of only one counterpart; the love a noble dog bears his master. A noble dog would have been no less cruel, no more inexorable in revenging an injury to his master than old Rose in avenging Alice.

"Her letter shows that she thought the

old man had his eye on the Moody fortune—that he was keeping the two lovers apart. So one night she pretended to go to sleep, then got up and procured a stout rope. Perhaps she took the towrope out of Paul Turner's car—she had likely seen it there at some previous time—perhaps some other towrope that happened to fall into her possession. She stole into the house, called at Mr. Moody's door on some pretext and was admitted; and then as she pretended to work about the old man's bed suddenly thrust a sheet into his mouth.

"She is a strong woman, strong enough to lick you, Blachford, in a fair fight. She could twist Tubal and me together around her fingers. Look at those shoulders, those arms. Great physical strength is the first requisite in such a murder as this and old Rose has it. Never doubt that for a minute."

"Why couldn't there be two? It looks more reasonable to me."

"There might be, of course—a principal and a hired cutthroat. There could not be two principals, for the simple reason that it is utterly beyond the bounds of credibility that two such criminal minds would unite upon the same enterprise with the same passion and relentlessness. Blachford, if I am not mistaken this is the deed of a lone wolf—whether a she-wolf or not I won't say. Two men could not share the zeal and determination, the fire and the hatred that found expression in that dangling body under the gallows. In looking for a suspect we've got to find some one who is physically capable of not only gagging and binding Moody—that might be easy, since he was an invalid—but of carrying him nearly a quarter of a mile. He was a large man, rather short but weighing around two hundred pounds. It would be simply beyond the physical limitations of a small man or woman to handle him. Not so with that great African. She has carried great weights all her life and the zeal that prompted the deed would not stop for a mere matter of a quarter-of-a-mile haul.

"It must have been a terrible sight: worse than any you or I have ever seen. Doubtless she carried him through the front door of his room, through the stately room we sit in now and out into the night; her great figure splendid in her strength; her black skin gleaming in the subdued light like polished ebony; her eyes cold as the eyes of

a reptile; and in her arms Moody, bound so that he could not struggle, gagged so he could not cry out."

Blachford's eyes were shining. "But he did cry out!"

"Yes. Probably she took off his gag when she had got him up on the platform. She wanted to put it about his eyes; it would be more professional. Perhaps it slipped off; anyway his screaming did not help him. He shrieked a few times but he was too near dead from sheer terror to succeed in bringing help. And presently she left him dangling in the dark."

He looked into Blachford's face. The latter's face was pale with excitement, his eyes shone under his brows. "Good Lord, I never thought of her!" he exclaimed. "So you think this is the explanation!"

"No." Silvester Teazle grinned and shook his head. "I don't think so for a minute."

CHAPTER XIII.

Teazle stopped talking as abruptly as he had begun and the remainder of the day was given over to his investigations. He questioned me closely in regard to everything that had happened since I came to Roadturn and he questioned every one else in the establishment about everything they knew. He made a careful and detailed study of the region immediately about the gallows and looking from my pantry window I saw him following down the line of fence between the house and the woods, examining every barb on the top wire. He seemed to uncover something of importance, because I saw him call Blachford to his side, and together they examined, with a pocket microscope, some small object that he held in his hands.

I was talking to old Tom when I saw them again. They came suddenly around the house and the look on their faces would have indicated that they were on a hot scent. They paused, however, watching the old colored man at his work.

The latter seemed greatly ill at ease. Evidently this famous detective from the North was an awful and sinister figure to him and though he pretended great interest in his flower beds I saw the sweat drops at the edge of his snowy wool.

"I see you've found your shovel," Blachford said easily.

"Yas, 'r." The old colored man looked

up, quaking. "Dat was mighty queer about dis 'ere shovel. I lef' it leanin' agin' de building and when I foun' it to-day——"

If he finished his sentence I didn't hear him, because Teazle had turned with deep interest to Blachford. "Do you mean to say that there was a mystery about a shovel—that you didn't let me in on?" he demanded.

Old Tom stared with open mouth but Mr. Blachford turned in annoyance. "Mystery, nothing!" he said somewhat irritated perhaps by the gentleman's tone. "It wasn't worth telling. What has a shovel to do with this case?"

"Who knows? I've often preached, Blachford, the value of the *little* things. The whole truth might hang on a vanished shovel."

"Nonsense. This old man forgot where he left it."

"No, sah!" Tom exclaimed with great emphasis. "Deed I didn't forget whar I put it. I lef' it der beside de buildin' because I was goin' to do some diggin' early next mornin' and I says to myself I'll leave dis shovel right heah——"

"And where and when did you find it, Tom?" Mr. Teazle asked.

"Didn't find it till dis mornin'—and der it was layin' out in de wea'der in de dahlia bed clean on de oder side of de house. And Ah says——"

"And *Ah* says," Teazle interrupted—making some little sport of Tom, I fancy—"this may be the most important clew we've found yet. Why does any one take a shovel? To dig. Why would a murderer want to dig? To hide evidence, of course—I don't think he carried this ghastly crime to the ghastly length of digging a grave, although it would be just like him. Tom, have you seen where anybody has been digging about the grounds?"

"No, sah."

"Then, Blachford, let's get busy."

Duties called me away but for an hour the detectives searched through the grounds and the gardens; and at last their efforts were rewarded with success. Tom told me later that in one of the dahlia beds—near the place Tom had found the shovel—they saw traces of recently disturbed earth, and digging they unearthed certain material that Tom thought to be part of a man's wardrobe. Just what this meant to them I was not to know for some time.

I served their dinner about seven; but they did not tell me the result of the day's research. I could see, however, that both gentlemen were somewhat excited. Although it is not my practice to attempt to overhear the conversations of a guest I did hear a single scrap of conversation that has its place in this narrative. "So the old negress sent it because she hated and feared Moody, eh?" Blachford said.

"Yes. She liked neither him nor his friend, the doctor—she thought that they had designs on her beloved mistress."

I went to my room early and too tired to read retired to bed shortly after nine. The day's excitement had worn me out and it seemed scarcely a moment before I was asleep. Just what wakened me, two hours later, I was never fully to know. I believe it was simply one of those half wakenings common to men in their latter years—a moment's semiconsciousness wherein the body seeks a new position. But presently I found my consciousness quickening and my eyes fastened on the long streak of moonlight on the floor, poured in through the narrow rift between the shade and the casement.

A slow wakening is always fearful. Things take shape slowly; the mind turns through weird and eerie fancies before it emerges into everyday consciousness. I found myself staring here and there about the room.

The preceding night I had slept fairly well, the sleep of deep fatigue, but I found my nerves on edge to-night. And presently I heard a very subdued, metallic sound in the region of my door.

"It is my latch," I thought. Yet I did not want to believe that it was; that the ghost of the corridor was abroad again. It was a great relief to me that the door was securely locked. Surely, I thought, my imagination had tricked me; and I listened, straining, for further sounds.

I was not disappointed. No one, looking for mystery at Roadturn, ever seemed to be disappointed. Presently I heard rather quiet steps as some one walked down the corridor and entered the room immediately adjoining mine.

I was not asleep and dreaming; this much was sure. I listened, straining, and some one moved heavy objects about and laid them with almost imperceptible sounds of concussion on the floor. Something dropped with a loud report—it sounded like a heavy

book—but somewhat to my surprise there ensued no long period of silence thereafter. Evidently this intruder was indifferent as to whether I heard him or not.

But it was not the footsteps, back and forth across the room, or the sounds of falling, sliding, heavy things that stirred and dismayed me the most. It was an odd whirling sound, somewhat metallic—exactly the same dim sound as I had heard that unforgettable night, my first night at Roadturn.

Was this intruder the same that I had followed through the halls, that had slain old Tom's dog at my threshold and had attacked me in my room? The steps were bolder, not so furtive as before, but that queer, humming whirl, so hushed and soft that a man might confuse it with the whirl of his own thoughts in his brain was not possible to mistake. For a long moment I lay motionless, hardly breathing, in the big bed—and I tried to decide what my course should be.

It was a queer moment; an uneasy, creepy moment. Soon I knew there was no safety in lying here in the darkness. No room in the house was sacred to that night prowler. I got up softly, and turned on the light—rather hoping, I am afraid, that he would see the beam under the door and go away. But I still heard him fumbling about in the next room.

I moved across the room and secured a heavy water pitcher; a woman's weapon, perhaps, yet not to be scorned in the arms of a man. I did not try to walk silently now, and I felt sure that the man in the next room would hear my steps. Yet he continued his mysterious activities. Presently I started to open the door.

Surely, I thought, he would hear and heed the turn of the latch. And now, as I stood ~~on~~ my threshold, I saw that the door of the study adjacent to my room was open wide and the light was streaming through. I stepped to the doorway and peered in.

Then I felt embarrassment at my own fear. Surrounded by books that he had taken from their shelves and strewn about on the floor stood the great detective, Mr. Teazle, and he was working with the dial of a small wall safe that had been concealed by a row of tomes.

"Hello, there, Tubal," he greeted me. "Sorry I woke you up. Would you mind going down to see if Miss Alice has the combination to this safe?"

No wonder I stared at him. He spoke as casually as if he were asking for bread at dinner. The lateness of the hour, the unusual nature of his activities and the sight of me in my night garments seemed to affect him not one way or another.

"Surely, sir," I told him when I had caught my breath. "But I believe it doubtful, sir, that she knows the safe is there."

"Extremely so—but it won't hurt to try. Bring Blachford too. And say, Tubal"—he looked up at me with a brilliant smile as I turned to go—"the man who concealed this safe was a crackajack."

I thought at first that he meant a safe cracker but soon I realized that this was just his droll way of speaking of a very shrewd and astute gentleman. "Topping, was he?" I suggested.

"Very, very topping, if I may say so. Ripping, in fact. He put that safe behind a panel and that panel behind a massive row of books labeled 'Selections from the World's Best Literature.' And he could rest assured they would never be disturbed."

CHAPTER XIV.

I could hardly dress for nervousness and my voice shook with excitement for all my effort to speak casually when I called through the door to Miss Moody. "The detective has found a wall safe in the study upstairs that he thinks has some connection with the crime," I told her. "Do you know the combination of it?"

"I didn't even know the existence of it," she replied when she understood my question. Her sweet voice ceased and the deep silence that dropped down indicated that some portentous thought had come to her. "Tubal, I don't know the combination but I believe I know where we can find it. I remember noticing a safe combination in one of father's old notebooks but supposed it was one of his office safes. I have all his papers—it might prove to be just what you want."

She groped through a drawer of old records and papers that she kept in her room. Fortune was with us to-night and in a very short time she found the entry that she sought. Then she rang for Rose and we all accompanied Blachford up to the study, and even I, merely a servant in the house, felt some degree of excitement as to what that hidden stronghold might contain.

I did not feel that I was intruding; Miss Moody, unable to see herself, was anxious for both Rose and myself to go, perhaps to protect her interests when the safe was searched. We found Teazle almost hopping about the room in excitement.

"There's one chance in six, I suppose, of this being the right combination—but we'll give it a try," he said. "If it isn't we'll simply have to wait for to-morrow and a professional safe cracker. Blachford, why weren't you ever a burglar? If I were going to train myself for a detective again I'd first take a few lessons in crime."

He talked as he moved the dial back and forth. It made a very curious humming sound and I recognized it unmistakably as the sound heard those first, mysterious nights at Roadturn. "Six," he said, "back to four, forward to eighteen—and now we've either failed or—"

But the mechanism creaked and the safe came open beneath his hand.

I saw his intent face in the room light as he peered within. Though the door was small, the safe itself was quite large. Swiftly he drew its contents into the light.

There was no gold or jewels, no securities or valuable papers. At first even Mr. Teazle looked bewildered at the strange, gruesome assortment of things that he had brought forth. There was what looked to be a man's linen shirt, almost covered with great, dark stains; a long murderous-looking kitchen knife, tarnished and stained, and one torn and spotted glove.

Teazle laid the things on a small table and his eyes shone in his sharp, wizened face. We all stood silent, staring. Then as some great truth shot home Teazle glanced around at us with a dim smile.

"This almost completes our case," said he.

"Against whom?" Blachford asked him sharply. "Against Doctor Hardy?"

"Partly. But particularly against the most wicked, terrible, depraved criminal that I have ever had to deal with—Oswald Moody."

"But Oswald Moody was the victim rather than the criminal in this case."

"If you wish to call him that. Blachford—Miss Moody—I am a believer in the law and the courts, never in mob rule or in personal vengeance." He was speaking very soberly. "There was a crime a few nights ago—likely a sordid, vengeful crime—and

its full details have not yet been fully cleared up. I am an imaginative man—to that I owe my success—and I don't want to appear too sensational; yet I feel that Fate took a hand in that game on the hill-top. Somehow beyond my knowledge this crime of a few nights ago became the very agent of Fate, a grim, immutable, poetically just Fate; and Oswald Moody simply paid the penalty for his wickedness—as all men of his stamp must pay—on the gallows!"

When we were gathered in the library Teazle told us the story of the crime as near as he could work it out. It was a story, he said, of poetic justice—of where a desperate criminal's vengeful deed worked into the hands of a just, retributive fate. He was quite a little moved and stirred, I thought; he spoke quietly, almost casually, but his eyes flashed and the color grew and paled in his shrewd, eager face.

This was what he loved—the unfolding of a great mystery to a circle of eager hearers. The case was not yet, however, an open book; he confessed in the beginning that some details of the story still evaded him. "I've gone as far as I can," he said, "but it is not yet a perfect fabric. Some things I can only guess at; of the two men that could straighten me out, one, the victim, is dead; the other, the murderer, still at large. When the latter is captured, as he certainly soon will be, probably the points in doubt will be cleared up.

"We must begin nearly twenty years ago—with the last deed of violence that was committed in this old manor house. Most of you know that story; how George Moody was murdered, and James Crockitt, a young Englishman who worked as gardener or stable hand on the estate, was hanged for the crime. Crockitt was convicted, you remember, on circumstantial evidence—a stained knife and certain garments of his, also stained, were found in his possession. Oswald Moody furnished the court with the motive for the murder when he testified that his brother had spoken of his intention of discharging the young man.

"Not often, my friends, has there been such a miscarriage of justice in the courts of this country. Crockitt did not murder George Moody. The true murderer was his wicked, depraved, avaricious brother, the actor Oswald Moody, who died on the gallows two nights ago.

"The murderer made his plan with the deliberate intention of fastening the crime upon the young stable hand. He procured a knife belonging to him, as well as some of his garments, stained them with blood either from a small cut in his own body or from some fowl or rabbit blood, and secreted them among the young man's things. These things, uncovered by the detectives after a diligent search, convicted young Crockitt of the crime.

"Yet there was some genuine evidence, after the crime, that Oswald had to destroy to protect himself. There was the knife used in the crime and certain garments that—as almost always happens in a knife murder—became stained. Unquestionably Oswald had plans made to destroy these immediately; possibly in the furnace, perhaps some other way. Those plans must have gone wrong. For some reason I can't be sure of—perhaps a knock on the door or some other interruption—Oswald was obliged to conceal the things temporarily, with the idea of returning at the first opportunity and destroying them utterly.

"Oswald's first great mistake was not using young Crockitt's knife and wearing his clothes when he actually committed the crime. The reason he didn't, of course relying instead on substitution, was that he feared he would have no opportunity to conceal them among Crockitt's things in the interval between the murder and the time of its discovery. His second mistake—if indeed it was not an unavoidable circumstance—was to hide his own evidence instead of immediately destroying it.

"I have quite a little story worked out how this hiding occurred—whether or not it is wholly true no man alive to-day can say. We can feel sure that the motive for this cold-blooded murder was Oswald's greed for his brother's estate. Oswald was a more or less successful actor but he was luxury loving to a great degree, and this, combined with an absolute lack of morals—his unredeemed wickedness, if you will—was a dangerous trait. He never doubted for a moment but that the courts would appoint him executor of the estate and the guardian of George Moody's infant daughter, Alice; and unquestionably he would have been so appointed had it not been that George made other arrangements in his will. As guardian and executor he soon could have obtained the estate, either through

fraud or, which would be simpler, the murderer of the child.

"It seems hard to believe that he would descend to this. It is getting to be a common belief among sentimental people that all bad men have much good in them, and all good men some bad—and perhaps that is true—in books. If Oswald Moody had any good in him I do not know where it was concealed. If capability of deliberate cold-blooded murder is complete condemnation for a man there are all too many thoroughly wicked men in the world—this is not alone my belief but simply a matter of record of our courts. Oswald Moody unquestionably had every intention of destroying his infant ward.

"But his brother left a will! Undoubtedly he had not altogether trusted his brother Oswald and much to every one's surprise he had drawn up a perfectly legal document making his dead wife's brother his daughter's guardian and executor of the estate. It may have been that Oswald suspected the existence of the will and it was part of his plan to destroy it; otherwise I cannot explain his presence at the wall safe immediately after the crime.

"I can picture him, friends. In one hand he held his brother's notebook, likely taken from his body—containing the combination of the wall safe. In the other arm he had certain gruesome evidence of the murder—a stained linen shirt, a glove, a reddened knife. He sped running to the wall safe—why, unless he was seeking his brother's will, I cannot guess—and from thence he intended to carry out his plan of destroying the grisly evidence. As the safe lay open before him there came the interruption—the unlooked-for, unanticipated incident!

"Remember, this is only a guess on my part. Clews that would prove it are lost in the mist of the past. But I do know that instead of destroying the guilty things he was forced to cram them into the wall safe and lock the door!

"To-night I found them. The laundry mark, unchanged in the years, prove them definitely as the property of Oswald Moody.

"He didn't get a chance, at once, to regain his property. Certainly he lost the notebook—probably left it among his brother's things for fear it might be found on his person—and either forgot or lost the combination. Those must have been days of terror for him; he knew that if those ob-

jects were found he would in all probability be convicted of the murder. The presence of detectives as well as Boggs, the new guardian and executor, kept him from blowing the safe or from making any other effort to regain the evidence. He feared the safe was fireproof so he dared not set fire to the house. Likely it was not until some days had passed and he began to realize that he alone knew of the existence of the wall safe that he began to feel somewhat more secure. Of course he could never feel absolutely secure as long as those guilty objects were upon the face of the earth.

"The new executor was an alert man and Moody soon despaired of either getting his hands on the estate or regaining his hidden property. He went back to the stage and in the years that I followed he fell in with another desperate criminal. What they had in common, what dread adventures they had had together I cannot tell you—I may be able to tell you in a few days more. The time came at last that Oswald fell into troubled, evil days—he was stricken with paralysis, he could no longer get engagements, and we can feel sure that his appointment as executor and Miss Moody's guardian—at Boggs' death—came as a great relief.

"He came here and he brought his friend with him. This friend called himself Doctor Hardy—it was Oswald's plan to use him in getting hold of the estate. Introducing him as a retired specialist Oswald was able to make him free of the house so that he could run his master's errands, keep him company and carry out his evil plans. There is no doubt, now, that it was this depraved man's evil intention to permanently blind his niece. Her eyes grew steadily worse under Hardy's treatment; the evil work has been stopped none too soon. The specialist that called this afternoon and examined the girl's eyes was not able to tell with what drug or acid this fake doctor had been treating her; but he did say that had the 'treatments' continued a few more weeks she would undoubtedly have been permanently blinded; and as it is weeks and months of care and treatment will be necessary before her eyes are strong as ever.

"Wicked and desperate scheme that it was it would have worked perfectly into his plans. You see, Miss Moody was practically of age, soon to begin to manage her

own affairs; but he would be able to continue as her guardian and trustee if she were blind. It meant nothing less than veritable ownership of the estate. He thought also that blindness would prevent her marriage—that either she would not allow herself to become a burden to Turner or that Turner himself would refuse to go through with the match. He feared Turner—marriage would take the girl out of his reach. It was because of this that he got Doctor Hardy to order that the girl and Turner be kept apart.

"Doctor Hardy was used further in an attempt to regain the evidence Oswald had hidden in the wall safe—evidence that still disturbed his dreams at night. Undoubtedly he would have succeeded in time—he would have worked out the combination or taken some more desperate means, such as blowing with dynamite. It was Doctor Hardy, Tubal, whom you heard in the corridors, who killed your dog and who twirled the dial of the safe in the room adjoining yours. He had an idea at one time that he might reach the safe from the rear, that there might be some sliding panel that would let him in to the interior, and that is why he came into your room that night, knocking you unconscious so that he could make his search. For the same reason Oswald Moody opposed your having that room. It is possible, also, that you heard Turner downstairs, making surreptitious visits to his sweetheart.

"It did not take me long to run down that wall safe, after you had put me on the trail. You heard some one searching and while it is true that I supposed they were looking for treasure—gold or jewels or securities—I thought it worth while to investigate. Room measurements showed too thick a wall between the two rooms. The rest was easy.

"And now comes the strangest part of this strange story. It is the further part that Doctor Hardy played in it—a part that was not written in the play. We don't as yet know much about Doctor Hardy. Personally I am convinced that he is a famous crook known to the police as 'Frisco' Hunt—a man whose specialty was posing as a doctor. And for some reason that I hope soon to know Doctor Hardy hated his employer like a poisonous snake.

"I'm afraid this will take a psychologist, rather than a detective, to trace down. The

story likely had its beginnings long ago—perhaps some unforgotten injury, some obscure crime in which Hardy thought that Moody had played him false. It is a strange thing to contemplate, this deathly hatred running through the years, all the time that they were so closely and intimately associated. It might be that Doctor Hardy was half mad—that there was some queer twist to his criminal mind that only a great alienist could explain—and his particular obsession was the gallows. Possibly the gallows had cast its shadow over his own life, till he lived in terror of them and hanging was thus the natural fate that his fancy prescribed for his enemies.

"This is, of course, mostly conjecture. In all probability we can clear it up when Doctor Hardy is caught. Let me say here, to prevent misjudgment of an able detective, that Blachford made every effort from the first to arrest him. Although he wasn't entirely convinced of his guilt the fact that Hardy had been present here the night of the murder was enough to arouse suspicion; and all the machinery of the law was instantly set in motion. When it was discovered that he had no telephone or mail address it made his guilt all the more likely. Blachford, hoping to facilitate his capture, was careful to keep him from knowing he was under suspicion—keeping his name from all newspaper accounts of the murder and not emphasizing it at the inquest. Mr. Blachford, I will say, has more than lived up to his reputation as a thorough and able secret-service man."

Blachford beamed in spite of himself. Undoubtedly this praise was beyond the value of gold and silver to him. Good work done and a word of appreciation; what does life hold more than this?

"We've got a pretty clear case against Doctor Hardy right now," Mr. Teazle went on. "We do not believe he had associates. He was a powerful man and he played a lone-wolf game all the way through—rendering his victim unconscious with a hypodermic of drugs, carrying him in his strong arms to the gallows, binding and blindfolding him in the manner used in the penitentiary death chambers, thrusting him up on the platform and pushing him through the broken trap. It looks like the work of a madman—the thoroughness of it all—or else some idealist whose relentless, whose immutable purpose and iron resolve,

resemble madness. Perhaps they are the same. Surely only a madman's strength could have lifted that two-hundred-pound man up onto that unstable platform and dropped him to his death. As soon as he completed the execution he came back here, took his professional-appearing clothes and buried them, and then donned such other garments as he had prepared for his flight—probably the garb of a laborer. He won't be easy to trace; he probably has shaved off his beard or it was false in the beginning; and no one seems to have a very clear idea of his face, probably because no one saw him except in the darkened halls. However, we have high hopes of running him down.

"We found his clothes where he had buried them—we have identified them beyond doubt. In their pocket we found Doctor Hardy's hypodermic needle with which he administered the drugs. I have found a few threads from his suit where he climbed the barbed-wire fence leading to the gallows, unquestionably with his unconscious victim in his arms. There is no evidence whatever against the other two suspects, Rose and Paul Turner. One was a zealous colored mammy, trying to frighten with an anonymous letter a man whom she instinctively feared; the other a romantic lover to whom even the threat of his sweetheart's blindness was not a barrier."

Thus he finished his story. We went at last to our rooms and the days resumed their tranquil course. The wall safe was empty now so I no longer wakened out of a deep sleep to hear the mysterious footfall in the corridor or that queer, dim whirl of the dial. The time neared when Mr. Turner and Miss Moody should marry and go on their long honeymoon, bringing my service at Roadturn to an end; and now it would seem they would have to leave, before all the last, doubtful points of the mystery were cleared up. Although the police of many cities looked zealously and long, Doctor Hardy had not yet been brought to justice.

And this brings me to the epilogue.

The reason that the old gallows was never destroyed, after the jail burned, was because a man who lived in a foreign country

thought that some time he might have need of it. The ground on which it stood was bought that that gallows might be preserved—for purposes of justice.

The reason why Doctor Hardy was never found was because he never existed. Oswald Moody was Doctor Hardy—they were one and the same. Moody only pretended paralysis the better to carry out his criminal purposes without suspicion; and to a man of his nature it did not come hard to lie in a great bed, surrounded by every luxury, and be waited upon—particularly since he could roam where he wished when the house was still at night. He would simply don his physician's garb, go out his back door, lock it and come in through the front. He had insured himself by his string latch and pretense of eccentricity that he would never be caught. He was an actor and this impersonation naturally appealed to him.

The murderer did not have to carry his great weight to the gallows. He led him there on the pretense of overseeing the secret meeting of Mr. Turner and Miss Moody, and he got him to climb up on the platform of the gallows to overlook the field beneath. Then he drugged him temporarily with an injection in his arm, bound him, blindfolded him like the guilty murderer he was, stripped from him the guise of the doctor that had been penetrated almost from the first, tied the hangman's noose about his head and then waited for him to waken. When the victim had come fully to consciousness and had full time to realize that he had met his rightful fate at last, his slayer cast him down.

This is more than an account of the crime; it is a confession. I am adding this postscript as I lie in my last sickness, not to be read until I am beyond the accusation of mortal tongue. The shadow that the old negress saw against my window shade the hour of the crime, and which established my alibi, was but that of a dummy, a manikin of old clothes with a book propped in front. The slayer of that cruel and wicked criminal, Oswald Moody, was the author of this confession, the man who for long years has been known as Tubal Small.

James Crockitt, unjustly hanged, was my son.

Look for more of Edison Marshall's work in coming issues.



Crab Doran's Haven

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "The Red-headed Umbrella," "The Bomb-proof Horse," Etc.

So long as you find what you want it doesn't make much difference where you find it.

CRAB" DORAN lifted his right arm and bunched his biceps. The loose sleeve of his baseball shirt bulged appreciably. He patted the lump of muscle admiringly with a horny left hand, then he lowered the arm into the reach of Matt McCoy, the rotund little manager of the Red Legs.

"Feel that, Matt," he invited.

McCoy obligingly gave the big arm a little pinch.

"I know you're strong, Crab," he admitted, "but—"

"And looka here," bade Crab, interrupting.

He drew the arm away, raised that and the left one above his head for a moment, and then, flexing his knees, leaped suddenly backward, turning an aerial somersault and landing lightly on his feet.

McCoy grinned at the demonstration.

"You're lively enough too, Crab," he admitted. "Some acrobat. But it ain't a circus I'm runnin'—it's a ball club."

"And here," cried Crab, diving for a baseball which lay on the turf a few feet away. Capturing the sphere, he gripped it for a moment, then took a little run forward and let fly with it in the general direction of the center-field bleachers.

"Show me a guy you got who can make a throw like that!" challenged Crab as the ball rolled to rest within a few feet of the fence. Then, before McCoy could com-

ment: "Where's there a bat?" he growled, looking around him. "Bring all them star pitchers of yours over here in a bunch! Let 'em take turns pitchin' to me and I'll betcher any part of ten bucks there ain't one of 'em can strike me out by three o'clock!"

"Maybe you're right, Crab," admitted McCoy, "but the point is—"

"Huh!" grunted Crab. "Bring your whole damn team over here and let 'em stand up to me one by one! If I can't lick 'em all, I'll eat my shoes—spikes and all! Well?" he demanded when McCoy's answer to the defi was merely an amused, tolerant grin. "Why don't you do somethin' about it? I'm givin' you a chance to show me up—if what you say about me's true. Huh!" he snorted sourly as McCoy's grin widened. "I might 'a' knowed you was just jobbin' me! Tyin' the can to me to give that baby-faced college kid my job! I'm as good as I ever was and it's you that knows it! And I guess there's other people knows it too! I'll lay you a little bet there's seven clubs in this league that would be glad to have me!"

"You'd lose, Crab," said McCoy gently. "All seven of them have passed you up already. You've been offered in exchange to every manager in the league and not one bite did I get. They all said the same thing—you were great in your day but you ain't big league any more."

"They're crazy!" roared Crab, not a whit downcast by what McCoy believed would be a disheartening, flattening piece of news to him. "I got more'n any other guy in the league! Why, I could——"

"Listen, Crab," interrupted McCoy. "I'm tryin' to break the bad news to you as gently as I can. I don't like to let you go but I got to do it. You've been no good to us all season. In fact, I'd have given you the poke last year only your contract had another year to go. Be a sport about it, why don't you, and take your medicine? You've had a good run—sixteen years in the big show. You've been paid good money. You've made a lot of friends while you've been with the club. But you've got old, Crab. The game has become too fast for you. I know just how you feel; it's the way I felt myself when Danny Rand hauled me in from shortstop one day after I'd been there twelve years and showed me a nice place on the bench where I could sit until he'd wished me onto some manager who wasn't as smart as he was."

"But you was *through* then," objected Crab. "Everybody knew it. I knew it and I was only a kid in my first season with the club. With me, though, it's different. I'm as good to-day, better even, than I was when——"

"The old story!" broke in McCoy sadly. "When a feller's slippin' he's always the last to realize it himself. You've been on the slide for a couple of years, Crab. Shucks! You ought to expect it; you're thirty-seven or eight if you're a day. You ain't a wreck exactly," he said, surveying Crab's stalwart form critically. "That little circus stunt you just pulled would prove that. But you've slowed up—even though you prob'ly feel as good as you ever did. That heave you made to the fence a little while ago—it was a long throw, Crab, but by the time you got set to make it a fast runner would have been halfway round the bases. See what I mean?"

"Ahr, it's a lot o' bunk!" scowled Crab angrily. "I can——"

"Crab, you can't!" snapped McCoy. "Whatever it is you were goin' to say—you can't do it! You never were as good as you thought you were—just a good, steady, dependable feller whose worst faults were a dirty temper and a swelled head. And now you ain't steady and dependable enough for the big time. You can prob'ly

get by in the minors all right if you take care of yourself, quit beelin' about how good you are and cut out lookin' for excuses to poke people in the face."

"I can prob'ly get by in the minors?" repeated Crab, putting his fists on his hips and glaring at McCoy belligerently. "Say, how d'you get that way? Why, I'm——"

"Well, whatever you are, Crab," said McCoy, ending the argument, "you'll show them in Newark. They need an outfielder there and they think you'll fill the bill. You report there day after to-morrow, so you'd better be gettin' your things together."

Thus passed Crab Doran from big-league baseball. If McCoy's method of presenting his passport to Crab may have seemed a little cold—heartless even—the fact was due entirely to the little manager's knowledge of the man with whom he was dealing and reflected in nowise McCoy's personal feelings in the matter. Actually, appending the well-known can to Crab caused McCoy a distinct pang. Crab was in a great measure a development of McCoy's own and he was the last survivor of the old guard of Red Legs, those dating back to the stout little manager's own playing days. But certain exigencies had left McCoy with no course open to him except to send Crab on his way, and if he conveyed the sad tidings to the veteran player with a frankness that amounted almost to cruelty it was only because he knew that any display on his part of the sentiment which such an occasion seemed to warrant would strike no responsive chord in the breast of the hard, crabbed, vain and self-sufficient campaigner he was selling downriver.

For Crab, as might be inferred from the colloquy just detailed, was an odd and difficult person. Never anything more than the "good, steady, dependable feller" which McCoy had styled him, he had ever believed himself to be the one outstanding star of all baseball history, an opinion which he was always prepared to back with tongue or fist. His own estimate of himself was substantiated neither by the records nor by the esteem of the home-town fans. In fact, he was decidedly unpopular among the latter, due to his surly, ill-natured manner on and off the field. But whatever his personal failings he possessed two attributes which had made him a decidedly useful member of McCoy's outfit. One was his passion for baseball, which he considered by long odds

the most important form of human endeavor, the other his belligerent crabbedness, which kept him constantly fighting and striving, no matter how bleak and hopeless the outlook might be.

Oddly enough it was the very qualities which had made Crab a valued soldier in McCoy's little army which hastened his departure for the minors. Had Crab ever evidenced an aptitude or liking for anything besides playing ball McCoy might have retained him as an assistant manager, coach, or in some similar capacity. But a lengthy consideration of that proposition convinced McCoy that in any position of that sort Crab would be worse than useless, because he was first, last and exclusively a ball player. Also, as McCoy had once told a baseball writer, he "played the game by ear." In other words, his playing, brilliant though it was at times, was a matter of natural aptitude and instinct for doing the right thing at the right time on a ball field, not of skill acquired through hard, painstaking effort. McCoy had amplified this statement by asserting that Crab knew as much baseball on the first day his eye fell on a bat as he did after six years in the league. So if, as McCoy maintained, neither tutoring nor coaching could add a single cubit to Crab's baseball stature, neither was it possible for Crab to pass along to others the secrets of a technique which he undoubtedly possessed but which he could no more have analyzed and explained than he could have elucidated the process by which thoughts flashed across the brain. So that let Crab out as a possible lieutenant to McCoy, even had the little manager been able to convince himself that a sour-tempered egotist who always carried a chip on his shoulder was a fit person to put in charge of others. And since, outside of awarding him an out-and-out pension, which McCoy was certain Crab would have refused, there was no other way of keeping the slipping veteran on the pay roll, Crab began the descent, usually a precipitous one, which leads to baseball oblivion.

II.

"Stump" Hobart, a stocky, enthusiastic ex-infielder of about Crab's own age, who had stepped down from the big leagues a couple of seasons before, was earning his managerial spurs by his whole-souled efforts to lodge the Newark team in the first divi-

sion of the International League. He greeted Crab effusively when the latter reported to him.

"Glad to have you with us, Crab!" he declared. "Seems like old times to see your handsome mug again. We've got a great little club here. No pennant this year maybe, but we'll sure make the grade next season. You ought to last that long," he observed thoughtfully, studying Crab narrowly.

"Hah!" gasped Crab. "I ought to—say, what d'you mean?"

"Why, you ought to be good for another year of baseball," said Hobart easily. "Feelin' pretty good for an old feller, ain't you?"

"Old feller! Feelin' pretty good!" gulped Crab.

"Hell, you ain't no milk-fed spring chicken!" grinned Hobart. "But you're doin' pretty good at that," he murmured admiringly, "to be as spry as you are at your age."

"Say, looka here!" bellowed Crab, now thoroughly angry. "I'm as good as I ever was! I'm——"

"That's the way to talk!" approved Hobart. "That's my old man's system. He's past seventy but the way he talks and acts you'd think he was a youngster of sixty, say. He's got himself so well kidded that he——"

"Kidded!" sputtered Crab. "There ain't no kiddin' about what I'm tellin' you! Lemme get into a uniform and I'll show you somethin'! Cripes, you're almost as bad as McCoy! Why, would you believe it, Stump, that boob kept me on the bench almost all season? Me—on the bench! He used me for pinch hittin' and——"

"You ought to be tickled to death that he let you do that," declared Hobart. "You could hardly expect to hold on to your old left-field job with a youngster like Tod Winters around."

"College kid!" growled Crab.

"And, except for the college part, about the same kind of a kid that Cobb was, breakin' in. Well, you'll find it a little different here, Crab. Not that you're goin' to have any cinch," interposed Hobart hastily. "We play almost as fast ball as the big boys. But you won't find so many crowdin' you for your job."

"Crowdin'—me? On a bush-league team?" grunted Crab.

"Say, lay off that kind o' stuff, you!" bade Hobart. "There's nothin' bush about my bunch. Take a tumble to yoursell, won't you, Crab, and call yourself darned lucky that I'm givin' you the chance to grab off a season's pay before you step down altogether."

"It'll be more than a season before I step down," predicted Crab ill-naturedly.

"I hope so," declared Hobart heartily. "Your job's good with me as long as you can deliver. But you want to remember," he warned, "that past performances won't earn your salary. The people in this town don't care how good you were in your prime. They can hop over to New York and see the best in the world any day they care to. So we've got to give 'em baseball or else shut up shop. All right, Crab, let's get over to the ball yard."

Hobart might have spared himself admonishing Crab to give the Newark team his best efforts. Crab was temperamentally incapable of doing anything else. His heart and soul were wrapped up in baseball and he would have thrown himself into an impromptu game on the sand lots with the same vigor he might have shown in the deciding contest of a world's series. So neither Stump Hobart, nor the men of his team, nor the local newspapers, nor those who kept the game going by their contributions at the gate could offer the slightest complaint about the manner in which Newark's new left fielder went about the task of holding down his job. The only thing was—and it wasn't long before the newspapers were commenting on it—Crab's ambitions somehow seemed entirely disproportionate with his capabilities.

On his first afternoon with the team, for example, there was a matter of one misjudged fly, a wild throw which let in two runs, an unsuccessful and entirely inadvised attempt to steal second, and three strike-cuts in four times at bat to Crab's discredit. Stump Hobart, who knew something about human nature, wisely refrained from offering to Crab even so much as a reproachful look. And he was not surprised when Crab took him aside and presented his alibi about as follows:

"It's like this, Stump. I didn't do so good this afternoon, but that's McCoy's fault. See, I ain't played a full game since down South this spring. And you know how it is, Stump, a feller kind o' gets his hand

out when he don't do things regular. See, McCoy's kept me sittin' on the bench all season, and not playin' regular; well, you know how it is, Stump. Besides, that kid that was pitchin' for them birds, he had everything. You noticed it, didn't you, Stump?"

"Sure!" lied Stump amiably, stifling a very natural desire to mention the fact that the pitcher who had everything had been bombarded from the mound and that the Newark team, despite the handicap of having Crab in the line-up, had won the game by a score twelve to three.

"I'll be all right in a couple o' days," predicted Crab. "I'm feelin' fine," he declared, although lines of weariness were plain to be seen on his rugged face, especially around his deep-set eyes. "Notice how the old whip was workin' to-day?" he asked, raising his right arm and moving it back and forth.

"I'll say I did!" asserted Stump, though he thought of the wild heave that had rung up two tallies for the visitors.

"And that time I got caught stealin'," continued Crab. "That was robbery; I was safe by a mile. And that horse thief of an empire never could 'a' took it away from me only one o' my spikes come loose while I was runnin' and it slowed me up enough to make it a close decision."

"Hard luck!" commented Stump sympathetically.

"That fly I missed too," said Crab. "That was a tough one. I stepped down a hole just after I started to run back."

"I'll have the groundkeeper fill it up before to-morrow's game," promised Hobart.

"To-morrow I ought to be right in my stride," declared Crab.

"Hope so," muttered Hobart shortly.

But "to-morrow"—and a whole string of succeeding days—failed to show Crab Doran in anything that remotely resembled his stride of former years. He did not repeat his sorry exhibition of the first day, it is true, but neither did he improve over that showing sufficiently to vindicate Hobart's opinion that there was still a season or two of fast baseball in Crab's aging body. He hit fairly well, for it is always the old batting eye which is the last relic of a passing player's greatness. His fielding was passable, so far as the proportion of accepted chances to errors was concerned. He played the game every second he was on the field.

But he had lost something that was not quite definite; something in speed, something in daring, something in that peculiar intangible quality called "class."

Crab himself did not realize that he was lacking. In his own opinion, which he went to no pains to hide, he was still the super-player and had been relegated to a minor league team through the stupidity and incompetency of certain persons who ought to have known better. Had he been willing to listen to his fellow players on the Newark team he might have been put straight, for they, of course, rode him, anyway, attempted to ride him, unmercifully for his shortcomings. But Crab didn't listen. Either he affected to be quite oblivious of the very existence of his teammates—as he believed befitting a star thrown by circumstances into close association with a lot of bushers—or else, when the comments of the others became too broad to be disregarded, he met them with an argument which his tormentors soon discovered to be unanswerable—namely, his fists. For though Crab may have slowed up on the ball field his prowess in rough-and-tumble combat had suffered no eclipse, a fact to which the most warlike of the younger members of the Newark team were soon ready to offer the eloquent testimony of respectful silence.

But it was not as a battler that Stump Hobart had sought Crab and so, coincident with his receipt of his first month's salary from the Newark club, the former major leaguer got his walking papers. He stormed, he fumed, he threatened, he offered to demonstrate on Stump Hobart's own person the fact that physically he was as good as ever. Hobart, though, was obdurate. There was no percentage, he said in effect, in holding on his team a player who not only was not delivering the goods on the diamond but by his brawling and rowing was wreaking havoc on the morale of the other men and by his ill-natured demeanor on the field was irritating and displeasing the cash customers of the club.

And the interview ended with Crab packing his trunk and departing in quest of a new berth.

III.

Matt McCoy read of Crab's failure to stick with Newark and shook his head sadly.

"He's gone back even further than I thought," he told Joe Tooker, second base-

man and field captain of his team. "If he couldn't make good for Stump Hobart I guess his baseball days are over for sure."

"Too bad," murmured Tooker, whose own star was beginning to set and who could in consequence sympathize with Crab.

"Wish I could have done somethin' for him," said McCoy, "but he ain't like you, Joe. When he's through as a player he's through in everything. Every brain he has is in his hands and feet. I got to keep in touch with him, though," he decided. "Baseball's all he's good for. I know he ain't got any too much jack saved up—it would be a shame to let a helpless feller like him roam around without holdin' some kind of a string on him."

So McCoy sat down and wrote a letter to Crab in care of the Newark club, bidding the cast-off to have no hesitancy in calling on him for anything in his power to give. There was no longer a job with the Red Legs for Crab as a player, McCoy wrote, but if he would swallow his pride it was quite likely that an agreeable and fairly lucrative position could be found for him with the groundkeeper's staff or in some similar department of the club.

This offer, of course, McCoy made from the kindest of motives, but Crab's reply, which came about a month later from a little town in the Far West, was a scathing, withering, abusive missive which caused the fat little manager to entertain thoughts of mayhem and murder for a full quarter hour after his first perusal of it. McCoy, wrote Crab in plain, misspelled words of one syllable each, could go to a much warmer place than any he was likely to visit during a midsummer swing around the National League circuit. Crab wasn't asking no charity from him or nobody else. McCoy had done him dirt once in railroading him out of the league at the very height of his powers; he wasn't going to be no such simp as to fall for any scheme of McCoy's to humiliate him further by making him exercise a rake and spade on the same grounds where kids he'd learned the game to was drawing big dough for playing ball! He'd be back in the league next season but McCoy could take a long running jump for himself before he'd ever be coaxed back with the Red Legs. He'd already started his comeback, because everybody out in Henryville in the Three Star League where he was playing regular was saying how them major-league

managers must be a lot of dumb-bells to let any such cyclonic marvel as himself out of their clutches. And he, Crab, had told them yes, they was; especially a red-headed fat guy named McCoy who couldn't pick a ball player out of a herd of sheep and who had put the skids under one Crab Doran because said Crab Doran knowed too much for him and was showing him up too regular.

There was more, but the above will probably give a general idea of Crab's reply. To McCoy's everlasting credit be it said that when his first anger passed he forgave Crab all the abuse the letter contained, registered a sincere hope that the projected comeback would be effected, and wrote to Crab repeating his offer of help though tactfully omitting any suggestion as to the form the help might take. He also asked Billy Gray, club secretary, to keep him informed about Crab's activities as they might be chronicled in the sporting press of the country, and instructed Steve King, the veteran scout of the Red Legs, to keep his eyes and ears alert for news of Crab as he toured the country.

Crab never got McCoy's second letter. The reason was that a day or so before the letter was delivered Crab parted company with the Henryville club and the Henryville club didn't bother to seek a forwarding address, Crab having departed too suddenly to furnish one, nor even to mail the unclaimed epistle back to its sender.

The circumstances under which Crab ceased to play ball in Henryville need not be related in too much detail. After observing Crab's work for a little more than a fortnight, Bill Rogers, a brawny, roughish person who both owned and managed the Henryville team, addressed Crab about as follows:

"Say, you! What d'you think I'm runnin' here—an old folks' home?"

"Why?" inquired Crab politely.

"Why?" repeated Rogers sarcastically. "Why, you limpin', crippled, fog-eyed, half-dead bum——"

And when Rogers came to his senses and recovered sufficiently to call for the loan of a gun Crab Doran was speeding eastward on a train which providentially paused at Henryville some ten minutes after his gnarled right fist had connected with Rogers' jaw.

Henryville was Crab's last stopping place in a baseball way for the rest of that season. He picked up a few ten-dollar bills, it is

true, by playing with semiprofessional teams on Sundays, but regular employment at the only trade with which he was familiar was not to be had and neither scanning the sporting pages nor inquiring from managers and players over the entire league circuit brought to Matt McCoy any knowledge of his whereabouts. To McCoy it seemed that Crab had accomplished the difficult feat of disappearing from the earth.

IV.

At the beginning of the next season Crab had annexed himself to the Mine Hill team of the Interstate League. Mine Hill was as much of a drop from Henryville as Henryville was from the Red Legs, but Crab took the job, when he got it, with a grateful feeling of relief. It had been a tough winter and even so small a salary as Mine Hill could afford to pay an outfielder was a welcome acquisition. As soon, however, as Crab began to eat regularly once more and to enjoy the other comforts which lack of funds had forced him to deny himself during the winter his feeling of gratitude departed and with it the humility which the young Mine Hill players had found admirable in a former big leaguer. He began again to boast, strut and quarrel, to find alibis for his mistakes, to resent the Mine Hill fans' exercise of their time-honored privilege to below at him from the stands.

And one day Joe Finch, the snappy third sacker who was manager and captain of the Mine Hill team, took Crab aside and said to him:

"Look here, Doran, you got to cut out that rough stuff you're pullin'. The people here won't stand for it. You might have been able to get away with that kind of bunk in the big league when you were *good*, but you want to remember that you're not good any more. There's six of us battin' better than you and your fieldin' is a joke. Why, there's a kid of sixteen playin' left field for Mine Hill High School that covers twice the ground you can. And I'll tell you this—he'd have your job, only his folks won't stand for him playin' professional ball."

For once in his life Crab permitted somebody to bawl him out at length without proving the other a liar by means of a well-directed swing for the chin. Finch's words struck him speechless, and all but paralyzed his limbs. He, Crab Doran, for sixteen years one of the conspicuous ornaments of

baseball, to be talked to like that by a callow busher, a hick, one who had never been east of the Alleghanies in his life, one who by his own admission had yet to see a major-league team in action! And the wind-up of Finch's reprimand! The statement that a sixteen-year-old schoolboy would be more valuable to the Mine Hill team than Crab Doran, who had figured in two world championships! Several seconds passed before Crab could speak and then the best that he could offer was a weak, mumbled statement regarding Finch's sanity.

"I'm this crazy," returned Finch easily. "I'll give you another week to pull yourself together, and if you can't do it, curtains for you! Get me?"

"You needn't wait no week," growled Crab. "Huh! You think I got to depend on you for a livin'? Why, I could step right back into the league to-morrow."

"That's why you've been playin' here for ninety a month," laughed Finch. "You needn't stay here any longer than you want to. I ain't the kind to stand in the way of a feller advancin' himself," he added sarcastically.

"I ought to punch you in the nose!" growled Crab.

"You ought to take a tumble to yourself and try to play ball and hold your job," said Finch patiently.

The youthful manager avoided prolongation of the argument at this juncture by walking away, leaving Crab in a boiling rage, anything but a desirable state of mind for one who had been ordered to show a sudden improvement in his work under pain of losing his job. For Finch had been entirely serious in announcing his intention of putting Crab on a week's probation. He proved it by firing Crab when the week was up.

Crab took the blow more or less meekly. That is to say he made no attempt to resent Finch's action by tearing the young manager limb from limb. He contented himself with informing Finch that he was making a mistake and departing in search of a manager who might be more appreciative of first-class baseball talent.

Crab's meekness was in no way indicative of the fact that he had at last read the writing on the wall and had reached no matter how reluctantly the same conclusion which others held regarding his ability as a ball player. On the contrary, Crab was as firmly

convinced as ever that on the diamond he was still a top-notch performer. But he had begun to question whether the failure of others to hold the same opinion was due so much to their stupidity as to the fact that Fate, after many years of kindness, had suddenly stacked the cards against him. It was a thought at once disturbing and consoling. Superstitious as are the majority of ball players, Crab knew how utterly futile it was to fight against the evil workings of a jinx. And yet if his failure to make good even with the lowliest bush teams was due solely to the fact that he was jinxed, was that not proof that he was right in his own estimate of his capabilities? Crab was sure that it was, and so, secure in his belief that the jinx would eventually leave him, he went on almost blithely from Mine Hill seeking a new place to display his talents.

Crab had four other jobs that season, and his maximum tenure was one month with the Perrytown team of the Central Valley League, an obscure six-club organization in a New England manufacturing district. An idea of the sort of outfit this was may be got from the fact that not more than a half dozen other players in the league were like Crab exclusively ball players. The rest were shop workers who came out for the games, played in the late afternoon and frequently terminated by darkness, after a hard day's work in some factory. But only one month was Crab Doran able to maintain the pace set by the factory hands.

Of Crab's other assignments for that season probably the less said the better. Each one of them was a step backward. In each one of them Crab failed to make the grade. The end of the season found him in a middle Western city picking up a precarious living by playing semipro ball there and in the suburbs. The reverses he had met since McCoy had sent him on from the Red Legs had made him more sullen than ever, more easily inflamed to fighting heat. Those who played with him rarely offered him a word of conversation, fearful that some unintentionally tactless word might drive him into a rage. The rowdy element among the spectators went out of its way to taunt him, enjoying his flights of temper and his occasional trips into the stands in search of those who had roared out something that was especially offensive. But Crab's vanity flourished as of yore. The lustiest blows of misfortune, the cruelest taunts of the

bleacherites, the frankest utterances of players and managers failed to convince him that he had fallen back a single step in baseball skill or physical prowess.

And during all this time McCoy searched in vain for any news of him.

V.

It was early in June of the next year that McCoy, perusing his morning newspaper, suddenly came upon an article which caused him to sit upright in his chair and utter an exclamation of amazement. The article was dated from a middle Western city and was as follows:

"CRAB" DORAN GETS LONG TERM FOR ASSAULT ON MAYOR.

Bernard—Crab—Doran, former major-league ball player, was to-day sentenced to five years in the State penitentiary by Judge Benson in the superior court here after being found guilty of assaulting Mayor Oliver of the town of Halehurst during the progress of a baseball game between the teams of Halehurst and Lakeside, played at the former place on Memorial Day. The trial consumed little more than an hour.

It was testified that Doran, who was playing left field on the Halehurst team, resented remarks made by Mayor Oliver, who is an ardent baseball fan and financially interested in the Halehurst team, and leaped into the grand stand to attack the mayor, who in court still bore marks of the beating he received at Doran's hands. Several friends of the mayor and two Halehurst policemen who went to his defense were severely handled by Doran before he was subdued.

Doran, who has been playing with semiprofessional teams since his big-league career ended about two years ago, offered no defense. Witnesses of the assault on the mayor agreed that the latter had called Doran nothing worse than a "poor old has-been."

"By the great horn spoon!" breathed McCoy when he had finished. "What a finish for Crab! Five years in the coop—it'll kill him, that's what! 'Offered no defense,' it says here," he mused, looking at the paper. "Wonder why not? Tain't like Crab to let them rush him off to jail without a battle. Let's see now," he murmured thoughtfully, "Memorial Day—that's May 30th; and here it's only the eighth of June and Crab's on his way to prison already, tried, convicted and sentenced! And the trial, it says here, took only an hour. By George," he breathed, jumping from his chair and folding up the newer paper, "there's the answer, right there! They *railroaded* him—never give him a

chance! Sure as I'm a foot high, that's it! This mayor he wallopéd had pull enough to tell the judge 'this bird rides,' and the judge had to send Crab travelin' for the limit! But, by cricky, they don't get away with it!" he ejaculated, striding heavily about his apartment as he searched for his hat. "Not while I've got any pull and any friends left they don't!"

He found his hat, sped to the street and calling a taxicab hurried to the office of the Mammoth Exhibition Company, which was the official name of the Red Legs. There he found J. K. Simmons, president of the club, a huge, hearty man with a great curling mustache of black and a fondness for flashy clothes and diamonds.

"J. K.," exclaimed McCoy, spreading the newspaper out on Simmons' desk and indicating the story about Crab, "we've got to do somethin' about this!"

He waited until Simmons had finished reading the article and looked up from the paper.

"You must know somebody out there," he said then, "somebody who can get Crab out. Five years is too much for a guy to get for doin' what Crab did, even if it was a mayor he wallopéd. Cripes, there's fellers climbin' up into the stands every year, right in big-league parks, and nothin' ever happens to them outside of bein' suspended and fined by their clubs. And I'll bet it was somethin' awful nasty that mayor got off before old Crab went after him! Crab was with me sixteen years and I never knew him to do more than sass 'em back when they started to ride him."

"I don't see what business it is of mine _____" began Simmons.

"I do!" snapped McCoy. "Crab's one of your old boys. Fact is, he was an old-timer on this club before you ever owned it. He helped keep the game goin' here for you as long as he had a good game of ball left in his system and it's up to you to give him a lift now that he's in a jam. So if you've got any governors or senators on your staff give them a wrassle right away and tell them they've got to get busy right away signin' pardons for Crab."

"All right. I'll see what I can do," promised Simmons, smiling at McCoy's vehemence. "Let's see," he murmured, glancing at the paper again. "Yes, I think I can do something. Senator Woods out there is an old friend of mine and he comes pretty

near being boss of the State. Of course," he added guardedly, "what Doran did may be worse than the paper says. If that's the case, I'm afraid we can't——"

"I'll have all the dope on the case in a couple of days," interrupted McCoy. "I'll get busy on it right away."

Within a week McCoy, with the assistance of Billy Gray, secretary of the Red Legs, was in possession of certain facts which had not been included in the article which first informed him of Crab's plight. Gray wrote to the sporting editor of the leading newspaper in the city where Crab's trial had taken place requesting a confidential report on the matter and the newspaper man's reply verified completely McCoy's assumption that Crab had been "railroaded."

Mayor Oliver of Halehurst, wrote the editor, was a sporting man and former saloon keeper and a politician of unsavory reputation. He operated the Halehurst team, a semiprofessional organization, principally as a sure-thing gambling medium through which he and his friends cleaned up handsomely every year, usually by means of fixed games. His private opinion, the editor asserted, was that the Halehurst-Lakeside game of Memorial Day had been fixed for Halehurst to win, for he had learned from trustworthy eyewitnesses of the affair that Lakeside's playing throughout the contest had been almost too bad to be true. Halehurst was leading by a score of three to nothing at the ending of the ninth inning when Lakeside came to bat. Then the Halehurst team suddenly became demoralized, and despite Lakeside's obvious efforts to be retired scoreless three of the visiting team were soon ornamenting the bases. The fourth Lakeside batter, apparently trying his best to strike out, accidentally connected with a wide ball and raised a high fly in Crab Doran's territory. It should have been an easy put-out, but Crab, who, the sporting editor stated, was entirely ignorant of the fact that the game was not on the level, misjudged the ball, which fell behind him and rolled to the fence. The Lakeside base-runners just sauntered around the bags, apparently giving Crab an opportunity to throw the ball in before there was any scoring. Crab, however, fumbled around so long with the ball when he found it that the first Lakeside runner could not avoid crossing the plate. Then Crab threw, and not

only was the throw wild, but, in striking the ground, the ball hit a stone and bounded into the grand stand. The net result of the play was four runs and the game for Lakeside.

Oliver, to whom the Lakeside victory meant a loss of several thousand dollars, went wild with anger and roared at Crab a stream of abuse. Crab, whose playing in previous games had been unsatisfactory to Oliver and who had been threatened with release unless he improved, resented the epithets that were being applied to him, leaped into the grand stand and gave the mayor an artistic trimming. The sporting editor gave it as his opinion, after hearing some of the names that Oliver called Crab, that the latter had had sufficient provocation to resort to his fists. However, Oliver's political influence was sufficient to get Crab both a speedy trial and a long sentence.

"There's somethin' to show your friend the senator!" declared McCoy, laying the sporting editor's report before Simmons. "We'll get old Crab out and hand that mayor guy somethin' to boot! Nothin's too bad for a feller who'd run a crooked ball team!"

VI.

In August, while the Red Legs were on the road, McCoy one day received a letter from President Simmons in which was inclosed a copy of a telegram which bore the signature of the club owner's senatorial friend.

"Have investigated Doran case," read the message. "Appears to be grave miscarriage of justice. Will take steps to have matter reopened in fall term of court."

"I knew we'd get old Crab out!" cried McCoy gleefully, passing the wire over to Joe Tooker. "By George, the old boy will be surprised to hear we're workin' for him! I haven't let him know a word about it for fear we couldn't do anything, but now the thing's ripe to be sprung. Say!" he exclaimed suddenly, "we'll be here on Sunday and there's no game. That jail where they've got Crab is only about sixty miles away. Suppose we hire a car and take a run out there on Sunday? I want to see old Crab's sour face light up when we show him this telegram!"

"Me, too!" grinned Tooker. "Too bad it isn't a pardon so we could take the old boy back with us!"

"Be satisfied with what we've got," said McCoy. "I guess Crab will be. Gosh, a feller that's lookin' forward to spendin' five years in the cooler certainly ought to turn handsprings when he finds out they'll let him loose in a couple of months!"

Late Sunday morning McCoy and Tooker, armed with certain credentials, entered an automobile and started for the prison. It was about two in the afternoon when their car passed by the lofty granite wall which inclosed the prison reservation. A few minutes later they were in the warden's office, presenting their credentials to a grizzled, kindly eyed man who smiled broadly as he looked up from his swift perusal of the documents.

"Mr. McCoy—and Mr. Tooker!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with the visitors in turn. "Glad to see you! You're both old heroes of mine. I remember you both on the diamond since—well, since I was considerably younger than I am now. You want to see Doran, eh?" he inquired pleasantly. "I imagine that can be arranged, if you don't mind waiting a while? He's busy just now."

"Busy!" McCoy could not forbear exclaiming. "Busy—in a jail? How—?"

"Come with me, gentlemen," smiled the warden, interrupting McCoy to pass across his office and beckon from the door.

McCoy and Tooker followed their guide from his office through several long corridors until they came to a great barred door which the warden opened and held aside while the visitors passed down a flight of steps into the prison courtyard. The warden rejoined them at the foot of the steps and led them across the courtyard and through a basement corridor in another building. As they came to the barred door at the end of this passage the warden paused and smiled mysteriously.

"Somewhere out there," he said, pointing at the door as he prepared to throw it open, "we shall find Doran."

As the big door swung back on its hinges McCoy and Tooker started with astonishment and looked at each other with puzzled, inquiring eyes. From outside the door, from somewhere above, it seemed to them, had suddenly arisen the startling, deafening roar of many excited voices. It was a sound strangely familiar to both McCoy and Tooker for they heard it virtually every day of their lives during the baseball season—

the spontaneous, involuntary outcry with which the fans receive a brilliant play.

"By gum!" breathed McCoy. "For a minute I'd have sworn I was at a ball game!"

"You are!" laughed the warden, throwing wide the door. "Look!"

He made a flourishing gesture through the doorway to the broad field which lay beyond, a field that was inclosed by the high granite wall they had passed on their way to the prison. Possibly a hundred feet from the doorway a diamond was laid out, with turf and base paths as smooth and well kept as though in a big league park. Two teams were on the field, one attired in conventional baseball uniforms, the other in the shapeless stripes that could only have been prison garb. There were no spectators on the field and no stands or benches to accommodate any. Except for the umpire, who wore the uniform of a prison guard, and the few other guards who patrolled the field with rifles on their shoulders, the contesting teams had the place all to themselves.

Unable to reconcile this fact with the roar which had greeted them as the door swung open, McCoy and Tooker looked about them curiously, and at last they discovered the source of the sounds they had heard. From each grated window in the three prison wings which fronted the field looked forth the eager face of a prisoner, and as McCoy and Tooker gazed up at the strangest gathering of fans either had ever seen the imprisoned onlookers cheered once more and waved their arms gleefully toward the diamond.

Turning to discover the cause of this new outburst the visitors espied a tall, broad-shouldered man in prison clothing strutting toward the plate. He was swinging a long bludgeonlike bat with an easy motion which must have brought to some of those who looked at him from behind the caged windows painful memories of the things their enemies the police used to do with their nightsticks. Not Cobb, not Ruth, not Sisler, no, not even the immortal Casey of the poem could have approached the task of facing a pitcher with a larger show of confidence and insouciance than was displayed by this convict batsman as he strolled to the plate. And not even the loose, ill-fitting prison clothing nor the unfamiliar surroundings in which they

glimpsed him could prevent McCoy and Tooker from knowing that this stalwart hero of the prison team, who needed to do no more than march to the batsman's box to draw the plaudits of the necessarily faithful fans, was the man they had come to see—Crab Doran.

"It isn't usually permitted," said the warden, "but considering who you gentlemen are I'm going to let you watch the game from close by."

As they walked across the field, Crab, swinging his long bat with the free motion that McCoy and Tooker knew so well, caught one of the visiting pitcher's offerings on the button and dropped it into center field. Before the ball was retrieved Crab was nestling on second and the convict batter who had preceded him and whose two-bagger had been the cause of the first outburst of the rooters in the cells had crossed the plate with what the scoreboard behind the backstop proclaimed to be the first run of the game. Crab's hit brought another roar from the barred windows and the demonstration was repeated a few moments later when the prisoner who followed Crab in the batting order poled out a long single on which Crab scored by a hairbreadth decision.

McCoy involuntarily clutched the warden's arm as Crab slid over the pan. The warden turned and read the question in McCoy's eyes. He hesitated momentarily, then he said:

"All right, go over and speak to him. It's a little irregular but you may do it."

"Come on, Joe," said McCoy, motioning to Tooker.

Together they walked toward the backstop, seeking to head Crab off before he reached the bench where the convict team sat quietly in the care of an armed guard. Crab saw them as they approached. He halted and for a moment his eyes were wide with surprise. Then his rugged face lighted with a broad smile of welcome.

"Hello, Matt!" he called cheerily. "How are you, Joe?"

McCoy was conscious of a deep sense of relief. He was entirely ignorant of the etiquette of afternoon calls at a prison and all during his long motor trip to the institution he had been perplexed as to the manner he should assume in approaching Crab; he had feared that a too generous display of the sympathy he felt for Crab in his plight

might prove embarrassing to the latter and yet he realized that a man facing five years behind the bars might expect something more than a casual offhand greeting. The bland cheerfulness of Crab's own manner, however, swept away instantly all possible barriers between them and put McCoy entirely at his ease. And yet McCoy found Crab's demeanor vaguely puzzling. Could this grinning, friendly giant really be Crab Doran, the grouch, the sour-visaged, sour-tempered brawler whose one conspicuous talent had always been for the making of enemies? Was it only the loose-fitting prison uniform which made it appear so, or was Crab, always of a bony, stringy type, actually filling out, gaining in flesh? Was it some trick of the afternoon light or had his long, leathery face taken on a smooth roundness? And those deep lines of gloom that ran from his nose to the drooping corners of his mouth—what had become of them?

"Say, fellers!" called Crab in hearty, resonant voice, "I'm sure glad to see you!"

"Crab, old man," began McCoy falteringly, stepping forward to grip the prisoner's hand, "I—I'm sorry about what's happened to—"

"Some team we got here, Matt!" beamed Crab, paying no attention to McCoy's halting proffer of sympathy. "A couple of our lads are good enough for the big leagues."

"It's hard lines for you, Crab," said McCoy. "The fellers of the club were all cut up when they heard—"

"We ain't lost a game this season!" grinned Crab. "You ought to 'a' seen us last Sunday! We—"

"But you don't want to feel discouraged, Crab," went on McCoy. "You've got some friends outside and they—"

"Did you see that hit I just made?" inquired Crab. "I been wallopin' 'em just like that ever since I—"

"But what Joe and me come here to-day to tell you," continued McCoy persistently, "is that you won't have to stay here. Look here, Crab," he directed, drawing from his pocket the copy of Senator Woodis' telegram. "A friend of J. K. Simmons is the big political boss of this State. He's found out that they railroaded you and he says right here that he's goin' to start the wheels turnin' to get you out as soon as the courts open in the fall."

"Hey?" cried Crab. "What's that?"

"This Senator Woods," said McCoy, "will have you out of here in a couple of months. Look what he wired to J. K."

Crab took the telegram. He read it, and as he finished the wide smile was gone from his face.

"My God, Matt!" he cried hoarsely, crushing the paper in fingers that were suddenly trembling. "You can't do that! Call that senator guy off! I—I—"

"But—Crab!" exclaimed McCoy. "Don't you understand? He's goin' to get you *out!* He—"

"Out!" exploded Crab as though horror-stricken. "He mustn't! I want to stay here!"

"You—you—"

"Sure!" cried Crab. "I'm—I'm happy here, Matt. I'm playin' on a good ball team. I—I eat every day—three times.

I'm treated fine. Them guys up there"—pointing to the convicts in the windows—"if they call me names they get put on bread and water. But the best part of all, Matt"—he paused, smiled happily and half closing his eyes rolled his head from side to side—"the best part of all is that I'm playin' at last on a ball team that I can't be fired from!"

McCoy studied him blankly for a moment. Then he reached out, took the telegram from Crab's fingers and tore it slowly into little pieces which he permitted to sift through his fingers to the lawn.

"Come on, Joe," he said then to Tooker, "let's say good-by to the warden and get out of here. And we've got to congratulate him too. He's got somethin' that I ain't seen before in twenty-five years of baseball—a player who's satisfied with his job!"

Another sport story by Mr. Brown in an early issue.



OVERWHELMING

ALPHONSE XIII. of Spain, is one of those fortunate monarchs who throughout the vicissitudes of latter-day political earthquakes has managed to retain not only his crown, his throne, and his scepter, but his royal sense of humor.

Last summer—as all the world knows—the debonair sovereign spent a portion of his yearly lapse from the cares of state sojourning in France—more particularly at Deauville, the Newport of Europe.

It so happened that at the time of Alphonse's descent upon Deauville, a monarch of another stripe was claiming the adulation of the summer populace—no less a potentate than Georges Carpentier, who at that time knew nought of the dethroning possibilities lodged in the fist of a certain obscure aborigine from the wilds of darkest Africa.

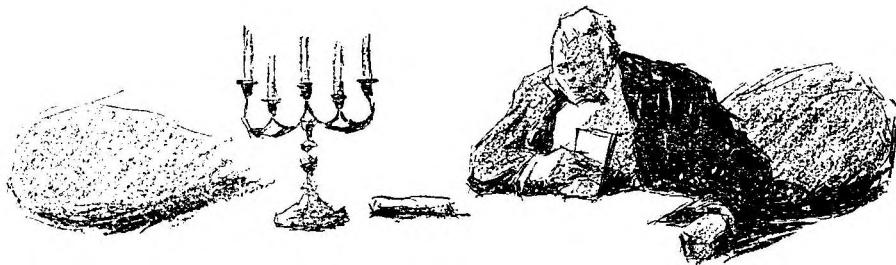
Georges usually appeared, to greet his faithful subjects, some time between tea and dinner at the most fashionable café of the resort, La Potinière, and his presence was always marked by the gathering of a dense crowd about the table where he was wont to sip his aperitive and bask in the sun of popular glory.

Now, upon the arrival of Alphonse, the Spanish monarch's first thought was for the Potinière, and thither he repaired, as soon as his dignity permitted, with all convenient speed. But he was a little late in arriving and Georges was in the van. A huge crowd was already gathered about the boxer's table when the King of Spain entered the place quietly and was escorted to a seat by the maître d'hôtel.

But the word began to bruit about that a real specimen of royalty had come and was on view. In due time it reached the fringes of the crowd about the table where sat the boxing king of Europe. The effect was electrical. In a trice Carpentier found himself alone with his manager and his aperitive and Alphonse had scarce elbow room to raise his glass of port.

He looked about him, nodded to the crowd, then turned to the maître d'hôtel with a smile which it is said is almost as winning as that of the captivating Georges.

"I am overwhelmed," said the King of Spain. "Is it possible that I am as celebrated as the peerless Carpentier?"



Swizzles

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of "Oil," "The Red Pirogue," Etc.

Captain Keel found that where tyranny ended law was likely to begin.

CAPTAIN KEEL had followed the sea in an undistinguished way until his fifty-fourth year and had then obtained the dignified and fairly lucrative post of harbor master of Princeport. The appointment had astonished all who knew William Keel, including himself; but after a year in office Keel had begun to consider it as a reward of merit rather than a bit of luck.

Keel was a relentless disciplinarian. In his tenderest years—and tenderest parts—he had been disciplined by his father, a drunken carpenter; and so little had discipline found favor with him at that time that he had run away to sea to escape it. Afloat he had found even more discipline than he had fled from ashore, for the ministers of it had multiplied. For years after that mates and boatswains and sea cooks had chid him, bawled him out, knocked him about—always in the name of discipline. He had decided that it was a thing no more to be avoided than life itself; but he had also seen that there were two ways of recognizing it and serving it—the way of the subject of discipline on one hand, the way of the administer of discipline on the other. So, to change his own attitude toward the inevitable he had learned laboriously to read and write and had then acquired the science of navigation along with the art of seamanship. He had become a mate and sailed many voyages as such. Strong on discipline, thrifty in his habits and careful about his work, he had

given an impression of reliability; but his intelligence being somewhat below that of the average windjamming mate he had not obtained a command of his own until close upon his fortieth birthday. And what a command!—a little Nova Scotian brigantine carrying cured fish to the Lent-observing peoples of the south and returning with freights of molasses for northern pancakes. But with money in the bank he had married on the strength of it and the isolation of his position when afloat had swelled his good opinion of himself into that pomposity for which he afterward became so widely known; and the pomposity had created loneliness and loneliness had driven him into a habit of tippling. Rum had been his tipple and still was. Rum was cheap; and cheapness had been a consideration with him for years.

The morn of Captain Keel's seventieth birthday found him flourishing, sound in wind and limb and dauntless of spirit. He had been harbor master of Princeport for more than sixteen years and he intended to continue being harbor master of Princeport until his eighty-fifth year, at least. The office suited him and he graced the office. He looked the part. He looked like nothing else than the harbor master of a busy tropic port. He looked far too important to be the captain of even a Royal Mail Steam Packet boat and far too salty to be a colonial governor. If you can imagine a cross between an absolutely self-satisfied and

opinionated old sailor and a Canadian senator—all Canadian senators are like that, being appointed for life—you can imagine Captain Keel at the age of seventy.

This was the morning of the day of his great dinner party. He remembered this fact at the moment of waking, with a self-congratulatory glow, got briskly out of bed and took a turn on the seaward gallery in his pajamas to sniff the salty breeze. Then he shaved his red chin and jowls and lower lip until he was smooth as a billiard ball below the line of his trimmed gray mustache and "sidelights." Those trimmed gray whiskers marching down and widening to the line of his mouth were important ingredients in the mixture of physical and moral attributes that constituted his dignity. They looked official, governmental. He took a shower bath, clothed his sturdy form in spotless white duck, opened the inner door of his wide bedroom and bawled, "Lay *ast* with the liquor, steward!"

He always called his butler "steward," and prided himself on it.

Newsam came running with a red swizzle on a silver tray. The swizzle had been concocted in this wise: A large and strong tumbler had been half filled with crushed ice; pale brown Mount Gay rum, falernum and a dash of red bitters had been poured into the ice; and after all had been churned around and around with a swizzle stick until the ice had dissolved the delectable result had been strained into a thinner glass. This was Captain Keel's regular before-breakfast shot, his morning salute to the day. He put it away now with a gesture of head and elbow as familiar to Newsam as sunrise.

"Breakfast, steward!"

"Ready, sir!"—and the little black butler retired swiftly before him with the empty glass on the silver tray.

Captain Keel breakfasted alone, with Newsam in close attendance, on red snapper served with a white sauce, pepper pot, coffee, buttered toast and guava jelly. He breakfasted slowly and thoroughly. And where was Mrs. Keel? Breakfasting idly in bed, perhaps? No. Mrs. Keel had been disciplined into her grave twelve years before the morning of the harbor master's seventieth birthday. And the pledges of that union—where were they? There had been two pledges, sons; and both had been disciplined so relentlessly and unreason-

ingly that they had long since fled beyond the reach of paternal authority.

One had died at sea. Nothing had been heard of the other for years. Captain Keel had been disappointed, of course. He had hoped to make harbor masters of his sons, in time.

Newsam brought a large finger bowl from the sideboard and for a moment it seemed as if the captain was about to celebrate his natal day by indulging in a plunge bath at the breakfast table. But he recovered just in time, mopped his face and hands and looked at his watch. This was another cue for Newsam. He vanished, only to reappear ten seconds later.

"The carriage am ready, sir," he said.

Whereupon Captain Keel pushed back his chair and arose to his feet, and Newsam scuttled to the sideboard, paused there a moment, then turned and came to his master. Again he bore the small silver tray already mentioned and upon it a small glass full of pale brown liquor—Mount Gay rum undiluted, unsweetened, untouched by bitters. The captain deposited the potent offering as easily and swiftly as posting a letter in a letter box. He set the empty glass on the tray without giving it a glance and Newsam set the tray on the table. Captain Keel expanded his upper chest and his lower chest, stroked his whiskers, then moved slowly and pompously toward the front of the house. He reached the front door and stepped onto the wide front gallery—and there stood Newsam with a white helmet in one black paw and a gold-headed ebony stick in the other. The captain accepted the helmet and placed it on his head, accepted the stick and flourished it before him—all this without so much as a side glance at the butler—crossed the gallery and descended the stone steps to the waiting one-horse carriage. But there was Newsam before him, standing beside the open door of the carriage. The coachman touched the brim of his plug hat with a finger of a big hand incased in a white cotton glove. The captain entered and seated himself. The butler closed the door and stepped back. The coachman cracked his whip and the harbor master of Princeport was on his way to his office.

Newsam reentered the house, sighing. He was thirsty. He was always thirsty after the ceremonies of his master's arising and breakfasting and departing. He rolled dis-

consolate eyes at the big sideboard, knowing well what reposed behind those strong doors of mahogany. But what was the use? He passed onward, sighing. In that house famed for its liquor there was not a drop for Newsam's thirst. The contents of cellar, sideboard and cellarette—all under lock and key, and the keys in the safe! The liquor for the morning swizzle and the after-breakfast nip had been measured out the night before by the captain's own hand, with not a drop to spare. This he did every night after locking up the decanters from the dinner table; and thus it was every morning with poor thirsty Newsam.

Newsam passed through the house to the scullery, took a turn to the right there and went sighing along a stone-flagged passage to the detached kitchen, near the door of which stood a stone water filter, and behind the filter a bottle. The bottle was the joint possession and comfort of Mr. Newsam and Mistress Darling, the cook—Miss Grace, the housemaid, was above rum. The bottle was maintained by weekly contributions by the joint proprietors of ninepence each. The red liquor was very low in the bottle this morning; but as both the butler and the cook entertained high hopes of replenishing their stock in the evening by holding out on their master during the stress of the grand dinner they split it even and swallowed it.

Captain Keel thought of many things that morning as he sat at his wide desk beside the wide window overlooking the harbor. He thought of the lucky fluke that had made him harbor master of Princeport—but he did not look upon it as a fluke. A peculiar and fitting act of Providence was his name for it. He had been master of a barkentine at the time, out of his course by a hundred miles in half a gale, with enough ruin in him to convince him that he was quite as good a man as he thought himself to be, when a smudge of thick black smoke had been sighted to windward across miles of bellowing seas. A look through the barkentine's brass telescope had disclosed a white steamship under the smoke. He had changed his course and raced down upon the distressed vessel under a few strips of sail. A nearer view had disclosed a red flicker of flame amidships of the stranger, and the facts that her people had not left her and that her boats were burning on their

chocks and at their davits. Having no boat himself fit to launch in such wild waters Keel had proclaimed his intention of laying the barkentine alongside the steamer. The mate had objected and that had fixed the master in his daring intention. He had done it and the crew and passengers of the fated ship had scrambled aboard him to the last child; and he had then broken away and sailed off with no more damage than a smashed jib boom and a charred rail.

Among the rescued passengers had been a number of important people of Bados, including the Chief Justice and his new second wife, Mr. Digby of Sugar Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Alleyne of High Park and old Doctor Pennywhistle of Princeport. And what had the master of the barkentine gained by his trouble and daring? The answer is: the Royal Humane Society's medal, a gold watch suitably engraved, several boxes of cigars, several hysterical kisses—and the berth of harbor master of Princeport.

Captain Keel sat at his big desk and thought of that sudden change in his condition. He had established himself in Princeport immediately, though not in the fine house he now occupied; had ordered his family to come to him; and had sent the mate home with the trusty barkentine—but not before he had transferred from ship to shore every item of his dunnage, every last stick of his personal seagoing possessions, even to the gig's ten-gallon water breaker. The gig's original breaker had been stove a year before, through no fault of his, and he had replaced it at his own expense and had failed to recover the price from the owners. Now his mind dwelt for a little while on that small keg. He had bought it in the insignificant port of an insignificant island. A well-coopered little keg it was, built of a reddish, narrow-grained and fragrant wood—a variety of cedar, he supposed—and upon settling ashore he had stored five or six gallons of surplus rum away in it. He had forgotten the breaker—the rum in it being of only secondary quality: had seen it during the moving from his first house to his present dignified abode twelve years ago, had locked it away and forgotten it again. But he thought of it now, on his seventieth birthday. He felt a natural curiosity concerning the rum that had lain undisturbed in it for sixteen years.

He thought of the preparations he had

made for his birthday dinner party and of the guests who were to be present. His mind dwelt upon these things with relish; his tongue moved unctuously but inaudibly over the names of the guests. It was to be a strictly masculine affair, as all his dinners in the past had been. He had given numerous dinners since his wife's death and many dignitaries of the island had graced his board, but to-night's effort was to outshine all others in every respect. Sir Bertram Hicks-Hick, K. C. M. G., would be there—but this in itself did not impress Captain Keel greatly. He had entertained Sir Bertram before and other governors of Bados before this one. But the governor was bringing his aid-de-camp, Captain the Honorable John Macintosh, D. S. O., and the young officer's distinguished father, Lord Macintosh of Tosh, who had stopped off for a few weeks at Bados on his way around the world. No former harbor master of Princeport had ever entertained a Scottish earl. For the rest, it is doubtful if a more distinguished roster could have been made up in any island south of Jamaica—the old Chief Justice, a Digby of Sugar Hill, an Alleyne of High Park, Lieutenant Colonel Rumbolt from the garrison, Captain Blake, R. N., of H. M. S. *Hercules* and—to show his interest in the merchant service—Captain Bentley, R. N. R., of the Blue Star liner *Westward Ho*.

Captain Keel lunched lightly at the club; took his nap at the club in his favorite easy-chairs, with his stalwart body in one and his fat feet in the other; returned to the office after his nap for an hour of more dignified repose in his official capacity; tead at the club on two tots of rum and a few arrowroot biscuits and drove home at four-thirty.

An hour later, at about five-thirty p. m. of the seventieth anniversary of Captain Keel's birthday, a little inter-island schooner furled her patched sails and let go her anchor in Spanish Cove, four miles north of Princeport. A boat put off from her immediately and pulled ashore, with a black man at the oars and a white man aft. The white man was thin as a crow, untidily bearded, anxious of eye and shabbily dressed. He moved hurriedly across the beach, through a fringe of coconut trees, through a copse of whitewood and manchineel and onto the white highroad. After

a glance to his right and his left he moved southward along the road.

Captain Keel interviewed the extra servants—an assistant cook and three waiters sent down from the club—who were paraded before him by Newsam. Then he descended into the cellar to look over the liquors and wines for the evening, accompanied by Newsam and two of the extras carrying round-bellied decanters. He decanted sherry and port with his own hands, accompanied the bearers up to the dining room and locked the charged decanters away in the sideboard. All descended again and the master released champagne and claret in generous quantities. These were carried up in their bottles; and the champagne was locked into the ice box and the claret into the sideboard. Again the master descended to the cellar, this time alone, to consider the ingredients of the swizzles. He prided himself particularly on his swizzles. Content to have the wines on his table as good as the best on these special occasions, he was never content with having his swizzles anything less than unique. It was his custom to serve two rounds at a dinner, the first upon the arrival of the guests and the second when they took their places at table. He was partial to swizzles with a foundation of rum. Sometimes the superquality depended upon the bitters, more often upon the rum, now and then upon both.

Captain Keel unlocked a great bin containing his finest rums in bottles. Here stood Mount Gay that had been ten years in wood and seven in glass, Admiral's Pride of equal age, Old Governor from St. Christopher and Red Sunshine from Jamaica—all old in wood and at least five years bottled. He gazed at this collection by the light of a candle with pardonable pride—but his thoughts ran curiously on the gig's water breaker. He turned away from the bin and unlocked his old sea chest. There lay the little ten-gallon keg. He lifted it in both hands and shook it. Five gallons at the most, he judged. He laid it securely on its side and, with difficulty, knocked and twisted the plug out of the bung hole. He sniffed at the hole. He sniffed again. Then he stood back and bawled for Newsam to come below with a glass.

Newsam came running.

"Lay your nose to that hole," commanded the master.

The butler obeyed, inhaled deeply and closed his eyes.

"That will do!" said the master. "What d'ye make of it?"

"The breath that breathed o'er Edum, sir," whispered Newsam, straightening his back with very evident reluctance.

A patent bung was driven into place, the breaker was stood on end and Captain Keel drew off two fingers of ruby-colored liquor into the glass. A subtle fragrance captivated the nostrils of master and man. This fragrance was not the bouquet of any rum or any liquor either of them had ever before encountered. It was unique.

"It was ship's rum," said the captain. "The wood must have done it. Some sort of cedar, I reckon. Sixteen years in that breaker!"

He looked at the liquor in the thin glass against the flame of the candle. It shone as clear and bright and flawless as a priceless ruby in morning sunshine.

He brought the glass to his lips and sipped. His eyelids fluttered. He sipped again. He shut his eyes tight and drained the glass. He opened his eyes and stared at Newsam, who was staring at him. He stooped without a word and drew off one finger of the liquid ruby into the glass—only one this time. He handed the glass to Newsam. The butler tipped it into his large mouth, shut his lips on it tight and swallowed it slowly. The candlelight gleamed on the whites of his upturned eyes.

"What d'ye make of it?" asked the master in a tone of voice that was new to him.

Newsam sighed.

"Milk of Edum, sir," he whispered.

"We'll use it to-night in the swizzles—without bitters," said Captain Keel.

The sudden twilight blinked down and darkened swiftly to-night. White stars shone. The starshine was delusive and the shadows were deep in the harbor master's garden and around his lawns and along his curving drive. One of the shadows on the premises was not stationary. It moved. It shifted its ground. It slipped onto the front gallery and off again. It wavered near the kitchen. It moved on the bank gallery, paused for a few seconds at the door, for longer at an unshuttered window—but it did not enter the house. It slipped away to the shadows along the curving drive. No one noticed it.

Captain Keel felt sleepy but a cold shower woke him up. Then he dressed in white dinner kit and went down just as Newsam relieved the old Chief Justice of his hat and stick. Mr. Digby of Sugar Hill arrived half a minute later, with Alleyne of High Park close on his heels. The two sailors, Royal Navy and Royal Naval Reserve, together in a hired cab, were halfway up the drive even as Mr. Alleyne ascended the steps of the gallery; and as the cab drew up the governor's carriage rounded majestically in from the white highroad with Sir Bertram and Lord Macintosh of Tosh on the back seat and the Honorable John and Colonel Rumbolt facing them.

All the gentlemen stood grouped in the drawing-room; and the harbor master of Princeport was a proud man. Well, it was a group of guests for any host to be proud of. All were in white except the Scottish earl, who wore the conventional evening dress of less tropical climes, ennobled by the ribbon and cross of the Thistle. The governor wore the jewel of St. Michael and St. George high on his chest, suspended from his neck by a ribbon. Sir Bertram had warned the earl of the importance of the harbor master's seventieth birthday, in the eyes of the harbor master; and the other guests had required no warning. Colonel Rumbolt and Captain Macintosh and the two sailors were in tropical mess kit, with miniatures of divers naval and military decorations and war medals glowing and flashing on their left lapels; and the old Chief Justice displayed his Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire mixed up with his little black tie; and even the planters of ancient names and estates flashed miniature war medals on their left chests. All had done honor to their host. But you must not think that the host had nothing to show in return for all this display but correct attire and perfect whiskers. On his right lapel—see "Dress Regulations"—hung a miniature Royal Humane Society's medal on its blue ribbon.

The Right Honorable the Earl Macintosh of Tosh knew how to make himself agreeable; and also he knew the medal on his host's lapel, for he was an honorary vice president of the R. H. S. and had heard the story of this particular award from the governor.

"For saving life at grave personal risk," said he to his host. "A thousand, five thou-

sand, are decorated for the destruction of life to every one who wears your medal, my dear Captain Bilge. Admirable! Admirable!"

Bilge! The other guests felt a thrill of apprehension and stared at their host's perfect whiskers to see them bristle. But no, nothing of that sort happened! An earl, it seemed, could confuse bilge and keel with impunity.

"Sir, I was fortunate in the opportunity," replied Captain Keel, with a smirk that was intended for a self-deprecatory smile. And then, with a glimmer of native wit—a possession inherited from his mother, upon which his official dignity sat heavily even to the point of suffocation—he added, "And now I shall seize another opportunity of saving valuable lives, your lordship. Steward, lay aft!"

Newsam appeared, bearing a vast tray upon which stood ten generous swizzle glasses glowing with ruby fire; and a fragrance like a breath from the Garden of Eden preceded him on the air. Several of the gentlemen sniffed inquiringly, rapturously. The governor took his glass, the earl his, the captain of the *Hercules* his—and so on. They stood glass in hand for a second, bowed slightly above the bouquet arising from their right hands to their nostrils, then all together squared their shoulders and tilted back their heads and tipped their glasses; and the movement was accompanied by a faint tinkling of silver and bronze and enamel on ten heroic breasts.

The empty glasses were replaced on the vast tray.

"Amazing!" said the earl.

"You've excelled yourself, my dear fellow!" exclaimed the governor.

The old Chief Justice blinked like lightning and exhaled appreciatively through his nose.

"What is it?" asked Digby of Sugar Hill.

"Milk of Eden," replied the delighted harbor master; and with smiles and bows he marshaled the distinguished company into the dining room. The moment the gentlemen were seated at the gleaming, glowing table another of those large and amazing swizzles was placed at each right hand and that unique and ravishing fragrance mingled with the perfume of the flowers which adorned the center of the board.

II.

The detached shadow was at a window of the dining room, with an eye to a crack between slats of a closed shutter. It was not a shadow after all, but a man—but so thin a man as to appear almost as immaterial as a shadow. He peered at the glorious company and the rich and glowing table with awe in his mind and bitterness in his heart. But awe and envy were choked for a time by cold despair. Here was more of his deathly bad luck! He knew enough of the harbor master's character to realize that this was not the time to interrupt him with a request for a loan, no matter how just his claims might be for an accommodation of that nature. But his own time was short. He must have the money to-night—thirty pounds, if he could get it, twenty if he could not do better. But twenty pounds at least—and to-night, without fail! The schooner would wait for him until dawn. If the schooner were to sail without him or if he were to sail without the money!—he shivered at the thought of the consequences.

He saw soup placed before the distinguished company by Newsam and the waiters from the club. He saw the sherry glasses filled. The butler's assistants withdrew. Then he saw Captain Keel make a gesture toward the window at which he stood spying, and Newsam move his way in answer to the gesture. He slunk aside, close against the wall, in the shadow of tangled vines. The slatted shutters were thrown wide open; and that was all that happened. He continued to stand motionless against the wall for ten minutes, then slid along and peered cautiously around an edge of the window frame into the room. What he saw amazed and bewildered him.

The butler was not in sight. The waiters from the club were not in the room. The soup was still before the diners. The sherry stood untouched, one glass in each group of glasses shining like a topaz. One of the gentleman sat with an elbow on the table, his chin cupped in his left hand, his eyes closed, and his right hand—spoon and all—sunk in his plate of soup. The venerable Chief Justice was slumped deep in his chair with his chin on his chest. Sir Bertram graced the occasion with an ear on a hunched shoulder, a mouth wide open and eyes shut tight. Captain Blake, R. N., who had sat with his back to the open window, now reposed on the floor. All the distin-

guished diners, including the dignified host, were sound asleep. Seven of them, including their host, snored shamelessly.

For five long minutes the shadowy man continued to peer around the edge of the window frame. Then he slipped aside and away toward the rear of the house. He went to the detached kitchen and there encountered the fat smoke of scorching roasts and entrées. He found Mistress Darling and her temporary assistant slumbering on the stone threshold with two large empty glasses beside them. Turning aside he entered the passage leading to the scullery and there lay the housemaid, sound asleep and prone on the cool flagstones, with a smile on her dusky features, an empty teacup in her hand and a fragrance in the cool air about her that intrigued and puzzled him. He paused for a moment to sniff, then passed onward and inward. In the butler's pantry the air fairly hummed with that same strange and enchanting fragrance; and there lay Newsam and the waiters from the club, all on the floor, all oblivious to the duties of man, the affairs of nations and the passage of time.

"All asleep!" murmured the intruder. "Drunk or doped or something queer! The whole damn crew, white an' black—dead to the world!"

He stepped from the pantry into the full, soft illumination of the lamps and candles. He looked sadly out of place there, a disgrace to that room and that company, with his gauntness, his untidy beard, his furtive mien and anxious eyes and shabby clothing. He crossed the room swiftly, then moved swiftly along the wall, closing the curtains and shutters at each window as he came to it. Still the fine company slumbered about the glowing, glittering table.

The intruder stepped over to Captain Keel's chair and laid a hand like a red claw on the great man's shoulder. But nothing happened. Then the intruder shook that pillar of official respectability until the Royal Humane Society's medal flopped on its blue ribbon. And that was all. Nothing else happened.

"Money!" exclaimed the intruder hysterically. "I must have it—to-night! And you are rotten with it! And my wife an' children are starvin'!"

He took up the sherry glass beside the harbor master's soup and drained it. It was a long time since such sherry as that

had passed his lips. That was the stuff! That was what his sick wife needed—good wine and enough food. He reached across to the next place and lifted another glass and drained it.

He glared down at Captain Keel's unconscious head.

"You owe me something, you old tyrant!" he muttered. "It's an old debt—cruel old—but I'll collect it to-night!"

His downward glance rested upon the harbor master's white waistcoat and the pockets thereof. One pocket bulged with the presentation watch. He stooped and slipped a thumb and finger into the other and drew out five golden sovereigns and four half sovereigns. After a glance at the coins he pocketed them in his weather-stained rags. Then he went over to the sideboard and helped himself to port. It was rare old port. It was better than the sherry. It put life and courage into a man. He bumped off two bumpers of it. His eyes were less anxious now, his attitude less furtive. He leaned an elbow on the sideboard and treated the distinguished but unconscious company at the table to a long, calculating, appraising glance.

"I'll do it!" he said. "They're all rotten with it. They'll never miss it. To hell with 'em!"

He strode to the table, straight to the chair of the gentleman who sat with his chin in his left hand and his right hand in his cold soup, and picked his pockets inexpertly but thoroughly of gold coins and paper money; and then, as if to add an artistic flourish to the artless act, he drank the gentleman's sherry. He felt thrilled. He felt proud of himself. Sherry and port, port and sherry, all on an empty stomach. You can imagine it! He stepped along to the next guest, emptied his pockets and drank his sherry; and so on all the way around the table. He returned to the sideboard and there emptied his pockets, gold on one hand and paper on the other. The gold, in sovereigns and halves, amounted to only twenty-four pounds. He returned it all to his pockets. The paper?—well, that wasn't so easy to count; and suddenly he felt that the sooner he got out and took a bit of exercise where there was some breeze, the better it would be for him now and later. So after adding three five-pound notes to the gold in one of his pockets, he folded the bulk of the precious paper into a tight wad

and stuffed the wad into the pocket of Captain Keel's waistcoat. He left the house by the front door, moving his legs with dignity.

Captain Keel was the first of the sleepers to awake. First of all, before he opened an eye, he became conscious of the thought that he would be more comfortable in bed than wherever he was. This thought grew to a conviction. He lifted a lid so as to ascertain his whereabouts and to his dismay glimpsed the lighted dinner table and the seated company. At that he felt a chill at the pit of his stomach and another up and down his spine, remembering the occasion.

With a mighty effort of will he forced himself to open both eyes. Oh, Lord, it was true! There sat the guests, there spread the table! And he was awake—and he had been asleep!

There sat the distinguished guests—but no, one chair was empty! One evidently had lost his temper and gone home, very likely swearing never again to degrade himself by accepting an invitation from a vulgar and ignorant old shellback. But what was the matter with the others? He blinked his eyes again and again to clear his vision. Could he trust his vision—or was he drunk? Could it be that Lord Macintosh sat there with his right hand submerged in his soup? That's what it looked like, certainly—and the horrified old harbor master damned his own eyes. And Sir Bertram! And the old Chief Justice! Both asleep, by Heaven!—or drunk! Drunk?—with the soup still on the table? Madness! But look at Alleyne of High Park, that model of good manners, with his face flat on the cloth in the midst of his clump of glasses!

Captain Keel arose slowly to his feet, with his hands on the edge of the table.

"Gentlemen!" he wailed, in a voice so absolutely unlike any previous utterance of his that even Newsam would not have recognized it if he had heard it. No eye opened. No lip moved in answer. Were they dead, he wondered wildly.

"Gentlemen!" he cried.

The governor raised his ear from his hunched shoulder, wabbled his head for a moment without opening his eyes, then flopped his chin on his chest; and the earl's noble right hand stirred slightly in the cold soup. That was all.

"Asleep," said the old man. "All asleep.

Not dead, not drunk, but asleep. And I was asleep. I wasn't drunk—but still sleepy. What the devil was it? What did it? Dope? Who doped us? And what for? One of the servants? Steward, lay aft here!"

There was no answer. Newsam did not lay aft. The harbor master left his place and moved over to where Lord Macintosh sat in earlish oblivion of time and the hour and petty conventions. He raised his most distinguished guest's right hand from the soup, relieved it of the spoon and dried it tenderly on a napkin.

"Hah!" exclaimed the earl, lifting his chin from the cup of his left hand and blinking at the candles.

Captain Keel jumped as if he had been shot.

"What's all this?" continued the earl. "Where—what—"

"You were asleep, sir," whispered the captain.

The earl turned his head quickly and blinked at his host.

"Asleep? My dear fellow! My dear Captain Bilge! Lord-luva-duck! Asleep, you say? A thousand apologies! Very unusual! Change of climate!"

"We've all been asleep, sir. I just woke up, m'lord. Others still asleep. Never had such a thing happen in my house before, sir, I assure yer lordship. I'm disgraced, sir!"

"Disgraced? Pooh-pooh, my dear Bilge! Drunk."

"I'm afraid not, sir. Still at the soup, you see. It wasn't done by sound liquor alone, sir—and there ain't a drop of anything but sound liquor in this house."

"Extr'ordinary! Abs'lutely extr'ordinary! Don't feel drunk myself. Still a trifle sleepy."

"Sleepy," said a voice from the floor and Captain Blake, R. N., rose slowly into view. "Who did that?" he asked. "Who knocked me out of my chair?"

"You fell out of it," said the earl. "You went to sleep at the soup. Wake 'em all up, will you—they look so damn silly."

The other guests were soon shaken and prodded back to consciousness and Lord Macintosh and the harbor master told what they knew.

"Where are the servants?" asked Alleyne of High Park.

The host led the way to the butler's

pantry; and there lay Newman and the boys from the club still sleeping soundly. They found the superior housemaid still oblivious in the passage, on the cool flags, and Mistress Darling and her temporary assistant still dead to the world on the threshold of the kitchen.

"Every one got it, whatever it was," said Sir Bertram. "There must have been a devil of a lot of it going."

"We slept for three hours," said the old Chief Justice.

"And I, for one, could do very handily with another hour or two," said Colonel Rumbolt, stifling a yawn.

"What was in those swizzles?" asked Digby of Sugar Hill.

"Rum," replied the harbor master.

"But the bitters?"

"No bitters. The rum had been sixteen years in my old gig's breaker and I thought of it this afternoon for the——"

"Sorry," interrupted Captain the Honorable John Macintosh, "but—ah—have you chaps lost anything? I've been frisked. Not much, but all I had on me. Five or six sovs."

He stood with his fingers in his waistcoat pockets.

"Frisked?" cried Captain Keel. "Robbed, d'ye mean?"

With his left hand he felt his watch pocket and found the fat timepiece in its place and at the same moment he slipped the forefinger and thumb of his right hand into his right-hand pocket.

"What's this!" he cried. "I had some gold here and now——"

He swallowed hard, choking down the rest of the sentence, and stared wildly around him. All heard his words but no one saw the expression of his face, for every man was busy just then investigating the condition of his own pockets. All had been cleaned out. Some had lost gold only, others both gold and paper. Every one had been relieved of all the money he had on him but no one had lost anything else than money. Sleeve links, watches, cigarette cases, the jeweled Thistle, the begemmmed Crosses, golden decorations and silver medals, all remained to their rightful owners.

Captain Keel stood helpless, dazed and dumfounded, his face as gray as his whiskers and his nose a dull purple, with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand still sunk in his right-hand waistcoat pocket.

The servants were searched and in the searching awakened—but neither gold nor paper was found on them.

Carriages and cabs arrived from town. Mr. Digby aroused the harbor master, who still stood finger in pocket, wide-eyed and empty-eyed like a sleepwalker confronted by a nightmare. Mr. Digby demanded rum of him, a sample of the rum that had gone to the making of those unique swizzles. The old man bestirred himself—but no rum was to be found in the pantry where the drinks had been mixed. Every drop that had been brought up from the cellar—drops enough for the compounding of four rounds of man-size swizzles had been consumed. So the old man led the way to the cellar, unlocked the old sea chest and produced the little keg. Digby drew off a pint of the fragrant liquor into a bottle to be dealt with by the board of agriculture's imported English chemist in his professional capacity.

The guests departed, leaving the cold soup still on the table. Captain Keel did not appear to realize what was happening. He watched them drive away without protest, but always with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand sunk in his waistcoat pocket. When the last cab had driven off he turned back into the house, took up a branched candlestick from the deserted table and retired to his bedroom. He closed and locked his door, stood the candles on the dressing table and closed the shutters at the windows. Returning to the dressing table he sighed profoundly and drew the wad of paper from his pocket. *Money. Bank of England notes.* His worst fears were confirmed. But there was worse to come. With trembling fingers he unfolded the wad. Five-pound notes, a ten-pound note—and, Heaven help us! *a note of one hundred pounds.* He shook with horror. He groaned in misery.

"I wasn't drunk," he whispered. "Asleep. I must be mad! Sat down with seven pounds in gold in my pocket—woke up with one hundred and sixty in paper and no gold—and all my guests robbed! All asleep—doped with my liquor—and all robbed! Mad! Picked their pockets in my sleep. But what did I do with the gold?"

He sank into a low chair and held his head in both hands.

"They wouldn't believe it," he muttered. "They must never know. The black dis-

grace—after all these years! Do they suspect me? Why didn't I show my pockets? But no, I couldn't do that. Thank God I didn't do that! They must never know. I must live it down. But what did I do with the gold?—my own and theirs? I must destroy the evidence."

He got up and returned to the dressing table, moving like a wooden figure hung with leather hinges. He took up a five-pound note and burned it at a candle flame to a wide white flake of frailest ash. The ash fell to finest powder between his hands and the powder vanished into air at a puff of his breath. He took up another of the delicately engraved sheets of thin, strong paper—but his hand refused to hold it to the flame. It wasn't paper, it was money; and to continue burning money was a thing dead against his nature. It was money, the property of gentlemen who had been robbed while seated at his table as his honored guests. He could not destroy it. He must try to think of something else to do with it and of a way of returning it to its rightful owners some day. And what was the use of destroying this evidence while other evidence, in the form of gold, might be lying where any searcher could find it?

Captain Keel unlocked his bedroom door cautiously and stole forth, candlestick in hand. He searched every room for the gold, but without success. He returned to the bedroom but this time he did not lock the door, fearing that a locked door might arouse the suspicions of Newsam. He had returned the notes to his waistcoat pocket before setting out on his search of the rest of the house and now he tried to think of a good hiding place for them. He thought of a dozen places, but no one of them seemed good. At last he gave it up. He must carry the cursed notes until he could hit on a better plan. So he undressed; and when stripped to the buff he resumed the white waistcoat with the hundred and fifty-five pounds of paper money still in the right-hand pocket. Then he donned a pale blue silk sleeping suit and crawled miserably into bed. Hours dragged over him before he slumped suddenly, at last, into a pit of sleep as heavy and oppressive as quicksand.

Captain Keel awoke slowly to find Newsam bending over him and prodding him in the vicinity of the ribs with a respectful thumb. Then he remembered the grotesque tragedy of the night before and wished him-

self still asleep. No, that would not be enough. He sincerely wished himself dead. He dismissed Newsam and climbed out of bed. He thought of the morning of the day before and could not believe that he was the same person who had faced the world with such a glow of self-satisfaction only twenty-four hours ago.

During breakfast his glance and the butler's met several times, only to separate instantly. It was evident to each that the other had something on his mind. At last the master spoke in a ghost of his old voice and a feeble imitation of his old manner.

"Devil of a lot of that old rum drunk last night," he said.

"Yessir," quavered Newsam.

"There was something wrong with it."

"Yessir. Yessir."

"Everybody went to sleep. I went to sleep. So did you. Have you happened to see anything lying round—sovereigns or anything of that sort—that the gentlemen may have lost out of their pockets?"

"Yessir. No, sir, I don't see nothin' like a sovereign."

The harbor master had not been gone from home more than an hour before Mr. Digby of Sugar Hill rode up on a chestnut mare. He asked Newsam a number of leading questions concerning the rum that had gone to the making of last night's swizzles; and Newsam told all that he knew about the contents of the little keg and the manner of his master's discovery of its unique flavor only a few hours before dinner.

"How does your master seem to feel this morning?" asked the planter. "Merry and bright as usual, I hope. Wonderful old man."

"Yessir, thank you, sir. No, sir, he don't appear to be neither merry nor bright today. He am a proud man, sir, am Cap'n Keel, sir—an' he feels shook concernin' the deplorable situation of puttin' hisself an' all his grand guests to sleep before the champagne, sir. It lays hard on his mind, sir. He ain't hisself, no, sir. He slep' in his wescut."

"What's that?"

"He slep' all night in his white dress wescut, sir."

"Went to bed in his clothes, did he? Well, I've done something of the sort myself."

"No, sir, he undressed an' went to bed

all proper in his pajamas, sir—but when I was wakin' him this mornin', sir, his sleepin' jacket was bulged open an' I see the shine of the pearl buttons. Yessir. An' when I go back after he drive off, to put that white dress wescut away, I don't find it nowhere. No sir. He got it on him still, sir, nex' his skin. The cap'n ain't hisself this mornin', sir. No, sir."

"It sounds a bit out of the common, I must admit. Better not tell him you told me. He might not like it. A gentleman of your master's age has a perfect right to wear his waistcoat inside his shirt if he wants to. I advise you not to mention the matter to him. He might not like it. Don't worry him."

Mr. Digby mounted the chestnut mare, wheeled her and cantered away. Newsam turned and reentered the house heavily.

Mr. Digby had inherited a fine property—but both his sire and his grandsire had done themselves very well. In short, there were a few plasters on the title deeds. But quite apart from that fact, a hundred pounds is and are a hundred pounds. Not enough to marry on, of course, but too much to lose in your sleep. A thoroughly good-natured young man, Digby was loath to hurt any one or anything; so he rode home to his massive old plantation house without a word concerning his suspicions on the way. He gave the balance of the day and hours of the night to an exhaustive consideration of the harbor master's unique dinner. By ten o'clock at night his suspicions had become convictions; but he reasoned that there was plenty of time for action—that all was well, as far as the lost money was concerned, so long as poor old Keel continued to wear the white evening waistcoat with pearly buttons inside his shirt. It was his firm belief that the harbor master's mental rolling stock had, after years of perilous rocking, finally jumped the rust-bitten rails. He wanted his money back, his hundred pounds, simply because he needed it. He was anxious to avoid injuring the old man either in his own fine conceit of himself or in public opinion. The old boy was undoubtedly off his chump but that did not seem to Digby a good and sufficient reason for his losing his job of harbor master. But the money! There was the rub. He decided to talk the matter over with the old Chief Justice, in the strictest confidence, some time to-morrow.

5B—P

Colonel Rumbolt, though well-intentioned, was a chatterer, a natural gossip; and when Mr. Codrington Beaconsfield Spade, of the Princeport *Advocate*, approached him hat in hand on the morning after Captain Keel's dinner, he bubbled over with engaging condescension and spilled the beans. The colonel talked for the love of talking; and Mr. Spade drank in every word because that was his job and rejoiced at every word because he hated the harbor master. Captain Keel had never treated Codrington Beaconsfield Spade with the consideration that is not only desirable but advisable from a public official to a gentleman of the press.

III.

Captain Keel was in a bad way, gripped by shame and fear and indecision. His mind sagged from labor as useless and unceasing as the racing of a squirrel in the wheel of a cage. His nerves jumped day and night. His heart was like molten metal, heavy and hot and unresisting. For three days he went through the motions of attending to his official duties—with the white dress waistcoat under his shirt all the time, and the bulge still in the right-hand pocket thereof. He neither saw nor heard anything of the gentlemen who had attended his disastrous dinner. Every night he decided to confide next day in his patron the old Chief Justice—to tell that just old friend all that he knew about the grotesque robbery and to hand over the money and hope for the best. But he changed his mind every morning. For even if the Chief Justice should believe the story—and that wasn't likely, considered in broad daylight—what would he think? What would he think of William Keel? That his mind had gone wrong. Less than that he could not think. And what would that mean? A new harbor master, for a certainty. Loss of place and of public and private consideration, for a certainty. And if the Chief Justice did not believe the story? Disgrace! Black shame! The pride of the past undone and a dishonored old age; and even public punishment, to brim the bitter cup, perhaps.

On the evening of the third day the first blow from outside fell upon him. On the front page of the *Advocate* he read the following journalistic effort:

A DINNER IN HIGH LIFE.

A PROMINENT OFFICIAL TREATS DISTINGUISHED GUESTS TO SOMETHING UNUSUAL IN WAYS OF REFRESHMENT AND ENTERTAINMENT.

A widely known official of the town recently gave a dinner in honor of himself, on the —th anniversary of his birth. In the same modest spirit—and he is celebrated for his modesty—he invited only the Great Ones of the land and the sea. He served a unique liquor, which straightway put all the diners and all the servants to sleep. It even put the host to sleep—so he says! However that may be, the host was the first of the sleepers to awake. Queer chance! That was a good joke; but a better joke came to light when one of the distinguished guests put his hands in his pockets and found his pockets empty. The other guests immediately did the same, with the same result. All the distinguished gentlemen's pockets were empty. The host made no statement as to the condition of his pockets. The guests went home dinnerless and penniless, leaving about two hundred pounds behind them in gold and bank notes. Does it pay to entertain? Well say it does! We can only hope that this delightful host will not be permitted to continue in office, in his position of public trust, for long enough to exercise his peculiar line of humor on public moneys. A front of brass is not the only required qualification for government employment. The Marine and Harbor Building is not the only public institution. There are others—the Princeport Jail and the Bados Insane Asylum, for instance.

Captain Keel read every word of it, then crawled off to bed. Newsam wanted to send for a doctor, but was forbidden to do so on pain of instant dismissal.

Captain Keel remained in bed on the fourth day, with the fatal waistcoat still next his skin, ready to jump and scream at a word. He tried to brace his nerves with rum. As the day wore along he found himself playing with the thought of the contents of that cursed ten-gallon keg. He reasoned that half a pint of it would put him to sleep forever. It had already destroyed him; then why not let it kill him? He made several attempts to order Newsam to bring up the little keg—but his courage failed him at the first word each time.

Mr. Digby and the old Chief Justice grew weary of waiting for the harbor master to make the first move, to show a sign of repentance. So they dined together, then hardened their hearts and drove out to confront him with the error of his ways. They found the old man in bed, gray of face, dull purple of nose, wild of eye. They pushed Newsam out of the room and shut the door.

"You don't look well, William Keel," said

the old jurist, wagging his silvery head. "You look to me like a man with a guilty conscience. I am grieved to say this to you, William. I have waited days for you to come to me. I have always believed you to be as honest as I knew you to be courageous. And at your own table!"

Captain Keel's lips moved, but several seconds passed before any sound issued from them. Then came a shaken whisper.

"I was asleep. I—it was that rum from the gig's breaker. I didn't know—it was like that. Drank it myself. Didn't know what happened. The disgrace is killing me, sir. I—I can't think—what to do. Glad to do anything—to set it right."

"Then begin by making a clean breast of it," returned the old Chief Justice gravely.

"Yes, you might make a start by taking off your waistcoat," said Mr. Digby, with a smile.

The harbor master turned a glance of despairing horror on the planter, gasped, groaned, fell back on his pillow and rolled over on his face.

"Too sudden, Dick," chided the Chief Justice. "Might have managed it more gently. We should have given him a few days more, I do believe—which we would have done, but for that dirty newspaper. He is evidently taking it hard. Quite unnerved—and—ah—I fear——"

He touched his right forefinger lightly to his brow.

"My God, he is crying!" whispered Digby.

"Dear me! This is really too bad. Come, come, William, this will never do! You should have thought of all this—of how badly you would feel about it—before you committed the—ah—offense. Dick, is that rum in the bottle there? If so, give him a shot—and I really feel that I should be better for a drop myself. Very painful occasion, this. Old friend—preserver of my life—all that sort of thing."

Mr. Digby attended to the Chief Justice first, then refilled the glass and held it against Captain Keel's ear. The captain raised his face from the pillow, brushed the back of a hand across his eyes, then turned over and sat up in one motion and snatched the glass and drained it between trembling lips in another. He dropped the empty glass, thrust a hand into the front of his sleeping jacket, low down, and brought forth a wad of paper money.

"Here it is!" he cried. "I found it there when I woke up—in my pocket. That's all I know about it. Didn't think you'd believe me—if I told you—took it in my sleep. Don't know anything about the gold. Can't find any gold high or low. Burned a five-pound note—but couldn't go on with it. Didn't know what to do. Knew you wouldn't believe me."

"But if you were innocent," began the Chief Justice—and at that moment the door opened and closed and beside the bed stood a man like a scarecrow, in ragged shirt and weather-stained trousers, with bright and hungry eyes looking out above an untidy beard. The old Chief Justice gasped. Mr. Digby said "What the devil!" The old fellow in bed moved his ashen lips without sound.

"I'll tell you all about that," said the intruder. "I took the money—whatever the old lad may've told you. I stuffed the paper into his pocket, an' him dead to the world, same as all the rest. I'll tell you how it was. I'm poor, an' I've been sick, an' my wife was sick an' no money an' no credit for medicine nor food—an' my children hungry. So I came across from St. Mark's—I'm a boat builder there—to try an' collect twenty or thirty pound from the captain here. He owes me that much anyhow. I was desperate. Had to have the money. Wife burnin' up with fever an' no quinine. I'd of faced the devil for twenty pound.

"I looked in the window an' saw you all asleep—all the gentlemen asleep. An' the cooks an' waiters asleep. So I went in an' tried to wake up the captain. No use! So I drank his sherry. Then I took what he had in his wescut pocket—gold—seven quid. Reckon he owes me more than that—yes, by a damn sight! Drank some port then. Stomach empty. One biscuit in two days. Drank quite a lot of port. Pretty soon I didn't care what I did. So I took the money

off all the gentlemen an' drank all their sherry, thinkin' all the while of my sick wife an' hungry children. But when I came to look at it—well, I had more than I needed. More than I'd come to get from the old gent. Too much! So I put the paper into his pocket, all but three five-pound notes, an' cleared out an' went home to St. Mark's an' bought quinine an' food an' paid the rent. An' that's the truth, so help me God!"

The Chief Justice was the first to speak. "William, who is this man?" he asked.

The harbor master continued to gaze at the intruder's gaunt and bearded face and glowing eyes.

"Are you—some one I know—used to know?" he asked in a dry whisper.

The intruder nodded with an ironic smile.

"Are you—James?"

Again the thin man nodded.

"He is James," said the harbor master, turning his dazed glance and bloodless face to the Chief Justice. "James. I haven't seen—nor heard of him—for years."

"James?" queried the Chief Justice. "What James? James who?"

"James Keel—my son."

"Your son! Starving! Great heavens, man! Look at him!"

"I didn't know. He went away, to sea, years ago. I had another son—who was lost at sea. It was all a long time ago. I—I had forgotten James."

Captain Keel is still Princeport's harbor master. But he is changed. Even Newsam does not stand so desperately in awe of him as of old. And his last dinner party, celebrating the seventy-first anniversary of his birth, was entirely unofficial. The old Chief Justice and Mr. Digby of Sugar Hill were the only guests outside the family.

James Keel, who works in the custom-house, has changed his clothes and dispensed with his beard.

Look for more of Mr. Roberts' work in a future issue.

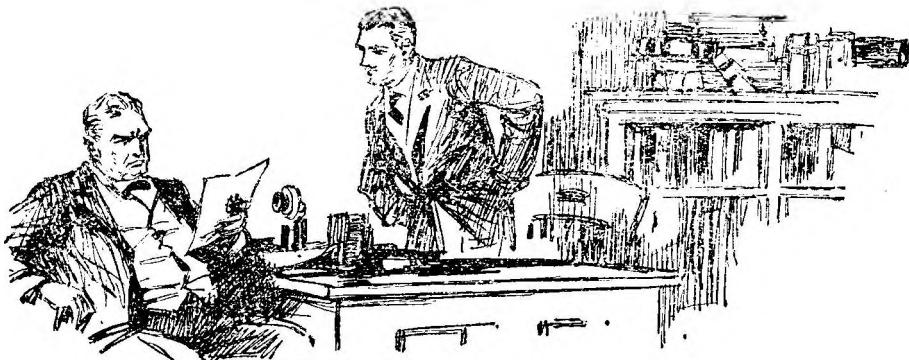


SUPERFLUOUS PRECAUTION

THE town council of a little German community out in Indiana had assembled in a chapel preparatory to inspecting a proposed site for a new cemetery. As the weather was oppressively warm, they took off their coats.

"One fellow," suggested Herr Baum, "can stay behind and watch these coats."

"What's the use?" demanded the mayor. "If we are all going out together, what's the need of anybody to watch the clothes?"



According to His Folly

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "The Piecework Gods Take Charge," "The Place of the Gods," Etc.

The Pink One discovers that a good turn has come home to roost.

FROM where he stood with Sidney Johnston Orr in the street entrance of the high building in which Orr had his law office Boone Adams observed an incredibly pink youngish man approaching them along the crowded sidewalk and his deceptively frank eyes narrowed as he said resentfully:

"Here comes the fool Englishman now. He doesn't suspect that he owes us ten thousand and that he's going to pay it presently—with tall interest."

"Silly ass, what?" grinned Orr, quoting an unflattering comment upon himself that the "Pink One" had made to them on the occasion of their first meeting, when the subject of the Englishman's complete unfamiliarity with America and Americans had come up. "Doesn't it beat time how these Britishers can be big enough men to put over a tremendous project like this proposition they've got here and yet send over a mutt like that to boss it? That's Johnny Bull for you! So cocksure of their superiority that anybody is good enough to do business for them with backwoods Texans. Well, what's their loss is our gain."

"I meant to phone you but I've been busy all the mawnin' until just now when I had lunch with the man I was doing business with," Adams said. "I take it you saw the right people at Austin yesterday and

didn't have any great difficulty fixing things."

"Leave it to old Sidney J. to know how to do simple little stunts like that," Orr replied modestly. "Mistuh Hugh Puttley Vanovah is due to learn a few details about Texas corporation law that he never suspected, pretty pronto. Then after he's got to chasing himself in a circle trying to get out of the mess he finds himself in, he gets sent to me to show him the exit—and me, I'm the old bushy-tailed law fox that can do it. Price, fifteen thousand."

"I don't see why we can't press that and make it twenty."

"Carver says not," Orr replied.

"Carver plays his cards too tight," Adams grumbled. "Just because he knew an Englishman once up in New York who was smart enough to trim him in a deal he's got a respect for them out of all reason." He lowered his voice as the subject of their conversation drew nearer. "We're committed to pay something to your friends at Austin, of course. How much?"

"I made a right pretty bargain," Orr told him. "They wanted a thousand, to be paid when the scheme worked, but we ain't taking any chances on its working—it's bound to—so I talked them into taking five hundred cash as soon as they've done their share by notifying him what's what."

"That's all right," Adams conceded. "But I still think we ought to charge him twenty thousand. We'll have him thrown and hog tied. Why not get while the getting is good?"

"We'll ask Carver. Come up with me to the office after Pinkie is gone; he's going to stop to talk to us," Orr murmured.

The approaching pedestrian had pink skin, pink hair, pink eyelashes and ultra-pink finger nails, and even the walking stick which he swung widely to the scandal of noncane-carrying business men on a Texas street in the early afternoon of a Texas business day had a handle that was pinkish. He wore clothes of English weave and cut and he walked with his elbows out a bit from his sides. He appeared to be about thirty and young for his age, although as a matter of fact he had passed his thirty-seventh birthday.

Boone Adams, who was a rich ex-cattleman and looked it, and Attorney Orr, who was an ex-lobbyist, also more than well-to-do, but looked like nothing but a big, cheery, hail fellow well met, had from his arrival among them disliked Hugh Puttley Vanover on general principles for being pink and of a certain British type which they held in scorn. They regarded him with a greater displeasure now because of a business casualty that had befallen them less than a month before, soon after Vanover had arrived from London to be the general South Texas representative of the North British Contract Syndicate, Limited.

They, with their third partner in shrewd and not always creditable undertakings, one Barry Carver, who had come from New York for his health and remained for his pocketbook, had devised a perfect plan for taking a considerable sum of money from the English syndicate and the plan had turned out to have a certain surprising imperfection whereby they not only had failed to acquire the cash they had anticipated, but had found themselves at the end saddled with an equity in a large piece of ranch property which they did not want and had bought at too high a price.

That this had been due to any effort on Vanover's part they had not the slightest suspicion. One of Vanover's office clerks who was in their pay had made an error of judgment in decoding a cablegram that the Pink One had given him to send, and Adams, Orr and Carver, in consultation, had

been participants in the error. They had all been victims of an amazing but practically unavoidable accident, that was all. Vanover, far from having had any part in the thing, was not even aware of it; they were sure of this, the Pink One having verified it in the course of a conversation that must have been sincere, he being far too transparent a blockhead for it to have been otherwise.

Although the incident rankled the trio had not wept long over the upset milk but set out to mop it up at their earliest opportunity, with a little cream on the side to pay for their delay and trouble. The fact that Messrs. Adams, Orr and Carver, although they always remained strictly within the letter of the law, were never unduly scrupulous in their business transactions had during a long association made them exceedingly competent moppers.

Vanover came to a stop beside the pair in the doorway, beaming genially.

"What ho!" he exclaimed. "You johnnies are looking fit! Jolly bright sunshine, what?"

"It's the kind of weather us Texans advertise," Adams replied cordially.

Vanover blinked with slight perplexity.

"The kind of—oh, I see. You mean in the newspapers. To attract the fellows from Cook's, and all that sort of thing. Yes. It's ripping weather for the work—our work on the dam, you know. No rains. Tornado River low; nothing to interfere with getting on with the construction. Ahead of schedule"—a veiled flicker of amusement passed between Adams' eyes and Orr's at the English pronunciation of "schedule"—"and everything cheerio. Ever been connected with dam construction or irrigation projects, either of you?"

"I have to admit," Orr said with boisterous good humor, "that I don't know any more about building a dam than Andrew Jackson did about cranking a Ford."

Again a puzzled look came into Vanover's eyes. He was often bewildered by American speech.

"Andrew Jackson. Yes. Quite so," he said. "I know him. But this slang—I'm getting it but every now and then it's perplexing. Just what, if you don't mind, is the point about his not understanding motors?"

"You know him!" Adams exclaimed.

"Perhaps there are two, what? The one

I mean takes care of my clothes. Blackamoor—I mean darky, you know. Public valet at the hotel."

"I was thinking of another one," Orr said without going into who and what the original Andrew was. "He lived where they didn't have 'em. So everything is running smoothly in your line, eh?"

"Oh, rather," the Pink One said. "Dam going right along. Irrigation tracts below it all surveyed. Materials ordered and beginning to come in for the branch railway. Town site located, laid out and ready for building as soon as the railway metals reach there. And we're going to have our own bank to handle our finances. I fancy you may have seen something about that in the newspapers."

"Yes," Orr said.

"Top hole idea, that, don't you think? Saves interest and all that, no end. Sir Horace's suggestion, it was—Sir Horace Bassin, you know, chairman of the board. Clever old top, Sir Horace! What's your American word? Cagelike."

"Cagy," Adams smiled.

"That's it. Awful ass getting new idioms, and all that, I am. Due to never having been in the States before, of course."

"I don't doubt you have phrases that would sound as queer to us," Orr generously admitted. "Neither Adams nor I have ever been out of America any more than you had ever been out of England."

"Right-o," beamed Vanover. "As regards this bank, under the circs—Texas interest eight per cent and all that sort of thing—it's a rather clicking idea, don't you think?"

Adams carefully let Orr reply.

"Fine," the lawyer agreed enthusiastically.

"Well, I'll be breezing along. All kinds of silly things to get out of the way at the office this afternoon and an early dinner engagement." The Pink One smiled upon them comprehensively. "Jolly to meet you again, and all that."

Adams followed Orr to the elevator and they were silent as it slid upward. As they moved along the hallway toward the open door of Orr's office the ex-cattleman said:

"Why did you tell Vanover his idea was fine? Why not look dubious and get his brain to slowly working on the idea that you know something about it that he doesn't? Then when he gets word that there's a hitch

and is told you're the best man in this neck o' the woods to wrestle with a problem like that he's already sort of half prepared. Seems to me it always needs to be remembered that he don't absorb more than one real thought a week and his mind needs to be got ready for it."

"Ever read the Bible, Boone?" the lawyer asked, laughing.

"You know it," the ex-cattleman said reproachfully, being rather proud of his regular Sunday attendance at one of the wealthiest churches in town.

"You'll find the answer somewhere in Proverbs," Orr told him as they reached the door. "'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.'"

They passed in and a young man who had been sitting just inside the doorway rose and said half apologetically:

"Howdy, Judge Orr. I want to see you just a minute, please, suh."

The youth was thin and pale and even so short a speech as he made was punctuated by a cough. The broad smile that had been illuminating Orr's face was wiped off instantly, and the lawyer replied:

"I'm very busy just now. What is it, Manning?"

The young man looked embarrassed. He coughed again and then said:

"I'd like to see you alone, please, suh."

"No use," Orr told him coldly. "I can't extend your time. I'd like to but I can't."

"But, judge! I've been sick, you know, like I told you the other day, and my wife isn't well, either. I haven't been able to raise but forty dollars. If you couldn't let me have a month or two—"

"I can't," the lawyer told him. "We went into all that."

"But, listen! You ain't going to foreclose after all we've paid in on that mortgage just because we can't make this one payment on time, are you, judge? Why, just as soon as I get a little strength back—and it isn't like I wasn't able to put up some security."

"You mean that worthless old 'Texas General Development Company' charter?"

"It isn't worthless. You yourself said it—"

"I said I would take it off your hands for the two hundred and forty dollars that is due to-morrow but I didn't say it was worth it. It may be some time but more likely it will never be worth a cent. There are any

quantity of those old charters kicking around the State—I've already got one or two of them myself. Really in offering you two hundred and forty dollars for it I'm doing you a big favor."

"But my father always said it was worth at least five hundred."

"He didn't ever find anybody willing to pay that for it, did he? No, I won't take it as security and I won't pay you a cent more than two-forty for it."

"I won't sell for that."

"As you please," Orr said. "I'm sorry you've been sick but I can't afford to carry you. I am willing to take that old charter purely as an accommodation. Otherwise I have to have the money. To-morrow. If you haven't got it go borrow it somewhere. And I'm busy now," he added impatiently as Manning would have again protested. "I haven't time to talk—and there isn't anything more to be said, anyway."

He and Adams crossed the room and entered Orr's private office. The moment the door had closed behind them Adams exclaimed:

"What's the idea? Isn't that another one of those charters? Great snakes, Sidney, you ain't passing up a chance to corral it for five hundred at this stage of the game, are you?"

"Why pay five hundred when it will fall into our laps for two-forty?" Orr asked. "I know that boy's resources. He can't borrow two hundred and forty dollars any more than he can borrow two hundred and forty thousand. Nobody would lend him anything on that charter, even if he had any friends with money, and he hasn't. To-morrow he'll be in here calling me a robber but he'll come across with the *lil' ol' charter*—and we'll have another on hand to use when it comes necessary like we're using the other one. He isn't going to lose his equity in his home just to hold out for a couple of hundred dollars more money, is he?"

Adams shook his head seriously.

"You're playing the hand pretty strong," he said. "There's darn few of those charters anywhere and while they ain't worth anything except when somebody is in the fix our pink friend is going to find himself in I hate to take the chance of having one batting around just at this minute."

"It won't be batting around after to-morrow," Orr assured him. "By to-morrow evenin' it'll be sleeping nice and comfortable in

old Sidney J.'s safe. How long since you was ever willing to pay five hundred dollars for something you could get for two-forty? I know this Manning hombre. He's got no friends with money, nobody but a friend would lend him without security, and one of those charters, so far as any banker or financial house could see it, simply ain't any security a-tall."

"Oh, you're right, of course," the ex-cattleman agreed. "Even if there was anybody who knew all the details of what is coming off and wanted to hold us up there'd be no chance of their ever getting in touch with him. It just sort of gave me a start to hear about one of those things being peddled cheap right now when we're making a bull market for another one."

"That's the time to play your cards so as to replace the stock on the shelf cheap," Orr grinned. "This fellow being sick and unable to make his mortgage payment at just this minute looks like a dispensation of Providence to me."

In the outer office Manning had stood for a moment looking undecidedly at the door through which the older men had passed. Then he turned and moved slowly out of the room and along the hallway toward the elevators, coughing.

II.

Across the table from the Pink One in an almost empty hotel dining room sat a good-looking man in his late twenties and a much more than good-looking girl considerably younger, and from the way they listened to Vanover's easy table chatter it was plain to be seen they did not think him altogether a fool nor credit his cheerful conversation to folly.

Joe Sayward was rapidly recovering from the shell shock that had long incapacitated him after his return from France and his wife had lost the look of worry and weariness she had worn when Vanover first met them on the occasion of a business visit to the town of Shrine, not many miles from the scene of the British syndicate's activities.

On that occasion, partly because Vanover had also participated in the war on the Western Front and had a brother who had been shell shocked, and partly because he liked them, felt sorry for their obvious but self-respecting poverty and was naturally a friendly person, he had assisted them—

at no cost to himself more than a hard evening's work with a pair of cable code books—to receive ten thousand dollars for an equity Mrs. Sayward owned in a ranch property, an equity whose ownership she could not establish without a lawsuit of doubtful outcome and which they would have been glad to sell for much less than half ten thousand dollars.

This money had been paid them by Messrs. Adams, Orr and Carver, who expected to sell the property immediately to the English syndicate at an exorbitant profit. It was this ten thousand to which Adams had referred that noon when he exclaimed to Orr that Vanover owed them that amount, which presently he must pay with tall interest.

The Saywards, while filled with gratitude for the good fortune that had come their way through the Englishman, had no real understanding of how it had been accomplished. They knew only that he had told them to hold out for ten thousand dollars and not to let any one know that they were doing it by his advice or even that he and they were friends. They had no more notion than had Sidney Johnston Orr himself of what the Pink One had done to bring the transaction about.

Being in San Antonio for a few days Sayward and his wife naturally had asked their English friend to dine. The early hour they had selected, in order that afterward they could all take in the first evening run of a much-advertised motion picture, gave them the dining room almost to themselves. Not a soul that either the Saywards or Vanover knew saw them together.

"We've put eight thousand dollars," Sayward told the Englishman as the dinner neared its end, "into one of these lumber-company mortgage notes. It nets us seven per cent and the broker wrote a clause on the back of it whereby he agrees to take it off our hands on demand. That is better than five hundred dollars a year income and in a town like Shrine, where it doesn't cost much to live, I can easily make enough, added to that, to live on comfortably, now that my health is getting so much better. After a while, we're aiming to buy into some good electrical business, somewhere."

"Topping!" Vanover enthused. "It won't be any time, now, before the good old nerves get altogether fit. I know the symptoms; my young brother had them all. You're

getting jolly well along toward being cured. Don't worry about that electrical business unless it happens to be what you want more than anything else. It won't be long, now, before our development there at the new town site makes a place you can fit into."

"You've been so good, Mr. Vanover!" Mrs. Sayward said warmly.

"Silly nonsense!" the Pink One beamed. "I want johnnies on our work that we can depend upon, what?"

"And we've paid up all our bills and fixed up the house and got some furnishings we needed badly," Mrs. Sayward told him.

"And just to prove I think ten thousand dollars makes me a regular John D. Crœsus," put in Sayward, with a sheepish look in his wife's direction, "I distribute hundred-dollar bills to anybody that meets me on the street and asks for them."

Mrs. Sayward looked upon her husband with a light of fond pride in her deep gray eyes.

"You would think, Mr. Vanover, that he had done something I blamed him for, wouldn't you?" she said. "Well, I don't. I think he did exactly right. You helped us out when we needed it right badly. We can't pay you—not in money anyway. I think Joe did just right in sort of passing it along. He feels conscience-stricken because he didn't want to consult with me."

"It is really all your money," Joe said.

"It is our money," she corrected him gently. "As long as you've brought up the subject you might as well tell Mr. Vanover what you did."

"I met an old buddy of mine on the street this evenin'—a fellow that was in the Ninetieth with me," Sayward said. "And he was sure up against it and natchully he stopped me to spill his hard-luck story. And I wound up by giving him two hundred dollars."

Sayward frowned, then corrected himself.

"That ain't a fair way to put it," he said, "because he wasn't a beggar. In a way, he gave me security; at least he thinks it is security, although seeing it hasn't ever been of much of any value to him, I don't see how it's ever likely to be worth anything to me. He could have turned it into two hundred and forty but that doesn't prove I ever could. He's had it ever since his father died. One of those old Texas Reconstruction charters."

"Reconstruction?"

"One of those charters that were granted during the reconstruction days, you know," Sayward explained.

"Oh, yes. I see," said Vanover, who hadn't the slightest idea what his friend was talking about, the various phases of the American civil conflict of the 'sixties and the period that followed it being about as clear in his mind as the details of the Crimean War are to the average American.

"And I'll say they were some charters," Sayward went on. "Gave a corporation the right to do anything except commit murder and steal—and I'm not sure homicide and larceny mightn't be authorized under some circumstances. This buddy of mine—his name is Manning—said his father had never been able to sell it, though. He never came in touch with anybody that happened to need such a charter and I don't guess I'm likely to either. Well, it won't eat up any of the family food, lying there in the safe deposit with the lumber company note."

"You didn't tell Mr. Vanover why he had to have the two hundred," Mrs. Sayward reminded her husband.

"He owes it to that loud-mouthed crook, Sid Orr."

"Orr. Yes. Unfortunate to be in debt to Orr, I should fancy," the Pink One commented.

"You said a mouthful, King. This Manning got married and bought him a little home here in San 'Ntonio and Orr holds the mortgage. And Manning has had pneumonia, and his wife has been sick, too, and a six-month payment, principal and interest, is due to-morrow, and when he went to Orr to try to get more time the old Shylock told him he'd foreclose if he didn't get his pound of flesh. Manning offered him the charter as security, but the best Orr would consider was to take it for the two hundred and forty that is due—and Manning swears it ought to be worth five hundred and wouldn't let Orr trim him out of it that a way. Orr told him he already has a couple of charters like it. Well, when Manning met me and began to cuss out Orr and tell his troubles—he had forty toward the payment and I let him have two hundred and he agrees to pay it back some time with interest or, if I want, I can have the charter by giving him two hundred dollars more. He's come down on the price from five hundred to four—but not to Orr."

Sayward looked across at where the late

sunlight through a west window was emphasizing the reddish glints in his wife's brown hair, and said:

"I reckon I'd better let Belle carry the family bank roll in future; don't you think so, Mr. Vanover?"

Mrs. Sayward smiled reassuringly upon him but addressed the Englishman:

"If I did I'd spend more than two hundred to get anybody out of the clutches of that Adams-Orr-Carver crowd. It's true they don't owe us anything, the way it turned out, but I haven't forgotten it was Boone Adams' money sharking that lost Uncle John the Scott Ranch, and if you hadn't come along and told us what our share of grandmother's homestead interest was worth—"

"By golly, something most slipped my mind!" interrupted Sayward. "I've been so busy up here in San 'Ntonio, with a head that don't work as good as a real head, anyway, that I darn near forgot something I was aiming to tell you. Manning, while he was waiting in Orr's office, heard Adams and Orr talking, and they mentioned you. It must have been you—there isn't anybody else of your name in town, far as I ever heard. Manning only told it sort of accidentally, sputtering his troubles to me. He didn't even know you and I are acquainted and I didn't see any necessity for telling him. He said—"

Sayward knit his brows, recalling the details.

"Adams asked Orr why he had told you your idea was fine, instead of preparing you for the trouble that's coming. And Orr quotes Bible at him; that riled Manning more than anything else, hearing that old crook quote the Bible. He couldn't tell me just what the verse was and I don't know the Bible well enough to say it, either. But it starts, 'Answer a fool according to his folly.' Something to the effect that if you don't, he'll think he's as smart as you."

Vanover was still smiling but his eyes were not as stupid as usual.

"'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit,'" he said softly.

"Do you know what he meant, Mr. Vanover?"

"No."

"You don't suppose they are fixing to get square with you for what you did for us!" Mrs. Sayward exclaimed intuitively.

"I don't think they know that I ever even heard of your transaction," Vanover said. "However, we always had a rule in the old Intelligence Service, there in France, that when in doubt it's a good idea to credit the enemy with knowing as much as it is possible for him to know. Saves overconfidence."

The Pink One looked at his watch.

"Time to be toddling along if we want to see that cinema," he said. "And thanks no end for the information about what your friend overheard. I'll perhaps be able to razz the old bean, by and by, and recall what conversation the jolly pirate crew was referring to. 'According to my folly.' A bit thick, what?"

III.

The mystery of Attorney Orr's hallway debate with his partner Adams was made clear to the Pink One two or three days later when a broad-beamed, good-natured-appearing person whom he had met a few times socially and vaguely understood to be somehow interested in politics although not an office holder, dropped into his office, carefully closed the door from the outer room and remarked that something had come his way that in ordinary friendliness he thought he ought to pass along—in confidence.

"Confidence," Vanover repeated, his eyes unusually blank. "Quite so."

The caller hitched his chair near enough so that from time to time he could lean across and tap the Pink One impressively upon the knee and proceeded to divulge information that it seemed he had fallen upon accidentally during a trip to Austin the day before.

The North British Contract Syndicate was planning to do a number of things not embraced in its original plans, he understood. Among them, to develop a town site. And a municipal light and power plant for it. And a bank. Was he right?

Vanover admitted that he was. The matter was no secret; it had been in the newspapers.

The visitor leaned nearer and became more mysteriously impressive. Had Vanover given thought to how he was going to do these things? Under which charter?

Vanover opined that the syndicate's Texas attorney had these matters in charge and

had said they ought not to present any difficulties.

"But does he know?" the caller asked. "Does he *know*? A good lawyer for ordinary business things, old Maxner is, but when it comes to politics—he isn't wise, that's all. He isn't wise."

The visitor elucidated.

There must be influences in the State government unfriendly to Vanover and Vanover's company. He didn't know who or what they were. Hadn't had time to find out: might not be able to find out if he tried—not in the limited time at their disposal, anyway. The enemies might be old-fashioned Texans who resented foreign corporations doing business without getting a Texas permit and thus avoiding the payment of good-sized taxes into the State treasury. The North British Contract Syndicate never had taken out a Texas permit, had it?

"But we have domestic corporations," Vanover said.

Ah, there it was, the caller smiled. Two Texas corporations. The Texas Southern Land and Irrigation Company, which was chartered to build a dam and develop an irrigation project on the acreage below it, and the Tornado Valley Railway Company, which had the right to build a branch railroad from the main line to the dam. But who was going to build the town site? And who was going to run the light and power plant? And—most impressively—where was the charter for the bank?

"I understood there would have to be a special bank charter, of course," Vanover said.

"But did anybody ever tell you you could get it?" his caller demanded. "Anybody in authority, I mean? Any of the tall timbers that have the say about such things? Because I get it mighty straight that while you may be able to get a town-site charter—although not without one whale of a lot of trouble and expense—when it comes to the lighting plant and, especially, to the bank, there'll be nothing doing." The visitor sat back, nodded, and repeated the last two words portentously. "Nothing doing."

"Oh, I say!" Vanover exclaimed.

"And well you might," the other agreed. "So that's that. And when I got wind of it, I says, 'Here's this Vanover, and he's a stranger in a strange land, and I like him,'

and I'm going to put him next, even if the gang gets on to it and takes it out of me for not keeping my face closed."

The Pink One's countenance registered consternation.

"Good of you," he stammered. "Very good of you, I'm sure. But, my word! What are we to do? All our plans are under way—"

His caller shook his head sadly.

"Cussed if I know," he confessed. "I've thought and thought, all the way down from Austin on the train, and the more I've thought the tougher it's got. Looks to me like they've got you stalled on some of your most important work. And I have to admit—bad as I hate to—that I ain't smart enough to see any way out and I ain't any child in politics in this State, either. But there's fellers close to the big ones that I can't get to a-tall—especially when, like in this case, I don't know who they are and can't seem to find out."

Vanover smoothed his always well-brushed pink hair with pink fingers.

"Perplexing, what?" he said vaguely.

"You've said it."

"I suppose I ought to see Maxner—"

The other shook his head.

"No good," he declared with finality. "No good a-tall. Maxner ain't in with the right crowd even as much as I am. If we could only find somebody—"

His face lighted with sudden inspiration.

"The one man in the whole State!" he cried. "Funny I never thought of him before! Do you by any chance know Sidney Orr?"

"Orr," repeated the Pink One dully. "Sidney Orr. Why—er—yes."

"Know him well enough to ask a favor? Or perhaps you wouldn't need to put it as a favor, seeing he's a lawyer. I don't know him very well myself and he and I don't train with the same political crowd but if there's a man in Texas who could think of a way out of this mess you're in, it's him."

"I say! It might be a good idea for me to talk to him." Vanover exclaimed with an air of having thought of this himself.

His caller rose.

"I bet you're right," he said. "And yet—I wouldn't be too hopeful if I was you. It's going to be a mighty hard thing to fix and maybe he can't do it. But if he can't I don't know who can."

"It's ripping of you to pop in and tell

me all this," the Pink One told him as they shook hands at the door. "Friendly, what? I won't forget it."

"That's all right," disclaimed the other. "I couldn't see a stranger that I like up against it and not slip him a little help. Good luck to you."

"Thanks," said Vanover. "I'll do the same for you some time if it ever comes so that I can."

He walked slowly back to his desk when the door had closed and there was no one to observe him, and sat before it several minutes, his eyes narrowed on its polished surface.

"The good old squeeze," he murmured, "and rather well done, too. I haven't encountered it in just this form since that time in Hangchau. My word, but I was jolly well rattled that day—but that was years ago, when you and I were young, Hughie."

He telephoned Joe Sayward, who was to leave town for home that evening. Then he called Attorney Maxner and made an appointment to be at Maxner's office in an hour.

After the office had closed, that night, he wrote a pen letter to the eminent Sir Horace Baffin, chairman of the board of the North British Contract Syndicate, explaining the necessity for a relatively small but unanticipated expense. It would have been a source of vast surprise and something of a shock to his Texas acquaintances if they could have looked over his shoulder and observed that it began, "Dear Uncle Horace."

IV.

Attorney Sidney J. Orr listened with serious attention the following forenoon while the Pink One, across the desk from him, haltingly told him how he had been advised by a friend of the obstruction at the State capital and informed that nobody could help him overcome it so well as Orr.

"I'm not exactly retaining you—not at this moment anyway," he said in conclusion. "We have our regular solicitor, you know, and perhaps I ought to have had him see you, but it seemed as though it would be quite all right for me to look into it myself. If you can see some way out of it that I haven't been able to think of I shall expect to pay fairly for it, of course."

"That's all right, my boy," Orr replied cordially. "You and I are good friends and

unless I can really be of help I wouldn't want to charge you. No, sir. That isn't my way. By thunder, I won't charge you a cent, Vanover, not even if I *can* help—not even a nominal fee. This development that you-all are doing is a big thing for the State and the section and if there's a bunch of mossbacks up there at the capital that want to upset your plans, a public-spirited fellow such as I am ought to help you merely as a matter of good citizenship."

"Oh, good of you!" exclaimed Vanover. "Quite so. What do you suggest?"

Orr thought deeply.

"I haven't got enough pull," he said after a moment, "to alter the minds of those fellows if they've decided to make you a bunch of trouble. What they probably want to do is make you take out a Texas permit for your big British company to do business here—and the cost of that in the long run is practically prohibitive. No, I can't shift them, probably. I might as well admit it first as last. So that means—"

He pondered further.

"If we could only find one of those old Reconstruction charters," he finally said, as though thinking aloud.

"Reconstruction?" the Pink One murmured blankly.

"They're blanket affairs," Orr enlightened him. "Authorize their holders to do everything—hold and develop land, go into merchandizing, run light and power plants, even banks. There are still one or two in existence that ain't working and I think I know where I can find one. If we could buy that, cheap enough—"

"How much would be cheap enough?" Vanover asked.

"They're supposed to be held at around twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars," Orr told him, "but I've had shoes and been about and sometimes I have ways to go after things for my friends. If we had good luck I might be able to buy the one I'm thinking of for around fifteen thousand. Considering the fix you're in that would be a right pretty bargain, wouldn't it?"

Vanover sat and considered this, frowning. His eyes were unusually stupid when he looked up and said:

"But I don't quite understand—I'm a bit of an ass about absorbing new ideas, you know—I don't quite understand how this charter you speak of would be any better than the one we've already got to

work the town site under, and the lighting plant, and the bank, and all that."

He took typewritten papers from his breast pocket and scanned one of them with his face puzzled.

"This is a copy of the original," he said. "I don't see why it doesn't quite cover what you said. Really, I don't." He read aloud: "'And to corporately do any and all other things that individuals are not expressly prohibited from doing by law.' I don't pretend to know how your courts define a clause like that—but it seems to me as though that ought to be authority enough, what?"

Attorney Orr's face had fallen into stiff lines.

"Let me see that," he said sharply and glanced at the final words of the charter's terms. "Do you mean to tell me you own a charter that reads that way?"

"Why, certainly," Vanover told him dully. "Isn't it quite all right? I had a chance to pick it up and it rather struck me it wouldn't be rotten business, what?"

"But it's a Reconstruction—" Attorney Orr hastily turned back the sheet to observe the name of the corporation which had been given such extreme privileges and gasped as he read: "Texas General Development Company."

"Isn't it all right?" Vanover asked anxiously. "Isn't it a good charter? The chapie that picked it up a few days ago from some egg who said he had owned it a number of years told me it was just the thing we needed. And old Maxner said so, too. Why do those blighters up at Austin say we can't do business under this charter?"

Attorney Orr strove to gain control of his features and voice and measurably succeeded. He even achieved a thin smile.

"I don't think they do," he said as he handed back the copy. "They probably don't know that you possess this charter. I want to tell you, Mr. Vanover, that in falling into this document you're a pretty lucky hombre. How much did you pay for it?"

"Oh, I couldn't tell you that, really, Mr. Orr. It wouldn't do, you know. But not as much as fifteen thousand dollars. I'm awfully glad to have you tell me it's all right. That johnny that advised me to come to you said there wasn't anybody knew about such things more than you. And I can't tell you how much I appreciate

your not charging me a fee, pro bono publico, and all that. Thank you no end."

"You're welcome," Orr said shortly and rose hastily to bow Vanover out, having stood about all that he felt he could bear in one forenoon.

The Pink One wrote a letter to Joe Sayward that evening:

I am inclosing, to your order, a cashier's check for one thousand dollars in payment for your friend's charter. His price to you was four hundred dollars but if I were you I would pay him five, which will completely satisfy him, being all he ever asked. The remaining five hundred is yours very fairly.

I suggest that it might be as well if you do not allow it to become publicly known that

you acted as the direct go-between in this transaction, as there are persons who had an earlier opportunity to purchase the charter who might feel disposed to be revengeful, this being the second occasion on which you have profited through them. They know I have it but not where I secured it and presumably credit me with having bought it through some bank or broker.

My best regards to Mrs. Sayward and all good wishes to yourself. Faithfully yours,

HUGH P. VANOVER.

P. S.—Do you recall that a certain rather loud-speaking person quoted Scripture one day recently? The twenty-sixth chapter of Proverbs has two verses in it regarding fools and their folly which contradict one another. The one he didn't quote reads: "Answer *not* a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."

Look for more stories by Mr. Davis in early issues.



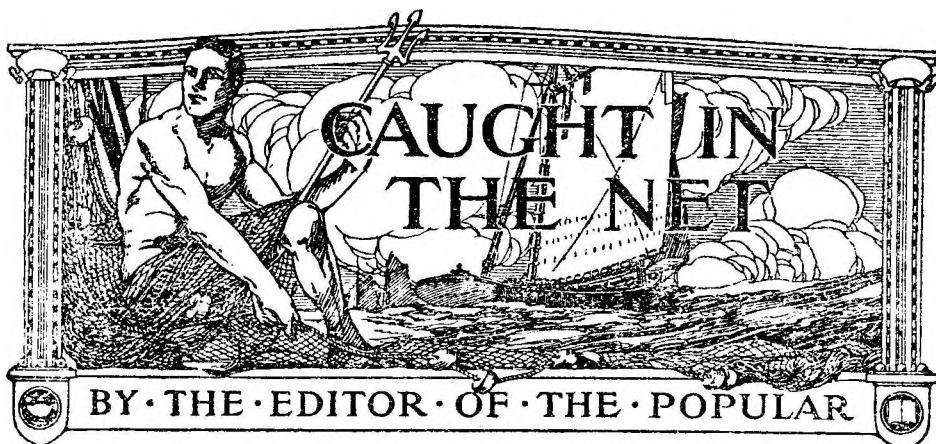
THE TONE OF TIME

ONE of the accusations brought against us as a people lacking in the finer artistic sense is that we fail to appreciate the delicate, softening tone of time in our architecture. We mistake it for the discoloration of grime and when a church or a public building begins to look dingy there is an immediate agitation to have it sand-scoured. Few of us have the artist's eye which sees in the discolored stone exquisite tints of orange and russet-brown. We want the "dirt" scrubbed off.

Apropos of the tone of time and the dust of antiquity, a story is told of Florence which illustrates the difference between the European viewpoint and our own. A few years before the outbreak of the World War the municipal authorities of Florence took it into their heads to order a thorough cleansing of their masterpieces of sculpture in the Loggia dei Lanzi. Great was the amazement and horror of the Florentines to see the douching and scrubbing of the revered works of art in their city. "The 'Perseus' of Benvenuto Cellini, the 'Sabine' of Di Bologna and the 'Judith' of Donatello were threatened with baths! Indignation ran high and the leading citizens of Florence petitioned and demanded that their treasures remain untouched by the vandal scrubbing brush.

The English people are quite wrought up over the possibility of having to clean away the tone of a thousand years which lies over Westminster Abbey like a hallowed veil. Time has given that historic structure a mellowness that nothing else can achieve. But it has come to public attention lately that the noxious vapors from industries in the vicinity of Westminster Abbey have had a disintegrating effect upon the ancient stones and it has been proposed that the venerable pile be given a whitewashing to save it from utter destruction. No Englishman of fine sensibilities can tolerate the idea of Westminster Abbey being whitewashed and it is probable that some genius will come forward with some preservative mixture that will save the Abbey and maintain its tone of antiquity.

It is odd to consider the artistic value of dirt, but such is the case. The painter Turner, we are told, was keenly alive to the æsthetic possibilities of dirt and frequently would throw a handful of it at some canvas to secure a desired effect. Sir David Wilkie understood its importance, too, for one day while looking at an exceedingly fastidious painting by Clarkson Stanfield said to the artist: "Mr. Stanfield, ye have yet to learn, sir, that durtt is a capital thing—a capital thing is durtt!"



BY THE EDITOR OF THE POPULAR

SELLING ABILITY

WHAT is it? Many think they know but when you come to pin them down their answers are so divergent that you conclude that salesmanship has as many facets as human nature itself, and that, finally, success in that big field is largely a matter of two things—knowledge and personality. Most salesmen will tell you that salesmanship cannot be taught and that it is the bitter-sweet fruit of long experience, study of your market and skill in handling human nature. And doubtless this is as close as you can get to definition.

Yet there is one thing the matter with most prospective salesmen, which, while not altogether peculiar to their class, is peculiarly prevalent in their midst. They want to begin at the top! Usually the man who thinks he can sell thinks he can sell anything and so rather than peddle pins, for instance, as a starter, he wants to handle the big-time stuff. Not that we advocate peddling pins especially, but selling some simple necessary article is generally productive of greater encouragement in readier sales to the ambitious purveyor, and it provides valuable and many-sided lessons in human nature.

For a long time we have held that the glamorous advertisements that we see in every daily newspaper, calling for men of no particular experience, to sell some easy article or service at a fat salary and commission, is responsible for more destruction of latent selling ability than any other one factor in the country. It distorts the perspective of a young man and the chances are it warps or thwarts any native ability he may possess.

The writer was once associated with one of the eminent sales managers of the United States, a man who had come up from the bottom rung of the long ladder of selling success, and he used to say:

"One of the best ways of learning salesmanship is by trying one's hand at house-to-house canvassing of some article, either in one's spare time or as a regular occupation. Selling merchandise on commission in this way is not only the best but the quickest way of acquiring proficiency in salesmanship. More can be learned at kitchen doors from distracted housewives and unfriendly husbands, within a few months, than could be derived from a year's study of a whole library of textbooks on the subject. Try house-to-house canvassing for a few years if you would acquire proficiency in salesmanship. There is no better training and it will not only develop your selling capacity but it will bring you self-reliance and confidence. Succeed there and you are ready for the most difficult of the politer and higher-class propositions."

Which, of course, is like asking a budding dramatist to become a sceneshifter, but both are the likely foundations of success.

GOOD BUSINESS?

A NEW YORK banker says that a man who earns a salary of only thirty-five dollars a week can assure himself of financial independence in his old age. Persistent thrift and compound interest will bring him his reward. The plan is this: At the age of twenty-five the man starts to save a fifth of his salary—the banker says that it can be done. In three years he will have a thousand dollars which he should invest in safe and sane securities. After that he should save a seventh of his salary until he is sixty-one years old, when he will have twenty-seven thousand dollars, the interest from which at four per cent will enable him to retire on an income of one thousand and eighty dollars a year.

We are poorly qualified to argue with bankers on matters of dollars and cents; yet we dare wonder if this plan is really good business for the average ambitious young American. The assurance of an independent old age is a comfortable thing that like most things in this world may be bought at a price—and like most other things at a price that can be too high. Of course the man who in the ordinary circumstances of life spends all he earns is little better than a fool; as wise old Ben Franklin put it:

For age and want, save while you may:
No morning sun lasts the whole day.

Every one should put away something for the threatened rainy day or to make possible the grasping of opportunities that come to most of us; yet we are far from convinced that lifelong saving until it hurts for the sole purpose of being able to retire at the age of sixty-one is so sound a scheme as our banking friend would have us believe. There is thrift in spending as well as thrift in saving. Dollars invested in the good things of life are not wasted. Who can prove that money spent wisely for books, or theater tickets, or travel, or a Ford car, or any other wholesome amusement isn't as soundly invested as money handed in at a bank teller's window? A reasonable portion of a man's earnings thriftily spent should help bring him to the age of sixty-one so young in mind and body that he will laugh at the thought of retiring on a thousand a year—or on ten thousand, for that matter. "To be otherwise is to ossify; and the scruple monger ends by standing stock-still," wrote Stevenson in an essay that taken well to heart should see a man bravely through this world and creditably into the next, and his thought applies as well to the accumulation of money as to any other aspect of living. For the voyage through life "Safety First" is an excellent life preserver but an unsatisfactory compass.

REVERSING THE PRINCIPLE

ECONOMISTS used to explain the late militarism of Germany as the result of an excessive birth rate. They argued that Germany wasn't big enough to hold all the Germans, present and to come, and that, therefore, she was obliged to contemplate a policy of conquest in order to take care of the imminent overflow in population. Japanese war mongers fall back on the same thesis, as they sound their strident call to arms. When Japan is no longer big enough for the Japanese, they say, the mikado will forcibly annex and colonize some weaker nation. The principle seems sound. But it is interesting to note that in the case of France, to-day the popular "militarist peril," the principle is reversed.

For years France's birth rate has been falling with dizzy speed. Last year it dropped again. The official French birth census for 1922 shows that only three hundred and ninety-six thousand seven hundred and twenty-six new French citizens were born in the past twelvemonth, twenty-four thousand less than in 1921 and twenty-eight thousand less than in 1920. Meanwhile the deaths in France almost equaled the births. There were only nine thousand more births than deaths in France last year. Marriages too have fallen off, to the tune of forty-five thousand in the year elapsed. This alarming fact indicates to the French statisticians that

the French birth rate during the current year will register another drop of at least fifty thousand.

If it be true that France has become a militaristic nation, what becomes of the principle enunciated by the economists and war mongers with respect to Japan and Germany, where the birth rate is high? Can it be that France is not militaristic at all but just desperate?

Certainly France is in no enviable situation. With the best will in the world a nation cannot recruit an army without men. The size of the French army may appear to many as a menace. But the real test of a nation's power, in the eventual analysis, lies not in the size of its army but in the size of its family. If the alarmists will meditate on the record of France's vital statistics they may find there an antidote for their fears, and take comfort.

MORE NEW VOCATIONS FOR WOMEN

THE girls are breaking into new jobs every day. We now have women chauffeurs, women express drivers, women longshore workers and women engineers. For some years women had been working as house carpenters and in a number of other building trades, besides working in a number of miscellaneous avocations. We have women doctors and preachers. Homes are growing in frequency where both husband and wife go daily to work for wages and where the woman does not have to absolutely depend on her husband's earnings for money for household expenses, but receives a pay envelope of her own weekly. In some cases the husband does his own share of the dish washing before and after meals, when time permits. A larger number do their share of the cookery. Workingmen's homes of the old kind are still greatly in the majority but those of the new kind are becoming more numerous. One city can boast of having five women cobblers. In many cobblers' shops, for a long time, girls in the cobbler's family have given the finishing touches when worn shoes were provided with new soles, in blacking the soles by holding them against a revolving blackening wheel and have become experts at their work. It is expected by the time women cobblers are more plentiful that they will sit at their work in more graceful positions than most of the men cobblers feel they are necessitated to adopt when working.

ASK FAIR PLAY FOR PUEBLO INDIANS

AWIDESPREAD protest is being raised through the State of New Mexico and other parts of the United States in behalf of the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico, against the Bursum Indian Bill introduced by Senator Bursum of New Mexico and passed by the United States Senate. It is entitled: "A bill to ascertain and settle land claims of persons not Indian, within Pueblo Indian land; land grants and reservations; in the State of New Mexico."

The leaders in the protest are the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs and the Indian welfare committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Nearly one hundred delegates, including eight governors, representing eight thousand Pueblo Indians in nineteen pueblos in New Mexico, met lately in the pueblo of Santo Domingo, condemned the bill and adopted a memorial to the American people "for fair play and the preservation of Pueblo life." "The bill," the memorial concludes, "will destroy our common life and rob us of everything we hold dear; our land, our customs and our traditions. Are the American people willing to see this happen?"

A list of outstanding objections to the bill has been prepared by those protesting against it. One of its objectionable sections takes from the bureau of Indian affairs its authority to deal with purely Indian problems of administration and government and transfers it to a court of law, which is not supposed to have any experience in solving such problems.

A reason, among others, for the protests against the bill is that it purports to confer jurisdiction upon the State courts of New Mexico, as distinguished from

the Federal courts, over lands once Indian which have been segregated from Pueblo lands by final decree. In some instances such final decrees have been rendered upon facts based on fraudulent claims or upon alleged titles by adverse possession. Other objectionable sections are described in the list. Many, too, object to the vagueness and confusing verbiage of the bill, which furnish opportunities for fraud and perjury.

Should the bill become law it will ruin the Pueblo Indians by the loss of their land and in a short time destroy them. It is in every way unfair to these Indians, who have been rapidly absorbing American ideas and ideals, and as it now stands it bristles with incongruities. Among its provisions several run counter to some of the best traditions of the United States government.



POPULAR TOPICS

OUR government's Reclamation Service has been in operation for twenty years and the result of its work during that period has been the furnishing of a complete water supply to almost a million and a quarter acres of formerly arid land in the West, and a supplemental water supply to over a million acres of privately controlled land that formerly was arid—this at a cost of a hundred and thirty-five million dollars. On government reclamation projects there now are over thirty thousand farms averaging fifty-three acres. From an agricultural viewpoint the work of the Service has added another State to the Union, for the products of the land made fertile by its water supplies equal in value the farm products of the State of West Virginia, or the combined agricultural products of Vermont and Connecticut.



WHERE will the Irish stop? Now it is said that the Irish Free State's political status will make it necessary for John Bull to change the official title of his large establishment from "The British Empire" to "The British Commonwealth of Nations."



RESIDENT membership in the Order of the Brown Derby is hereby extended to the New York department-store advertising man who in announcing a recent sale of raincoats showed ex-members of the A. E. F. just where they get off by remarking in type: "Note well—these are every one a gentleman's raincoats—not army coats." The English is the copy writer's.



THAT the Red government at present in power in Russia is directing a campaign in the United States for the overthrow of our government is charged by William J. Burns, head of the Federal bureau of investigation. He says that soviet agents have caused thousands of circulars advising American workers to engage in mass action against the government to be distributed; that several schools for the teaching of radicalism have been established; that there is a well-organized plot to get Red agents into the army and navy, and that there now are six hundred and eleven radical publications doing their worst in the United States.



SO far in the United States the followers of the communist idea haven't done much but talk. In Europe the red flag is a real menace. The soviet government has a well-trained, well-equipped army of a million and a half men led by trained and often experienced officers. Whether these wearers of Trotsky's six-pointed red star have been organized to keep the present Russian government in power or to fight against other nations is a puzzle that makes European statesmen lose their beauty sleep.

SPEAKING of sovietism reminds us of liberty—the two things are so exactly opposite—and liberty reminds us that from the town of Liberty, Missouri, comes news that the trustees of William Jewell College have demanded the resignation of their professor of biblical literature, who doesn't find it possible to believe in the devil. Perhaps if this gentleman could spend a year or so in Russia he'd be able to get his job back.



THAT the commercial airplane has become a real factor in European transportation is proved by a recently published travelers' guide which includes a complete schedule of airplane services in time-table form. Before long we Americans will be losing our tempers over folders reading something like this:

	A. M.
New York.....	Leave.....a 9.00
Philadelphia.....	Arrive.....b 0.45
Baltimore.....	".....c10.30
Washington.....	".....d10.55e

a Passengers advised to make their wills before boarding plane.

b Passengers who forgot to pay their accident-insurance premiums change to railroad here.

c Twelve-hour stopover allowed passengers who wish to spend a week in this city.

d Motor will be cut off five miles from Washington to avoid awakening members of Congress.

e If pilot makes error in landing, to what address should your remains be forwarded?



MOVING day doesn't mean much in the life of French peasants. The newly instituted Cross of Agricultural Merit is to be awarded the head of any family that has cultivated the same farm for a century or more. One of the first claimants was a man named Poublain whose family has lived on the same farm in Béarn since 1023—a mere matter of nine hundred years.



THREE are few large fortunes in France. Last year, out of a population of thirty millions, only a half million people reported incomes in excess of \$1,500. Another half million taxpayers reported incomes of less than \$750.



AUTOMOBILES are becoming quite common in New York State. A million and a quarter of them were registered last year, an increase of twenty-five per cent over 1921.



JOHN and Mary States, who live in a town of northern Pennsylvania, are the proud parents of a young son. You've guessed it—the boy is named "United."



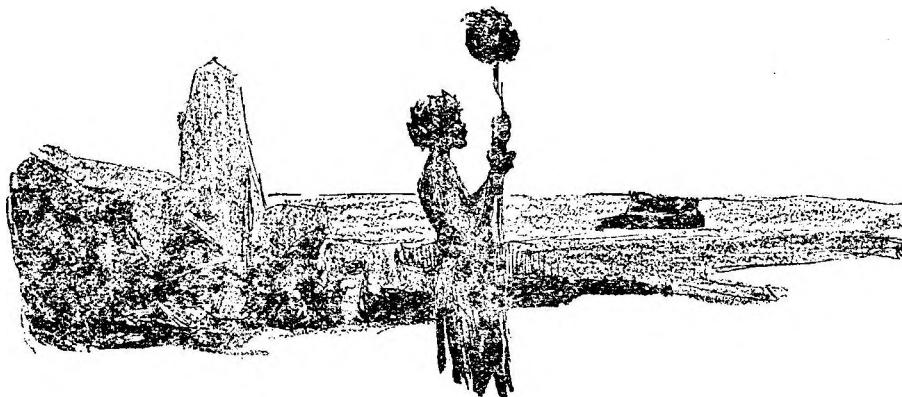
THE National Order of Pipe Smokers, a new organization with several hundred members—and still growing—has been incorporated. Doctor Horace Grant of Atlanta, Georgia, is the national president and the order's motto is "Tolerance and Peace." Offhand we can't think of any two things that the world needs more.



ANOTHER famous ship of the United States navy has sailed on her last cruise and soon will be scrapped. Not long ago the *Olympic*, Admiral Dewey's flagship at Manila Bay and the vessel that brought home the body of America's unknown soldier, was placed out of commission.



A NEW world's record for shorthand speeding was made in a recent contest when Mr. Neale Behnn, a New York court stenographer, transcribed a judge's address to a jury at the rate of 350 words a minute, with but two errors.



The Garden of God

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Blue Lagoon," "Picaroons," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

When Lestrangle finally found his shipwrecked children, Dick, his son, and Emmeline, his niece, they were dead. From the island where they had been cast away, had grown up, and mated, they drifted north in a dinghy, on the bright bosom of the south Pacific, with their two-year-old baby boy. And Lestrangle, searching, had sailed down to meet them, aboard the *Raratonga*. But they were dead. Only their child, little Dick, was left to him alive. Desiring only to end his days on the island where his children had lived and loved, he sailed on southward until he found their home, Palm Tree Island, "The Garden of God." There he landed with little Dick and the sailor Jim Kearney. The *Raratonga* was to have returned at the end of a year but she was never seen again. Lestrangle died after a few months, leaving Dick and Kearney to share the island alone. Years passed and no ship came to take them off. Kearney learned contentment and Dick, knowing no other life, wished for no other. He was thirteen when Katafa came to the island. She was his own age, of Spanish blood and native breeding. As a baby she had been captured by the savage warriors of Karolin Island. The tribal sorceress, fearing some evil to her people from the adoption of the white baby had set upon Katafa the taboo of *taminan*. Its effect was to isolate her from all human beings. She was forbidden to human touch. Bred to the taboo since infancy, it became as much instinct with her to avoid human contact as to breathe. From Karolin she was blown north to Palm Tree Island. To Dick she was just a playmate—he knew nothing of girls. To Kearney she was only a "Kanaka kid." Dick, to Katafa, was, like all human beings, a pure abstraction, a matter of indifference. But Kearney had once tried to touch her. Hence he became an object of suspicion and finally of hatred. And Pixielike, she began to vent her dislike for Jim in teasing, annoying pranks, full of feline malice. It was after one of these offenses on Katafa's part that Kearney, bedeviled out of all patience, attempted punishment. She fled from him in the night, out to the sea rocks. He pursued and sought her behind the rocks and in the tidal pools. And while he searched a great mass heaved itself from the sea, a long sinuous arm whipped about his body. He had fallen the prey of a giant octopus. When Katafa returned to the hut where Dick slept, she walked alone.

(A Four-Part Story—Part III.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

NAN.

JIM!" cried Dick. "Jim—where you gone to?"

He was standing before the house in the early sunlight. He had just come out and Kearney was nowhere to be seen. A breeze had broken the heat and the abso-

lute loveliness of the morning found reflection in the soul of the boy.

The far-off sea that would be purple at noon lay like smashed sapphires beyond the reef, the lagoon whipped by the breeze showed colors unimaginable by man, colors that seemed to live by their own intrinsic brilliancy, stretching from the luminous blue of the near pools to the purples and mauves

of the submerged rotten coral beyond which lay the dancing sapphire that washed the reef line.

Over all the breeze, the flower-blue sky and the gulls.

But Kearney was nowhere to be seen.

Then as Dick called again the girl came out from the trees at the opposite side of the sward, fresh from a dip in the lagoon beyond the cape and with a scarlet flower in her hair which was tied back with a bit of thread liana.

She crossed the sward and the boy, seeing her, bothered himself no longer about Kearney and set to preparing for breakfast. Had he not been so busy he might have noticed a difference in her. She walked assuredly and with a carelessness and an ease that were new to her. In ordinary times she would come for her food as an animal might come, an animal not quite tamed and vaguely distrustful, take her seat at a little distance and wait meekly yet watchfully for the dispensations of Providence. It was different now.

She came close up to Dick and without offering in the least to help stood watching him, taking her seat when the meal was ready as close as "Kea'ney" had sat and helping herself to the food without waiting to be helped.

Even Dick, satisfying his voracious appetite, noticed the change in her now. He did not know what it was in the least and he didn't bother to think, yet in some curious way it disturbed him.

With Kearney there he and Katafa had always been subordinates; between subordinates there is always a bond, a league however vague and unwritten against the master. Youth had helped and the two had made a little society of their own with Dick as leader. This relationship had been strangely disturbed this morning by the absence of Kearney and by the actions of Katafa, who was doing things she had never done before, sitting in a different attitude and speaking in a new tone of assurance and indifference. Dick almost felt that something had happened to himself. Something had.

She had been accustomed to help in clearing away after meals but this morning she just sat and watched. There was not much clearing to be done but Kearney had always been particular that no scraps or fish bones were left about to bring the robber

crabs round scavenging, or the gulls—a dirty camp has always followers. So the scraps were shot into the lagoon, then the plates had to be cleaned and put away on their shelf in the house.

Dick, thinking she was maybe lazy or tired, did not bother. He finished his business and stamped out the fire, reckoning that if Kearney wanted food when he came back he could cook it for himself—but where had Kearney gone to and why was he so long away?

He had not taken the dinghy. The little boat was moored at its usual place by the bank. He must have gone off in the woods.

"Katafa," said Dick, after running to the boat to see if Kearney had taken the fishing tackle, always kept in a little locker in the stern sheets, "what makes Kearney so long away? He has not taken the lines to fish with from the boat."

"Perhaps," said Katafa, "he is on the reef."

"No," replied the boy, "for he has not taken the boat."

"Perhaps he is among the tall trees."

Dick half shook his head as if in doubt. Then raising his voice, he cried again:

"Hai, amonai—Jim! Hai! Hai!"

A far-off echo in the trees caught the hail and sent it back. "Hai! hai!" faint, yet clear came the echo, dying off to a silence troubled only by the sound of the reef.

"He answers," said Katafa, "but he is too far away, he cannot come."

There was a grove on the south beach of Karolin that had an echo; call there and you would hear the spirits of the departed answering you, jeering you in your own voice. She did not believe that the spirit of Kearney was answering Dick; some old spirit of the grove, maybe, but not Kearney. She knew that Kearney was not among the trees and she spoke in mockery.

Dick knew that it was only an echo. He gave another shout and then, dropping the business as a bad job, and Kearney from his mind, ran off to the boat to overhaul the fishing tackle. When he had finished he came back for her to go fishing and found her busy with a huge old grandfather coconut and one of the Barlow knives salved from the wreck.

She must have gone into the house to get the knife but Dick never thought of that—the work she was on held him. She had frayed away the brown husk into a sort of

frill and was busy now on the face of it, making eyes in it and the semblance of a nose and mouth.

A new idea had come to Katafa, a common-sensical idea, and it was this. Nanawa was the active god of Karolin; frightful, capricious, striking right and left when invoked and sometimes hitting the invoker. She had brought him to her twice, and the first time he had roared over the lagoon and broken her canoe, angry no doubt at having been balked by the god of the little ships; the second time, last night, he was much more satisfactory in his behavior. But Katafa had a dim suspicion that had he not found Kearney and taken him to himself she would have found her, and this suspicion was perfectly well founded—he would. She determined not to deal with him again.

Now on Karolin there was another god, Nan. Very old, amiable, the president of the coconut groves, the puraka patches and the pandanus trees, a sort of minister of agriculture, but much beloved, honored and feted. Nan, in fact, was more than a god, he was the symbol of Karolin, just as the British flag is the symbol of Britain. His old carved coconut face was to be found in all the houses and the sight of it to a Karolinite was as the sight of the union jack to an Englishman.

Katafa's idea was to make a symbol of Nan and stick it up on the southern reef; the common-sensical part of the business was the idea of using the deity as a signal. If any fishing canoe from Karolin were to sight that effigy erected on the reef it would come in to explore, and if Katafa knew anything of the Karolinites it would not leave till the whole place had been searched for the persons who had dared to erect the image of the coconut god on an alien shore. For not only would they consider that the god had been trifled with, which was bad, but that his virtue had been diluted, which was worse. He belonged exclusively to Karolin and if he went spending his powers on other islands it would be all the worse for Karolin.

Dick watched the girl as she sat working away on a business as bloody and desperate as that of filling a shell with high explosive. Any little trifling thing beyond the routine of daily life would interest Dick, and now, squatting on his heels, the fishing utterly forgotten, he followed every move-

ment of the knife as it worked away at the mouth of the deity, which was anything but an imitation of a rosebud.

"What are you doing that for?" asked he.

"You were saying but yesterday that the fish were growing smaller in the lagoon," replied she, glancing with head aside at the progress of her work, as a woman might glance at a picture she is painting.

"I know," he replied, "but what are you doing that for?"

"This will bring big fish to the lagoon," replied she darkly.

She saw, as she spoke, not the grotesque Ju-ju she was gazing at but the sun blaze on the waters of Karolin, the azure and chatoyance of those depths where the gulls were always fishing, the great distances, where a mind could soar in freedom, resting on nothing, caring for nothing, heedless of everything. She saw the wind and the sun and the breakers falling on the coral, for the people there she had no more feeling than she had for Dick or the departed Kearney—they were to her only as shadows or ghosts. The place was everything.

Perhaps the old Egyptians knew how to practice the *taminan* taboo and used it on cats with partial effect or an effect that has worn out through the ages; cats, for whom places are more real than people, who live in so strange a world of their own almost beyond human touch.

She could see as she worked the big canoes landing and taking her back; as for what they might do to Dick she neither thought nor cared.

"But how?" asked Dick.

"I will show you," said she, "but first get me what I want."

She gave him some directions and off he went to the groves, taking the ax with him, returning in half an hour or so dragging after him an eight-foot sapling, straight as a fishing rod, four inches thick at the base and tapering gradually to its extremity.

She examined the point of the sapling, then making a hole at the base of the coconut she drove the point in so that the thing was fixed on tight. Then between them they carried the affair to the dinghy, placed it longways with the frightful face staring down at the water over the stern, got in and pushed off.

Dick sculled under her direction, using the oars with a will and vastly intrigued with this new game of attracting big fish.

He half expected to see them coming after the boat or coming up the lagoon lured by this strange bait. Nothing appeared, however; the dinghy passed unfollowed down the long arm of the lagoon, passed the break and the vision of blazing sea beyond, reached the southern part of the reef and tied up.

The wind was fresh this morning and the waves on the outer beach of the reef came in curving and clear as if cut from aquamarine, bursting in snow and thunder, sheeting over the coral and sucking back only to form and burst again; the breeze brought the spray and the mewing of the gulls and the scent of a thousand square leagues of sea. Katafa, her hair blowing in the wind, stood for a moment looking south, south where Karolin lay, the great lagoon in its forty-mile clip of reef, sending its fume and song to the sky, and the sun making haze of the distance.

Then she turned to Dick who was standing beside her supporting Nan.

He could not tell yet how the bait was to be used; with the common sense born in him from his father he was beginning to suspect the whole business as being unpractical; however he said nothing and when she began to search about for a crack in the coral or some convenient hole to take the base of the sapling he helped. They found one some three feet deep, erected the pole, secured it from rocking with lumps of loose coral and sand and then stood to look at their work. The thing was hideous, fantastic and stamped with the seal of the South Seas. The breeze blew the frill on the thing's head and as the sapling swayed slightly in the wind the grotesque and grinning head seemed nodding toward Karolin.

"Ehu!" cried Dick, "but how will that bring the big fish?"

"They will come from there," said Katafa, pointing south.

Dick looked toward the south. He saw nothing but sea, gulls and sky. Then he turned to the dinghy, the girl following him.

CHAPTER XXV. THE MONTHS PASS.

Under the sea surface lies a world ruled by laws of which we know little or nothing. We know that the shoals have roads that they follow and that some master law keeps the balance so that the ocean's population

is checked and restrained to certain limits; that the palu change their feeding ground for some mysterious reason, and that for some other reason equally mysterious the lagoons are poisoned periodically so that the fish become uneatable; but no man knows how or why the poisoner uses his art, or why, as in the instance of Palm Tree, some lagoons are immune.

No one can tell why the fish run small at times as they had been running in Palm Tree lagoon, when the big bream had taken themselves off of late, and the schnapper and garfish rarely scaled more than a few pounds.

Nan, on the southern reef, grinning out to sea, had done nothing, and as the months passed, sliding away in long ribbons of colored days, Dick from time to time rubbed the fact in, Katafa saying nothing. She was not expecting breams. She was expecting the long canoes from Karolin and as the months passed and they did not come she might have lost heart only that she had something else to think about—Dick.

The relationship between the two had altered subtly.

For a long time—some three months or so—Dick had remembered Kearney, wondering what had become of him, even hunting about the woods spasmodically in the chance of coming on him. Dick knew nothing of death. Kearney had gone, that was all—but where?

This incessant reference to Kearney had stirred something in the girl's mind against Dick, a vague antagonism of the type that had been bred by Kearney before he hit her on the back with the tia-wood ball.

On Karolin she had never felt antagonism or hatred to any one of the human phantoms that surrounded her. It had been reserved for Kearney by his attempt to hit her with the seaweed stick and his success in hitting her with the ball to humanize her to the point of being able to feel aversion and hate.

This antagonism against Dick was helped by the fact that he had put her in her place. Without a direct word, yet in a hundred little ways, he made her feel that he was the superior being, or thought himself so.

Keeping still to her shack in the trees she yet came to meals just as she had done on the morning after Kearney's disappearance, taking her seat boldly, close to the boy, and

showing no trace of the old diffidence and humility, but, unchivalrous as a dog, Dick gave her the worst of the fish and while reserving to himself the high office of cleaning the plates gave her the rubbish on a leaf to fling into the lagoon. Fishing, out in the boat, and on the reef it was the same. Dick first, Katafa nowhere.

That is perhaps how sex first came between these two, making a foot mat of the female for the use of his lordship, Dick; sex, a law of nature from the workings of which Katafa was forever barred out by *taminan*. The law which Le Juan had implanted in her subconsciousness had shown its teeth at Kearney because he had attempted to touch her; condemning her to eternal isolation, was it showing its teeth at Dick because he was a man?

Katafa only knew that Dick was going the way of Kearney in her mind, turning from an almost abstraction into something she could resent and dislike for some reason that she could not fathom, for he had never made any attempt to touch her.

One day when Dick had taken the dinghy fishing away beyond the cape he returned elated and triumphant.

"Katafa!" shouted he as he brought the boat up to the bank. "The big fish have come!"

The girl, lying in the shade of the trees by the house, sprang to her feet. The vision of Karolin flashed before her eyes, destroying everything for a moment; then she came running to the bank.

"Where are they?" cried she.

"There," replied Dick, pointing to the boat where a brace of big bream lay, red and silver in the sunlight.

It was like a blow between the eyes.

She sat crouched on the bank watching him with a dark look on her face as he hauled them on shore. Nan had fooled her nicely, but her animosity was not against Nan but against Dick and next day when he went off gayly with a single fish spear to the reef he found that the point had been blunted. Then the fishing lines began to break without apparent reason and a lobster hung up one night was gone in the morning.

If he had chewed gum his gum would have gone into the lagoon after the lobster. It was the same old game she had played with Kearney, and like Kearney, Dick suspected nothing of what it all meant.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIGHT ON THE BEACH.

The rainy season came and made Dick busy mending a hole that had suddenly come in the roof of the house. It passed, leaving the island greener than ever and the birds preparing to mate.

Nan, on his stick on the southern reef, was beginning to show signs of wear and weather. Gulls roosting on his crown had not added to his beauty, and the winds, forever bending and straightening the sapling, had loosened his head so that it wobbled a bit, making at times a click-clocking noise as though he were clucking his tongue with impatience. But all things have their time and season and had he been god of the lagoon instead of the coconut trees and pandanus patches he might have known that the pandanus season had arrived at Karolin.

They had fish ponds there stocked with sea fish to tide them over the bad time, but these pond fish were never quite as good as fresh fish from the sea and adventurous spirits would put out sometimes long distances after the real article, and unable to carry fire with them, eat their catches raw.

"A raw sea fish is better than a cooked pond fish," was a proverb with them, and one morning when Dick took the dinghy round to the eastern beach after bananas the proverb bore fruit. He had secured his bananas and placed them on the sand ready for shipment when the idea suddenly took him of having a look at the gollywog on the reef. He rowed over and no sooner had he landed on the coral than away across the sea he saw a canoe. It was longer than the canoe of Katafa, it was standing in toward the reef and when the occupant caught sight of him a cry came across the water, fierce and sharp like the rending of calico.

Dick didn't wait. He dropped into the dinghy, rowed off to where an *aoa* tree jutted over the water just beyond the beach sand and hid the dinghy under its branches. Then he took to the trees. He had forgotten the bananas. They lay there on the sand shouting to the sun and it was too late now to secure them, for the canoe was coming into the lagoon. The sail was brailed up and paddles were flashing, and Dick, peeping through the branches, could see the forms and faces of the four rowers, fierce faces utterly unlike the face of Katafa and forms brown and polished like mahogany.

The canoe passed the break and took the quiet undulations of the lagoon, the paddles now scarcely touching the water. Gliding and silent as a stoat it came, the faces of the paddle men turning to right, to left, to left, to right, the eyeballs showing white as the shark-teeth necklaces on the breast of the bow paddle.

The bow touched the sand, two of the men jumped out, made for the bananas, turned them over and gave a snort.

The bunches had been cut, no ghost had done that, and assured of this fact, the pow-wow began, the fellows on the beach shouting to the fellows in the canoe, evidently urging them to land.

But the boatmen were coy. Land! Not they! It was well known that this beach was haunted by the spirits of the Ancient and the men who had fallen in battle. They were unarmed, they were too few, they would come at another season with more men to follow them.

"Go then and search in the trees thyself, O Sru, son of Laminai," cried the stern paddle. "If there is nought to fear, why fear it?"

"Dogs!" cried Sru. He bent, picked up the two banana bunches and turned to the boats with them.

"They come!" yelled the canoe men.

Dick had burst from the trees, fear flung to the winds at the sight of his precious bananas being spirited away from him; swift as a panther, flexible as India-rubber he was almost on Sru when the other man caught him, tripped, fell with him and lay flattened for a moment with a blow on the nose.

Then as Dick bounded to his feet Sru had him—almost.

Kearney had always clipped Dick's hair and since the vanishing of Kearney Dick had done his own clipping when the hair worried him by getting too long, using Less-trange's folding mirror to help him.

Sru had caught him by the hair and the hair was just an inch too short for the grip to hold, but long enough to hurt. With a yelp of pain like a dog when kicked Dick struck out and Sru fell.

The lightning-swift blow had been given just below the chin point. Sru fell like a poleaxed steer and next moment Dick, a banana stalk in each hand, was running for the trees, trailing the clusters after him and diving into the foliage.

He had saved the bananas but he was still ready for battle. Rage filled his mind and a curious musky smell; it was the smell of Sru, coconut oil and Kanaka mixed. The smell kept his anger blazing; game as a terrier who scents a badger he stuck his head from the leaves ready to renew the fight armed only with the weapons of his race, but Sru had not risen. Sru was lying just where he fell, the other man bending over him and trying to lift him was chattering and crying to the fellows in the canoe, who had pushed away a bit off the beach. Their voices mixed with his like the clanging of sea gulls.

"*Tiu kau—Tiu kau—Matadi hai matadi.*"

The broken sentences came up on the breeze. It was the language of Katafa. What were they saying about the reef and the wind? What was the matter with Sru?

Then Dick saw the bending Kanaka rise, race through the water and scramble on board the canoe. The paddles flashed and the bow turned toward the break. They were leaving Sru, who still lay on the sand with arms outspread staring up at the sky.

Now what was the meaning of that?

Dick knew all about traps, from the trap of the great spider of the woods to the trap which he and Kearney had constructed for catching crawfish on the reef. He was a fisherman and knew the ways of sea creatures that assume the appearance of sleep while watchful and waiting to snap; absolutely brave he was, yet no fool, and remained among the leaves waiting for developments.

He had no fear of Sru, but great fear of the thing he did not understand. The fellows in the canoe were under the same obsession, they had suddenly come on something they did not understand and, the foam dashing from their paddles, they drove out, the paddle swirls and the shearing ripple of the outrigger marking their track across the azure-satin surface of the lagoon.

At the break they found their voices, shrill with rage. "*Kara! Kara! Kara!*" "*War! War! War!*" The cry came like the clang of sea fowl, and they were gone.

Dick watched. He squatted, sitting on his heels and continued to watch. The bananas were safe and on that fact he sat contented as on the top of a tower, his eyes traveling from the man on the beach to the opening of the break and from there to the reef and back again.

He was capable of sitting there watching till Sru rotted—almost, capable of anything but playing into the hands of these strange folk, the first enemies he had met, the first robbers.

Sometimes the man on the beach seemed to move, but it was only the heat-shaken air blanketing over him; now a cry came from the reef as though the canoe men had landed there from the outer beach and were threatening him—no, it was only a sea bird.

Then a shadow passed over the sand and a great predatory gull circled over the beach, swept out across the lagoon, returned and lit on the sand.

Sru had fallen near low-tide mark and the great gull after a moment's rest came toward him, hop, hop, hop, across the hard sand, paused, and as if frightened took a flight and returned to its original position.

It was not afraid of the man but it sensed Dick and was nervous in the face of something it did not understand. Then gaining courage it rose and lit on the chest of the man, spread its wings slightly and steadied itself and then struck its beak sharp as a digger into the stomach just below the ribs—*plong*. Like a dropped stone another fresh gull lit on the man's throat, steadied itself and struck—*plong*.

Dick knew now that Sru was out of count like the big fish when they went stiff, and he knew he had knocked him like that just with a blow.

He came out pulling the bananas after him, the birds flew away, and Dick, approaching the body, touched it with his toe. The creature with the broken neck was stiff now as a board and his slayer stood looking at him, a boy no longer but a man.

Dick knew nothing about death except its effect upon fish, eels, lobsters and crabs; some of these fought him like the big eel he had hooked a month ago in the northward stretch of the lagoon and which he had killed just as he had killed Sru, the second son of Laminai that Katafa, without intention and through Fate, had brought to his death.

He touched the body again with his toe, then seizing his precious bananas he took them to the dinghy hidden in the branches of the aoa and embarked with them.

As he turned the cape he heard the quarreling of great gulls, sharp and fierce as the voices of the canoe men. One might almost

have fancied it to be the voices rising and falling on the breeze.

"Kara! Kara! Kara!" "War! War! War!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

WAR!

"Katafa," said Dick that night as they sat after supper, idle, watching the dark rise over the lagoon, "men came to-day in a boat like yours."

Katafa heaved a great sigh, then she sat as if the breath were stricken out of her, without a word, her eyes fixed on the other.

He had said nothing of the affair till now, a fact that spoke volumes as to their mental relationship. Between Dick and Kearney there had been little of what we call conversation, between Dick and Katafa none. The inanimate things around them had the time of their lives, they did the talking or supplied the talk; abstractions had no place in this strange community of two where the actual moment was everything, at least to Dick.

"Men?" said the girl, breaking the silence at last. "Where are they?"

"Gone," said Dick. "I struck one and they went away, all but the one."

Some instinct checked him, helped by dislike of the labor of talking. Dick could think up things from the past easily enough if they were recent, but to arrange them in the order of thought dressed in and connected by words was becoming a hateful labor.

It was extraordinary. The things he saw or touched gave him no trouble but the things he had seen or touched even though it were only an hour ago were bothersome when they had to be turned into talk.

He lay back and yawned, then rising up he went down to the lagoon bank and the girl watching in the dusk saw him getting into the dinghy. He was bailing water out of her. That done he busied himself for a few minutes overhauling the lines and putting them back in the locker, then he walked off to the house and turned in, without a word, just as a cave man might have done in the days before speech was invented.

The girl, left to herself, turned to her side and then on her face, lying with her forehead on her crossed arms, brooding, suffering, dumb.

Karolin had drawn close to her and drawn away again perhaps forever, but Karolin

was only a thought, something deeper than thought had been in its grip, something that had risen in her mind to destroy Dick just as Nanawa had risen from the sea to destroy Kearney.

Once a law becomes part of the human mind it becomes a living thing capable of good and evil and the law of *taminan* implanted in the mind of Katafa, though simple as the law of gravity, became capable of profound effects; became in fact, a beast of prey.

"Thou shalt not touch another, nor be touched." What law could be simpler than that or more seemingly innocent. Yet of Katafa it had made a creature beyond human sympathy and appeal. It lay in her soul as the barrel-shaped decapod lay in the sea, watchful, ever waiting to strike, ever fearful of being itself destroyed.

To clearly understand the power of *taminan* one must recognize that its hold was not upon conscious thought but on the subconscious basis of thought beyond the power of will and reason, and yet capable of rousing will and reason into action, capable of inspiring the mind with aversion and hatred.

It had roused her thinking mind against Kearney who had threatened it, and now as she lay with her face on her crossed arms it was rousing her against Dick, calling on her to destroy him. Why? Dick had never tried to touch her, never threatened her, yet the beast of Le Juan in her soul dreaded Dick even more than it had dreaded Kearney.

Up to this, just as in the case of Kearney at first, her conscious mind had set itself against Dick in all sorts of trivial ways, breaking fishing lines and blunting the spears, but now, as in the case of Kearney when he hit her in the back with the ball, it had something definite to cling to. Dick had sent the canoes back to Karolin.

It was full night now and as she rose and came down to the lagoon bank the wind from the sea came warm and strong, breezing up the water and bringing with it the sound of the reef and the scent of the outer beach.

It was low tide. She cast her eyes on the dinghy where it lay moored to the bank. Dick, inspired by the sapling he had cut for the support of Nan, had made a little mast for the boat, the sail of Katafa's canoe, which had not been destroyed, was lying in

the shack behind the house and he intended using it for the purpose of cruising about the lagoon. She looked at the mast and the trivial thought of destroying or hiding it crossed her mind only to be dismissed.

Then turning from the bank she drew near the house and close to the doorway; sank down, sitting on her heels, her face toward the doorway, listening.

She could hear nothing for a moment but the gently stirring foliage as it moved to the wind, then as she listened, clasped in the sound of the softly moving leaves, she heard the breathing of Dick in his sleep.

The interior of the house was dark except for a few points of starlight piercing the roof, but as she gazed, her eyes growing accustomed to the darkness, the little ships began to show on their shelves guarding the dreams of the sleeper beneath.

Once, long ago, on the very first night she had passed on the island, the prompting had seized her to set fire to the house but the ships had saved Kearney and the boy. Now, darkly rising from the recesses of her mind the prompting came again and the ships were no longer potent against it. She had handled one of them and though its god had brought Kearney running to its rescue the god had done nothing else—could not even protect Kearney when Nanawa had seized him on the reef. A futile sort of deity, surely.

She could see the little shelf in the starlight and the match box upon it. She rose to her feet without a sound and was moving toward the shelf when a voice struck her motionless.

It was the voice of Dick fighting his battle with Sru over again in his dreams.

"Katafa!" came the voice, "hai, amonai, Katafa—help! He is seizing me!" Then a murmur of unintelligible words dying off to silence and the sound of Dick tossing uneasily in his sleep.

She stood with the starlight showering on her and the wind stirring her hair. Something had come between her and the deathly prompting to destroy him, perhaps it was the voice suddenly shattering the silence and her purpose, or the appeal for help, the first that had ever reached her from human being.

She stood with her head up tilted as a person stands who is trying to catch some far-away sound. Then she drifted away, vanishing among the trees.

Lying in her shack she knew that the shark-toothed god had been about to seize Taori with claws of fire—as indeed he had. Taori had called to her for help and she had helped by not firing the thatch. She could not understand in the least why she had held her hand or why the appeal for help had so shattered her purpose. She didn't try. She only knew that something had balked her for the moment.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAYBREAK.

For a moment only.

Next day and for days after, Katafa, drawing apart from Dick, would sit brooding, watchful, waiting; but wherever she might be, by the wood edge or lagoon bank, if Dick were in sight her face would be turned toward him, her eyes stealthily watching him.

She had forgotten Karolin. There was only one thing in the world now that mattered to her—Dick.

Since the night when he had cried to her in his sleep for help everything else had ceased to matter and her light-thinking mind had become the wrestling ground of two opposing forces.

The impulse to destroy Dick came at times in great waves up from the darkest recesses of her mind, like the rollers from the storm that had destroyed the *Rararongua*. Yet the impulse always just failed of effect. The terrible desire to destroy and destroy with her own hand had less relationship to hatred than to irritation. Dick vexed her soul, or the something dark that lay in her soul, and time and again she would almost stretch out her hand toward the fish spear or the knife that once clasped would have been driven into his heart.

Tuminan cried to her "Seize it and destroy him," and then the voice of *taminan* would turn into the voice of Dick. "Hai, *amonai*, Katafa—help!" and her hand would lose its power.

One day when Dick was off hunting for turtle on the reef the crisis came and the evil thing in her heart triumphed.

The fear of Nanawa and danger to herself vanished and rising up from where she had been sitting beside the house she put fresh fuel on the cooking fire they had used for the midday meal and which had not been put out.

Then, swift as Atalanta, she crossed the sward, dived among the leaves and fetching the skull from where she had hidden it, close to her shack, returned with it, placed it on the ground before the fire, and piling on more fuel, stood like a beautiful priestess, her eyes on the skull and her lips moving, repeating the old formula. "Come now, Nanawa, powerful to kill or save, come now and fulfill the wish of my heart—the wish of my heart—the wish of my heart."

The formula ran from her lips, a string of meaningless words, the something that had checked her hand was checking now her thinking power; she could not put into thought the wish to destroy, just as yesterday she could not put the will into action.

Nanawa, that figment of a Kanaka's imagination, was powerless against a real god more terrible and cruel than any deity of man's imagination. A god that held Katafa now in his grip.

She put the fire out and hid the skull in the leaves. Then casting herself down in the shadow of the trees she lay balked, demagnetized, impotent, looking at the lagoon water, the far-off reefs and the sky beyond.

Above the house two birds were building, two blue parua birds, exquisite in color and form, fearless of man and making their house again in the same position they had chosen for numberless years.

These birds, long-lived as parrots, had seen the father and mother of Dick build, mate, rear their young and depart; they had seen the arrival of Lestrange, the growth of Dick, the coming of Katafa. They had seen Lestrange waiting for his lost children, they had seen him vanish, and now they had seen his skull laid on a strange altar. Verily they had seen strange things, but the strangest lay below them on the sward in the tree shadows of that slumbrous afternoon, for Katafa might have been Emmeline who had often lain there just like that, Emmeline with the faithful flower still in her hair and her dark eyes fixed across the lagoon on the mysterious sea beyond.

The birds, while friendly, had always held aloof, the noisy and restless Dick managing to break somehow that thread of confidence which had drawn them sometimes to swoop down and light on Emmeline's shoulder or hand.

Now, Dick away and Katafa lying absolutely motionless, one of the birds, stirred

maybe by some old memory, fluttered down on the sward close to her, looked at her with bright eyes, picked up a bit of dried grass and flew up with it to the nest.

Again it came down and the girl stretching out her hand to it, it lit on her thumb, hopping at once back to the ground. She put her hand on its blue, warm back, clasping it for a moment. It was the first warm-blooded living thing she had ever touched. The first thing she had handled without intent to kill, the first thing that had come to waken the warmth of humanity in her heart—except that cry of Dick: "*Hai, amonai, Katafa—help!*"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TREE.

We see in nature forms of which perhaps the highest images of men are only compound reflections and symbols. If there had never been birds, would men ever have imagined angels? If there had never been serpents, would men ever have imagined Satan? Are the things about us—which we grossly believe to be the properties of a vast stage set for man to strut on—are these things the real actors in a drama of which man is only a property—a mirror exceedingly complex, built and set up by them for their reflections to fall on? Subtract from man all that he has ever seen, touched, smelled, heard or tasted and what is left? Bar the road of any of these five senses, will he be complete?

Katafa, who had never touched a warm-blooded sentient thing till now released the bird and it flew up to the branch where the nest was building, but it had left her something that had become part of her forever. Something strange and new and sweet, yet disturbing, something from the universal soul of sentient things that had reached her vaguely perhaps in the cry for help, but more fully now.

A great longing came on her to clasp the bird again, but it was far from her reach, busy in the branches above. She sat up and with her hands folded in her lap gazed away out to sea, perplexed, troubled, listening to the sound of the surf on the reef, the movements of the birds above and the gentle stirring of the wind in the leaves.

All the tenderest voices of the Garden of God, all the voices that had brought comfort to Lestrange and promise to his tired

heart, seemed conspiring now to augment the message of the bird, the message from a world of compassion, tenderness and pity.

A clap of thunder shattered the silence of the cloudless day and roused the echoes of the woods; another and another, swiftly following like drum strokes on some Gargantuan drum.

Katafa sprang to her feet.

The mirror-still water of the lagoo. was broken and boiling with fish, fish driven and in flight, great bream tossing themselves into the air, palu driving like swords through the water, schnapper, garfish, all as if pursued by some inclosing net, while louder now came the thunder and turmoil of a battle that was drawing closer, a battle between Titans of the sea.

A bull cachalot, cruising alone and exploring the great depths to southward of the island for octopods, had fallen in with four bandits.

The first was a Japanese swordfish, a ferocious samurai of the sea who had come on the Kiro Shiwo current from Japan to Alaska and from Alaska down the Pacific coast, past Central America, then skirting Humboldt's current, striking west for Gambier and up past Karolin to its fate.

Close on to Palm Tree, sighting the cachalot, a dusky bloom in the green ahead, it reversed its gear and then charged. Swift as a dagger stroke the appalling sword got home and stuck like a nail in a barn door.

Now that sword driven by energy to be calculated in foot tons would have passed through the planking of a ship as easily as a knife through cheese and have been withdrawn as easily; for twenty years it had ripped and slain living creatures from Hondo to Ducie, but never before had it stuck.

Embedded to the hilt under the backbone of the whale, the sword resisted all the efforts of the tail and great saillike fins of the swordsman, the cachalot shearing through the water, terrified less by the pain of the blow than the fact that its steering gear was upset by the frantic evolutions of the fins and tail of its assailant.

Then, tearing through the sea, came the orcas, three of them from miles away. They did the steering. Like bulldogs clinging to the head of the leviathan they piloted it into the lagoon, the cachalot springing into the air and falling back in foam and thunder. Up the left arm of the lagoon the fighters

came driving everything before them, palu, gumfish, bream, turtle, rays and eels all rushing to escape, the orcas like tigers to left and right and ahead, sharks and giant dogfish following after tearing at the swordfish whose fins were in ribbons and whose tail was gone.

Then the great sight broke before the eyes of Katafa, the monstrous bulk of the cachalot rounding the cape and the water leaping in waves over the bank as it drove into the pool. Above, a blanket of wheeling, screaming gulls followed the battle, while from far at sea the great burgomasters and bos'n's were coming in swift, wide of wing and all converging to one point—the cachalot.

She heard a shout. It was Dick who had just come back from the woods. He was running down to the lagoon bank, wild with excitement and not regarding her in the least as he stood watching while the orcas, steadfast as death, clinging to left and right, hung, thrashing, till the great barn-door mouth of the cachalot opened at last and swift as ferrets they began to root and tear out the tongue.

Then suddenly the body of the cachalot bent, and with the snap of a released spring it turned, dashing the spray tree high and drove back down the lagoon with the rush of a torpedo boat, sharks and dogfish following after to be lost beyond the cape.

Dick, shouting like a maniac, followed through the trees to see the end. Katafa, gazing with wide-pupiled eyes at the blood-stained waters of the pool, shivered.

She had seen orcas hunting and destroying a cachalot from the outer beach of Karolin and the sight had left her without emotion, but the mind of Katafa had changed and the world around her had found voices telling her of things unguessed and undreamed of till now.

The great fight had brought matters to a head with her, coupling itself in some extraordinary way by antithesis, with the warm tenderness revealed by the birds and with Dick who had just vanished heedless of her.

What the blue birds had whispered the battle had suddenly shouted: "You stand alone. A world lies around you of which you know nothing. It belongs to Taori, never shall you enter it."

She looked up at the birds, happy and building, heedless of the terror that had just

passed and vanished. She looked at the pool, still murky, its surface spangled with prismatic colors where streaks of oil had spread, she looked at the far-off reef and the sea beyond, and she saw nothing but Taori, that beautiful lithe form, that face, fearless and ever seeming to look upward, those eyes full of sight for all things but her. Until now she had never really seen him. She heard again his voice calling on her for help.

Like a person wandering in sleep she passed along the lagoon bank toward the eastern trees, seeing nothing, moving by instinct, scarcely alive, terribly, suddenly and mortally stricken. Sounds filled her ears like the chiming of the reef coral when the breakers of the high tide were coming in, sounds now broken and diffuse, now calling his name, gull clear: "Taori! Taori!"

Then, breaking away from the dream state and turning to a great tree she cast her arms about it, embracing it like a living thing and resting her cheek against its smooth sun-warmed bark, clinging to it and the great momentary peace that had come to her tormented heart.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GREAT KILL.

Dick, who had heard the first thunder of the battle in the woods, running from the trees had seen Katafa standing watching the cachalot come into the pool, but he had no eyes for her, the excitement of the fight and the fear of injury to the dinghy moored by the bank held him from thought of anything else.

Then, when the cachalot broke away he followed, running through the trees, hallooing, mad with excitement and the desire to be in at the death.

He could see through the branches overhanging the water the foam in the wake of the fight and a long line of following gulls.

The gulls were coming down already. The high cloud of them had broken and as if on a moving stairway they were coming down in a great curve that broke and fluttered about the nearly dead leviathan, surging now slowly, tongueless, torn, half eviscerated, toward the break of the reef.

It seemed as though scarce consciously it was making a last attempt to get to sea to the freedom it had lost.

The sharks grazing on it, tearing into it, were indifferent; it might get to sea or remain in the lagoon, it was all the same to them, it was theirs. The burgomasters and the bos'n's clanging and wheeling and swooping were indifferent; as long as it did not sink it was theirs.

Dick, knocking himself against trees and tripping on the undergrowth, followed till he reached the banana beach opposite the bank. Here, where he had slain Sru, son of Laminai, whose body the tides and gulls and sharks had long dispersed, he stood to watch while the cachalot, practically dead, moved in a great ring on the water, a ring described beneath a vortex of birds.

Never had the lagoon looked more beautiful, glass-smooth except where the great bulk moved half submerged, escorted by the gulls whose reflection flew white on the surface and whose shadows on the floor seemed phantom birds circling amid the shark shadows and the shadows of the dogfish.

Then, as Dick watched, little by little the dying cachalot gained speed; rising on the water as the momentum increased, the great bulk showed clear, moving in the circle prescribed for all creatures dazed or confused.

As the speed increased the sharks held off for a moment, dozens of dark fins breaking the surface of the water; the gulls, ceasing their clamor, circled like a coil of smoke, and silence fell on the lagoon broken only by the rush of the fish and the murmur of the reef tinged with the first fires of sunset.

Dick watched without moving till the flurry passed, the great bulk, like a ship turned turtle, moving ever more slowly while the shark fins vanished and a gull lit on it as the gull had lit on the chest of Sru.

When he returned to the house Katafa was nowhere in sight. He did not trouble about her, his mind was too full of the things he had seen. He ate his supper and turned in but he could not sleep. Katafa, supperless in her shack, gazing with wide-open eyes at the starlight seen through the leaves, could not sleep. She had seen him come back, cook his food and vanish into the house. He had never called for her as he usually did were she absent at meal time, he never had called for her unless he wanted her for something, to help in the cooking, to carry his spears, to work the boat. She was less to him than the fish he had just eaten or the mat he was lying on.

It was only now that she recognized this. Steadily, bit by bit, strand by strand, the clutch of *taminan* on her conscious mind had been broken so that her heart could beat as the human heart beats and her eyes could show her heart what it desired. Powerful as ever in her subconscious self, the spell remained, capable of separating her forever from the touch of human being, but her conscious mind had found release, an object to grasp with all the pent-up passion of her nature—and its indifference to her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CRISIS.

Next morning Dick, who had spent the night hunting cachalots in dreamland, came out to find Katafa lighting the fire for breakfast. She seemed just the same as ever save for the fact that she had no flower in her hair, but a third person, had one been present, would have noticed that her eyes evaded him, that she ate scarcely anything and sat mumchance as though some bitter quarrel had arisen between them.

Dick noticed nothing of all this. He did not even help to clear away and tidy the place. He was off to see if there was anything left of the cachalot and as he picked up a spear and made away toward the opposite trees he shouted some words or directions to her which she did not reply to. She seemed deaf as well as dumb and when he was gone, instead of clearing away the remains of the food and putting out the fire she turned on her side and lay with eyes half closed, scarcely breathing, seemingly asleep. Her half-closed eyes were fixed on the point where Dick had vanished among the trees. Dick, who, without a thought of her, was making his way through the woods, now skirting the water side, now plunging through the growths of maumee apple and fern.

When he reached the beach all traces of the cachalot were gone. Not a sign remained of the great fight of yesterday. The gulls were fishing just as of old and the lagoon lay placid and untroubled, blue and breezed and happy to where the reef line whispered its eternal message to the shore.

He saw Nan on his post away to the south. He remembered the "big fish" and a sudden respect for Nan and his power—perhaps the first dawn of a religious feeling—came into his mind. Nan had brought

the cachalot into the lagoon as well as the big bream and schnapper and as he stood by the creaming ripples on the sand he gave a nod of his head in the direction of the gollywog as if in recognition.

Then he came plunging back through the trees. Nan had suddenly reminded him of the sapling he had cut for his elevation and the sapling of the mast he had made for the dinghy.

He must get busy on that mast and sail. He had neglected them for days, and full of the fury of the newly released idea he came bursting out of the wood across the sward making for the house and shack where the sail was stowed. He would be able to sail the dinghy out beyond the reef and hunt for bigger things. Unhappy Dick, he did not know of the bigger thing that was feeling for him to grip him, of the hunting awaiting him on that day.

Full of this idea, heedless of earth, sea, sky or Katafa, he came running across the sward. The girl saw him coming and half rose, sitting on her heels, a lovely picture in the tree shadows; a picture that might have driven an artist to despair or drawn an anchorite from his cell, a picture only to be matched by that of Dick as he ran, sunny-haired and light of foot and swift as the wind.

One might have fancied him running toward her and have pictured the embrace of these two most lovely of God's creatures, but he passed her as though she were a tree stump, vanished behind the house and reappeared in a minute dragging after him the ugly old mat sail. Casting it on the ground he made for the dinghy, seized the mast which he had left lying in it and came back with it on his shoulder—still running.

That was just like him. He would leave a thing undone for days, maybe for weeks, and then of a sudden start on to it forgetful of everything else.

There was some old rope and signal halyard line that Kearney had salvaged from the wreck. This had to be fetched, also some tools from the tool box; he fetched them himself, and then sitting down happy and content he set to work and found his work cut out for him.

The sail was too big, it and the spar that carried it. With the sail and spar spread out on the ground he crawled about it on his hands and knees measuring it against the mast.

Sometimes he would say a few words to the girl, heedless whether she replied or not. Then when he had been working some half hour or so, looking up, he caught her eyes.

He was sitting with the sail spread on his knees and she was lying opposite to him resting on her arm. She had looked in his face a thousand times before, straight as the sun looked at him on the lagoon, but now, just before her eyes could evade him, he caught their glance, caught the look on her face—something that vanished and became nothing before his mind could fully seize it.

Pausing in his work he looked at her for a moment without speaking. She seemed to have forgotten his presence, her eyes cast down under their long lashes were following some pattern her finger was tracing on the ground and her face showed no expression.

He went on with his business mechanically. His mind, so far from straying, focused on the work in his hands. Every fiber of the mat that differed in color from the others impressed itself on his sight and understanding, the stitches went in evenly spaced as though made by some unerring mechanism, Katafa might seemingly have been a thousand miles away—and yet every fiber of the sail, every stitch he put in, seemed part of the something strange that had suddenly come to him from Katafa.

He worked with head bent as if lost in thought, then pausing in his work he raised his head and looked at her, his lips pursed, the trace of a wrinkle on his forehead.

She heard the stitches cease. Slowly raising her face, her eyes met his fully, without flinching, steadfast, while with her eyes still clinging to his, her breast rose with a sigh that died to a shudder. He had dropped the needle from his hand and the sail from his knees, leaning forward with half-parted lips his respiration ceased while her gaze fell away languorously like the gaze of a dying person, only to be raised again and pinned into his very soul.

They were standing now, the mat between them, Katafa flushed, shuddering, half laughing as one might fancy a being now dead and on the threshold of paradise. Dick, his nostrils widespread, his pupils broad with new-born emotions, flinging out his arm tried to seize her, and grasped—nothing. She had evaded him as though some wind had blown her aside. The attempt to seize her had thrown her into the world we enter when we fall asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PRISON OF THE TREES.

Just as a person in some phases of the state we call the dream condition has to run or finds himself rooted to the spot, Katafa, under the imperious sway of *taminan* leaned aside with no more volition than a reed possesses when moved by the wind.

The very intensity of her longing and her passion cast her more completely into the grasp of the subconscious power that had her in its charge.

Dick, with a sharp cry as if some one had struck him, sprang across the mat, grasped at her again and missed. She had bent, and springing erect again, all her soul craving for the embrace, with arms outspread like a drowning person she in turn tried to grasp. Then, turning, she ran as the dreamer runs followed by the viewless, across the sward, pursued yet untouched she passed with the speed of Atalanta, the leaves divided before her, yet still she ran unharmed by bramble, unhurt by tree, seeing nothing, protected by instinct.

Then, far in the woods where the tall matamatas tossed their broad green leaves to the wind, she crouched amid the ferns like a hare in its form.

The great crisis had come and passed and *taminan* had triumphed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

KARA! KARA! KARA!

There was a girl of the Islands, Nalia by name, who, living under the taboo of *taminan* and pursued by a lover, found refuge in the sea; swimming far out she could not return for the place of refuge had in some way by association linked itself with the spell and she could not leave it. She was swept away and drowned. Katafa, crouching among the ferns, heard the wind in the matamata leaves, the flutter of birds, the murmur of the reef, mated by the woods. Then a voice faint and far away, the voice of Taori:

"Katafa, hai, amorai, Katafa."

She listened—nothing more. Nothing but the wind; the reef murmur and the birds.

Time passed and the dusk rose and then as the starlight fell silvering the lagoon and the sea she came gliding through the trees.

Dividing the leaves she looked and saw the sward and the house with the starlight upon it. There in the house, with the little

ships above him, Taori was sleeping, far from her as any star.

She could no more leave the protection of the trees than Nalia could have left the sea; the open space repelled her. She was bound to the woods forever.

In the old romances we read of women spell-bound by witches and black magic. Le Juan had used no black magic; working with no material but Katafa's self she had molded into it a law that had become part of self. Emotion could not fight with or break that law, nothing could break it but something higher than self, something not yet fully existent in her still nebulous soul.

Like an animal held from its mate she crouched now, her eyes fixed on the house, the very depth of her emotion forging her bonds more securely in so far as it destroyed reason; dead to thought her senses were yet acutely alive.

She heard with miraculous clearness the thousand little noises of the night, the moving of leaves, the faint creak of branches, the rustle of a lizard, she heard the surf on the outer beach and the far-off splash of a fish from the lagoon water. Then as the wind from the sea died to the faintest stirring of air the moon rising across the eastern trees struck the house, and the air, as though some crystal door had been closed, grew still. Not a leaf moved. Katafa crouched amid the leaves seemed part of the silence that had taken the world, a silence reaching from the farthest sea stars to the trees, a silence suddenly broken by a sound more terrible than the voice of any beast. Howling, bubbling, bellowing, echoing through the trees it came from the distant eastern beach, raising the birds in screaming flocks.

She knew that sound. It was the blowing of a lambrai shell, the great conch shell of Karolin, blown only for war.

"We have come!" cried the shell. "The long canoes have come from the south, from the south, from the south! Kara! Kara! Kara!" "War! War! War!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SOUTH.

When the squall took Katafa's canoe that night sweeping Taiofa overboard, he was not drowned, but the sea killed him all the same.

The canoe driving north free of its an-

chor rope and towed by the fish, left him far behind, and without a moment's hesitation he struck due west, swimming for his life.

He was making for the water to leeward of the atoll where the current would be broken in its force, and the waves. Here he landed after hours of swimming and with his left leg gone below the knee. The sea is full of hungry mouths and to leeward of Karolin that night there were many sharks. He had just time to reach his people and tell his story before he died.

A great wind had struck the canoe and capsized it. He and Katafa had been thrown into the water, a shark had taken her. He had struck out for the reef. That was the story he told and he had told it in all good faith. He had seen Katafa pulled to pieces by sharks, though how he had seen it Heaven and the Kanaka imagination alone could tell.

When Dick struck Sru dead on the beach, Talia, Manua and Leopa paddling off across the lagoon had with equal imagination seen the island alive with Dicks, potential Dicks stirring amid the trees. The canoe men had yelled their war cry and once clear of the lagoon the potential Dicks became real figures strонгing their imaginations.

Nan's head woggling on its stick became the size of a house full of speech and proclaiming to high heaven that his deityship had taken up forced residence on Palm Tree, that his power and protection had been filched from Karolin, the fruitfulness of whose coconut trees and puraka plants would be now a thing of the past.

Beyond the reef and heading south the wind changed, blowing gently at first and then steadily and strongly from the north, a favorable wind and a good omen.

The paddles dashed the water to spray and the great sail bellied to the breeze. Evening came, the dusk rose and the stars broke out and southward still they flew, tireless as the wind, taking no heed of the current. All night long they paddled while the turning dome of stars rotated above them, the Cross and Canopas and the great streak of the Milky Way all moving mysteriously in one piece till, suddenly, in the east, like a dropped rose leaf, came the dawn.

Away ahead lay Karolin, and the paddle men, who had taken a spell of rest, leaving all the work to the wind, resumed their paddles.

As they came through the reef opening the sun was behind them and broad on the lagoon, lighting the white beach that swept curving away to invisibility, the coconut trees, the canoe houses and the houses of the village, and scarcely had they passed the reef opening than the sands began to swarm, for eager eyes had reported that they had lost a man and that of the four who had started three only were returning.

Now this canoe was of nowise of importance except for the fact that Sru, the son of the king's son, was on board of it. Still it was only one of the fishing canoes of which several that had put out in search of floating turtle were due to put in that morning, it flew no signal of disaster, yet instantly the news was known by this little nation of fishers and hunters of the sea to whom sight was life and swift deduction bread.

Before beaching it was known that Sru was the missing man and Laminai himself was standing to meet them as the keel took the sand.

It was Laminai who had tried to dash Katafa to death on board of the Spanish ship, it was Laminai who had killed her mother with the blow of a coral-headed club. Better for him and his sons had he killed the child as well, for Taiofa had gone with her to his death and Sru would never have fallen but for the image of Nan which she had erected to bring the big fish to the lagoon.

Laminai was tall and slight and subtle and exceedingly strong, with a forthright and ferocious expression and a permanent hard double wrinkle between the eyes, eyes that seemed always skimming great distances in search of prey.

Talia, Manua and Leopa, when they saw Laminai standing there with his shark-tooth necklace on his breast, were hit of a sudden by the forgotten fact that this terrible man would most likely visit on them the death of Sru. Visions of being staked out on the reef for sharks to devour drove them half crazy with fright but not crazy enough to forget Nan as a stand-by.

"Nan! Nan! Nan!" they yelled as the keel drove ashore. "He has been taken from us by a new people who have slain thy son. O Laminai, for half a day we fought with them but Sru was slain and Nan stands on the reef of Marua"—Palm Tree—"and never will our crops flourish again."

This news, delivered so convincingly, hit the whole beach dumb. Laminai, at a stroke, seemed to have forgotten Sru; the people automatically drew back, making a semicircle, and in this arena the three survivors of the great fight stood facing Laminai and his last son, Ma, a youth of some nineteen years.

He questioned them with a word or two and then turning led the way to the great house of the village where in the shadow of the door Uta Matu was lying on a mat with his back to the day.

Uta was an old man now, very different from the man who years ago had led the attack on the Spanish ship. He was so fat and indolent that he had to be turned by his women like a feather bed, and there he lay puffing out his cheeks while the three canoe men stood before him and one told their tale of the ravishing of Nan, the great fight and the death of Sru.

Having heard them out Uta did an astonishing thing. He sat up.

This old gentleman, despite his fat, his indolence, the blood lust that still clung to him and the fact that his only dress was a gee string, was a statesman of a sort. It was quite easy to call for revenge, to set the village buzzing like a beehive, sharpening spears and rolling the long canoes out of the canoe houses, yet when the murmur that marked the conclusion of the canoe men's story began to swell and spread and threatened to break into a roar Uta Matu raised his hand and cut it off as one cuts off water at the main.

He had to do two things, consult the priestess of Nanawa to see if the war gods were propitious and consult Ma, admiral in chief and dockyard superintendent of the Karolin navy. Being what he was, Uta decided not to worry the gods till he was sure of the navy. He called Ma and the son of Laminai came and stood before his grandfather and king.

The fleet was ready. That was the report of Ma. The four great canoes each capable of holding thirty men were safe in the canoe houses, seaworthy and only recently calked, the paddles were in their places and the masts and mat sails in readiness.

Now these canoes were useless for fishing or at least never used. They were too large and cumbersome and were kept for war. They had been used for the attack on the Spanish ship and they had been used when

the present northern ruling tribe of Karolin had fought the southern tribe living across the lagoon, nearly exterminating it, and chasing the remnants to the beach of Palm Tree. Long before that the navy of Karolin had resisted an attack from a fleet that broke the waters one pink and pearly dawn, a fleet of dusk-sailed canoes from the Pau-motus that had vanished forever, sunk and burned before the crimson sunset died.

Karolin was a sea power ever ready for eventualities.

Having received the report, Uta, to confirm it, caused himself to be carried to the canoe houses; not content with hearing he must see, and he saw as he sat facing the open doorways of the houses that Ma was no liar. In the gloomy interiors beneath thatched roofs supported by ridge poles the great canoes slued on their rollers ready for the sea.

Even here on land they were moored by innumerable shore fasts in case of accident. Twice had hurricanes blown the houses to fragments, leaving the canoes unharmed.

Uta, having seen that all was right, ordered himself to be carried back to the door of his palace, but the order for war did not come yet. Le Juan had to be consulted.

"Call Le Juan," commanded Uta.

CHAPTER XXXV. THE PRIESTESS OF NANAWA.

Le Juan had seen the canoe men land and heard their story, she had been on the outskirts of the crowd and having got the gist of the matter retired to her hut waiting for the call she knew would come.

Whether Nanawa was a false god or not she believed in him just as she believed in Nan.

Never laugh at the gods, nor sneer at them; the form of history has been molded by them and man's destiny arranged by them and the meanest African idol is the emblem of something that if not real was at all events powerful.

An interesting thing about these gods of Karolin was their individuality; each was a distinct character. Nan mild and benevolent, Nanawa ferocious, capricious and always ready to strike. Nan would never have been willing or able to reduce Le Juan to the condition in which she appeared before Uta when they found her and led her to him. Naturally ugly, her face was now

appalling, rigid as a face carved from stone and with only the whites of the eyes showing.

Standing before Uta and supported on either side she remained dumb for a moment, then her mouth opened and a voice issued from it.

The words flowed over out of it almost adhering together, the very saliva of speech.

"Set forth, strike, destroy," commanded the voice. "Destroy utterly, oh, Uta, and thou Laminai, his son, and thou Ma, the son of Laminai." The words became thicker, lost meaning, became a shout, a prolonged bray, more terrific than the bellowing of a conch; convulsions seized her, foam ran from her mouth and then, collapsing, she was carried off, while Ma seized the great Lambrai shell passed to him out of the king's house by one of the wives and filled the air with its howling.

The bellowing of the shell echoing over beach and lagoon roused the gulls; their cries came back like the echoes of the cries of the people. "Kara! Kara! Kara!" "War! War! War!" Then silence fell and the fighting men, the women and the very children set to work, marshaled by Laminai, on the great business that had suddenly entered their lives like a sword.

It was still early morning. At that moment the cachalot was passing Karolin to find the swordfish, the orcas, and destruction! But it was not till early morning of the next day that the preparations were complete and the four great canoes ready for launching.

Each canoe held thirty men, one hundred and twenty men all told, and every man of the tribe was of that expedition except Uta, who was long past war, and three old men, dwellers on the southern beach, useless for anything but fishing in a small way.

In two hours after launching, such was the readiness of response of Karolin to danger or aggression, the provisions were on board and in another hour the fleet led by the canoe of Laminai was paddling toward the break.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SHADOWS AND THE ECHOES.

The wind had changed and was blowing now dead from the south and as they passed the break the mat sails went up and the four great canoes shot away to the north

urged by wind, current and paddles, like hawks released on their prey.

An hour after the start the wind failed them but still the paddles kept on. They passed turtles asleep on the ceaseless swell and great belts of fucus carried by the current, the outriggers tangling and lifting kelp fish and fathom-long ribbons of kelp gemmed with sea growths and clung to by crabs.

The drinking nuts secured to the outrigger gratings were passed round under the blazing sun of noon and as the fleet drifted for a moment it was saluted by the thunder of a school of giant whip rays playing away across the blue. Warriors saluting warriors. The whip rays were a good omen, Karolin being one of their haunts, and Ma, seizing the great conch shell, returned the salute. Then before sunset the paddle men ceased work for a moment to shout and wave their paddles at Palm Tree, far off still but clearly to be seen on the northern horizon.

Half an hour later the landward-flying gulls began to take the light of sunset on their wings and the sun to dip toward a sea blazing with light; and now, as the sun vanished and the dusk brimmed over from the east, a wind rose blowing toward the land and the paddle men at the command of Laminai ceased work.

Silence fell almost complete, broken only by the wash of the canoe bows, the straining of a rope to the tug of a sail and the shunting of a steering paddle, and now in the pauses of the wind could be heard the surf on the reef like the breathing of the far-off island in its sleep.

The moon would not rise yet but the stars gave them light, light enough to see as they closed with the land, the breakers on the outer beach and the head of Nan on its post. Keeping away to the east they sought the reef opening where the palm tree stood bowed like a sentinel fallen asleep and as it came in view Laminai gave an order, the sails were taken in and the paddles flashed into work.

At that moment the brow of the moon broke the sea.

The tide was just at the slack after full and on the long river of light from the moon the canoes came like dark drifting leaves; past the break, the paddles working with scarcely a sound, across the lagoon, moving ever more slowly till again came an order from Laminai and the stone anchors going

over without a splash, the fleet rode at its moorings, silent as the moon that now stood above the reef.

They were brave with a courage that nothing could destroy but defeat or superstition, that nothing could dent but the unknown.

Had they been attacking a known tribe they would have beached the canoes, shouting defiance; as it was they anchored, feeling their courage and their shark-tooth spears, listening, looking, while the moon rose higher, lighting more fully the fairy land they were about to attack, whose only defenders were a youth fast asleep and a girl the prisoner of illusion and the trees.

Then of a sudden the lagoon became dotted with heads, the whole army of Karolin had disembarked; swimming like otters they made for the shore, and leaving the canoes with a man apiece for anchor watch, formed on the beach.

Nothing but their long shadows drawn on the salt white beach by the moon opposed them, shadows that swung clubs and brandished spears, threatening who knows what in shadow land.

The silent woods stood firm, the reef beyond the lagoon sent the selfsame whisper, the wind lifting the foliage failed and died. Nature before the terrific threat of Karolin seemed to have fallen asleep till Ma, like the knight before the enchanted castle, seizing the great conch blew the signal for war, blew with one mighty and prolonged breath till the whorls of the conch nearly split asunder, till the howling, bubbling echoes came back from strand and hilltop and wind and sea.

Like the response of the shadows came the response of the echoes—nothing more.

CHAPTER XXXVII. IN THE NIGHT.

Dick, when sleep took him that night, passed straight into dreamland. He rarely dreamed. When he did his dreams had always one origin, some vexation or irritation experienced during the day. He would be trying to light a fire that would not light, or the dinghy would be sinking under him, or going to cut bananas and banana trees would be gone—those were the sort of dreams that came to Dick. Katafa had never entered them till to-night when, suddenly, he found himself chasing her over the

sands of sleep, chasing her spear in hand till she dashed into the lagoon and became a fish, the most beautiful fish in the world, glimpsed for a moment like a flash of silver.

He had hunted for her till dusk through the trees, beside the lagoon, right to the eastern beach, and now in dreamland he was hunting her again. Ye gods and writers of the old romance, creators of the lovesick swain! Hunting her like an animal, possessed with one overmastering desire, the desire to seize her.

Suddenly the dream was shattered. Sitting up he saw the world outside the house clearly in the moonlight as though seen by day. A sound filled his ears. It was the sound of the conch.

He was master of all the sounds of his world, the island was always talking to him, the reef and the sea. Here was something new and unknown and inimical.

It came from the eastern beach, that beach which faced the gateway to the world beyond.

The sound ceased, the echoes died and the night reserved its silence. Dick, still listening without a movement, heard the reef speaking to the first waves of the ebb, the fall of a leaf on the roof and the furtive sound of a robber crab by the house wall on the right. Then, rising, he came out into the moonlight moving silently as his own shadow.

A fish spear was standing against the house wall. He took it and came along by the trees, listening, pausing every now and then, seeming to scent the air like a hound. Nothing. He turned his face toward the lagoon. Nothing. The great mirror lay unruffled to the reef and beyond the reef the sea stars shone paled by the moonlight but steadfast and untroubled.

The island said to him: "There is nothing here at all but the things you have always known. That voice was the voice of some sea beast that came like the big fish and has gone."

Yet still he listened.

Ah, what was that? A branch stirred and, turning, he saw like a ghost amid the trees, Katafa.

She was standing, the moonlight on her face and her arms outstretched. Next moment she had turned, vanished, and he was in pursuit. The woods, one vast green glow under the moon, were lit almost as brilliantly as by day, and as she ran he could

see, now a glossy shoulder, now her whole form, now nothing but swaying leaves above which the convolvulus flowers seemed the bugles of aerial huntsmen joining in the chase.

He was not hunting alone, the woods tonight were full of armed men, men who at the sound of the conch had spread and entered the groves like a bunch of shadows, beating the trees and glades, dumb as hounds when hot on the scent.

The line Katafa had taken was toward these. Pitcher plants cascaded their water as she ran dashing them aside and branches foiled him as he pursued, great perfumed flowers hit him in the face. Now he had almost seized her, and now she was gone, saved by a branch or tangle of liana.

The trees broke to a glade carpeted with slippery moss spread like a snare to betray her. Crossing it, she fell. She was his, he flung himself upon her—and fell on the hard ground. He had not even touched her. By a last miracle she had saved herself and was gone, doubling back through the trees.

The fall half stunned him for a moment, then getting on his feet he seized the spear—all through the chase he had carried it slanted over his shoulder, carried it unconsciously or instinctively, just as he had carried it in dreamland. Balked and furious, not knowing what he did, he brandished it now as if threatening some enemy, then returning, he stood resting on it and listening.

He knew she had escaped; to lose sight of a person for half a minute in that place was to lose him. His only chance was to track her by sound, but he could hear nothing. Not the breaking of a twig or the rustle of a leaf came to tell him of where she might be or what line she was taking. He did not even know whether she had dived into the trees, to right or left or before or behind him, the fall had blotted out everything for a moment and in that moment she had vanished.

With head upturned, and leaning on the spear, he stood like a statue, more beautiful than any statue ever hewn from marble, the tropical trees still as the moon above him, the sound of the far-off reef a confused murmur on the windless air.

Then his chin sank ever so slightly, a sound had come to him, something that was not the reef.

It was she. He could hear the leaves

moving—a step—louder now, she was coming toward him and coming swiftly; she had lost her direction and was blundering back to the place she had started from.

He waited without a movement, the foliage dashed aside and into the glade broke not Katafa, but Ma the son of Laminai, with the moon full upon him.

Ma, club in hand, the shark-tooth necklace showing white as his eyeballs in the strong light. Ma, lithe and fierce as a tiger and petrified for the moment by the sight before him.

The two faced one another without a word. Then the figure of Ma seemed to shrink slightly, relaxed itself suddenly, sprang, slipped on the treacherous moss and fell with the cruel fish spear embedded in its back and heart.

The club shot away across the carpet of moss and Dick was in the act of turning to seize it when out from the trees broke Laminai. Laminai with twenty others behind him. Ma had been the vanguard of these.

Dick turned and ran. Dashing among the leaves he ran, weaponless, defenseless, with sure death on his heels and only one craving, to free himself from the woods, to find an open space, to escape from the branches that checked him, the flowers that hit at him, the veils and veils and veils of leaves; instinctively he made uphill, the pursuit almost touching him, the groves ringing now to the cries of the pursuers and of Talia, Manua and Leopa who had recognized him as the slayer of Sru and were shouting the news to Laminai

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BREAKING OF THE SPELL.

Katafa, among the trees, pausing half dazed from the pursuit and released for a moment from the spell that had made her fly, stood listening.

She had taken the upward way toward the hilltop. The great sward, moon-stricken and surmounted by the rock, gleamed at her through the trees on her right; below and to her left the green gloom of the woods showed in luminous depths marked vaguely by the outlines of trees and sagging lianas.

The greenhouse atmosphere of the woods rose around her like an incense, cocoa palm, artu, breadfruit and pandanus, vanilla and hoyo, husk, bark, foliage and flower all

blent their perfumes undisturbed by any wind.

Then, as she stood listening, just at the moment when Ma, bursting from the trees stood face to face with Dick, she heard a sudden loudening of the surf on the reef.

The sound of a single great tumbling wave heaving up from the glacial sea to burst on the coral in foam. Silence, and then through the heat of the night another sound far away and vague, the chanting of gulls disturbed from their sleep and made uneasy by some voice or sign they alone could interpret.

Then, shattering the silence of the woods came the yell of Laminai as he sprang after Dick, the voices of Talia, Manua and Leopa and then the tongue of the whole pack in full cry, the sound of branches broken and leaves cast aside, footfalls, all rising toward her like a tide and breaking through the trees so close to her that she could see the parting of the leaves and the forms of the pursuers and pursued.

Dick, reaching the sward, made one last effort, breaking from the rock he would have reached it and rounded it and dived into the thickness of the woods beyond

TO BE CONCLUDED.



SOUTH SEA STUFF

AMERICAN trade and influence are these days rapidly extending in the South Sea Islands, and this is bringing them conspicuously before the world. These islands have been the happy hunting ground of the novelist. Take up almost any magazine and you are likely to come across a highly flavored "South Sea" romance. The romance is there, all right, and it must be admitted that the background is very enticing.

That the islands are lands of tropical-plant luxuriance, bathed by warm sun—not fierce—from out bright skies, is true enough. Those who know the islands must, however, admit that the beauty of the female inhabitants is likely to be exaggerated by the enterprising novelist. That the islands are inhabited by savages, feasting on human flesh, still under the influence of sorcery, and fiendish customs, is not quite the case. With the exception of one or two islands the majority of the natives are more or less civilized and educated. At the same time, many of the native races retain an individuality in customs and charming ways that give them a picturesque distinction.

Robert Louis Stevenson who knew these islands well, wrote of them as "dreams of fertility." There are hundreds of thousands of fertile acres, every acre suitable for some class of tropical plant product. For coconut—copra—rubber, sugar, cocoa, coffee, cotton, sisal hemp, tobacco and other products of the temperate zone as well as the tropical. The trade of the South Sea Islands is estimated at forty-eight million dollars a year and is fast increasing. Twenty-five years ago there were only a few white settlers—men; no white women and children. To-day there are thousands of settlers, men, women and children and townships with every modern convenience. There are insistent demands for railways, for more shipping, for banking and trading conveniences.

where the bog land lay and where he might have found refuge, but the uphill path was treacherous as the moss on the sward; he slipped, fell on one knee and was surrounded and lost.

A spearman raised his spear to pierce him but Laminai dashed him aside.

Sure now of his vengeance, the son of Uta Matu wished to taste it alone, and waving the others off with a sweep of his arm, and standing with his back to the trees, signed to his enemy to rise.

Dick sprang to his feet and stood facing the other with folded arms. He was lost and he knew it. He had no ideas about death, he only knew that as the speared fish was, so he would be and that at once. He heard without the least heeding the words pouring out of the mouth of the other and his gaze never flinched when Laminai, reaching with the spear, touched him on the left breast with the sharp brown point.

On the left breast Laminai laid the point of the spear. Just there the point would enter, piercing the beating heart. Then, swift as light, the father of Ma flung his arm back from the thrust and fell, struggling, with Katafa about his neck.



The Sacred Right of Bean Peddling

By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "Vassals of the Ice," "The Last Phantom," Etc.

A story of Alaska as big as Alaska itself.

THEY'RE a thing of the past, now," answered The Old Road-house Man—with a tinge of regret, I thought. "But in their time they were powerful weapons."

I had asked him about miners' meetings—that picturesque institution of the law-lacking camps of the Far North. I was curious to know how they had "worked."

As usual that grizzled veteran of the arctic expelled a few premonitory puffs from his blackened brier before he went on.

"Powerful for good, mostly; but sometimes for evil. Here, in this north-of-Nome country"—his gesture traced the great horseshoe sweep of the shores of Kotzebue Sound—"there were just one or two miners' meetings—the last flickers, as you might call them, of the old spirit of 'We're all the law that's necessary' that was quenched by the Oregon Code when Congress called that bunch of statutes good enough for Alaska. The country was legally organized, as the lawyers say, when the stampedes to the arctic started; but men coming from everywheres inland, from the Canadian side the line, from the Koyukuk and other far places—naturally it took 'em some little time to get really convinced that Alaska was sure enough on the judge-and-sheriff map of the United States.

"About half of 'em resented it—and they was sometimes the most powerful half. I

was present at the last miners' meetin' in these parts and I'll never forget it. I'm told it was the last anywheres in the North. It certainly should have been, for it was probably one of the worst—as I think you'll agree when I tell you the story."

Now pardner—continued The Old Road-house Man—I've got to explain one thing to you before you could possibly understand the forces and passions which went to make that last miners' meetin', with its cut-and-dried scheme to kill Aaron Solberg and appropriate his worldly goods.

It's about bean peddlin', as the miners call it; in less contemptuous language, trading—running a store. The guy might have a big stock, a big store or two or three of them in several camps, and be entitled to be called a merchant prince in the States. But here in Alaska he was, and still is, more or less, just a bean peddler—the mortal enemy of "the legitimate population," the mining public.

You'd think the men that brought the boon of grub and clothes, of guns and traps and blankets into this cold, hard land would get respect and gratitude. Not by a jugful! They were the scum of the earth. Why? Simply because of the struggle of the miners to *get* that grub and outfit—to get it on credit if they could, or for the least possible cash.

Men were not in Alaska for their health. Most all were fair to middlin' robust on The Outside. They were here to strike it—to make a stake and get out to where there's warmth in the sunshine, less death in the air. But unfortunately the bean peddler had the nerve to entertain the same pleasant fancy. He too was in Alaska not for health but for wealth. And the rub was that where the miner or trapper looked to fat fur bearers or frozen gravel to give him his stake, the storekeeper had to get his out of the trapper and miner! The trapper and miner objected. Consequently their feelings for traders were none too cordial at best; and there were times and places—camps where little competition ha l chanced to bob up by the time winter locked men in with whatever they had of grub or money—when it was actually war; war at the heart if not at the hand—between those who *had* and those who *had not*.

That's an old quarrel, pardner, as old as the hills and the Bible. But I'll swear that not on the face of the earth anywhere at any time did the passion of that ancient feud flame fiercer than up here in Candle Creek when Aaron Solberg, bean peddler or merchant prince—whichever you like to call him—became the central figger in a raging fire of avarice and hate; though it wasn't burnin' at the stake that the miners' meetin' voted out to him—not anything so hot!

Candle was a lawless kind of place from the first, what with bein' the farthest flung of any of the Nome camps and bein' a claim-jumped placer diggins to boot. This claim-jumping gang were in power and naturally it was that element that mainly laughed at the idea of the little shack with the sign "U. S. Commissioner" on it, and the still smaller one with "U. S. Marshal" tacked on the door. But for all that the enemies of Aaron Solberg were cautious enough to wait till the meek little commissioner and old Jack Crabley, the deppity marshal, were both out of town before they exploded their bomb.

It was the dead of winter—the second winter of Candle, with the easy money in the creek washed out and nothin' much struck yet in the frozen gravel banks, though hopes had run high. It was dark days, cold, blizzly; and they were days of dark discouragement, with grub runnin' low in many a cabin and cache not only on the creek but in the little village of Candle

with its three stores and four saloons—the saloons being the main gathering places of men both idle and busy—busy meanin' either tryin' to locate pay on the benches or prospecting out on new tributaries.

Aaron Solberg & Co. was the main business place, not meaning that he had the biggest stock; though he probably did, at that. But he was more a regular business man than the others. Who the "company" was nobody knew or cared up here where every other man you meet is tangled up with somebody on the outside. Magnus & Greenhood had a big place but a good deal of it was loungin' room—a stool-circled stove and a card table or two where you could be comfortable enough not to mind being soaked for a pair of overalls or robbed for a can of soup. At Dick Robertson's, a smaller place, you'd mebbe get a drink on Dick or a cigar, for sociability. That would kind of offset *his* prices—though it didn't make him any more popular with the men running the Northern Saloon or the Monaco Bar.

But Solberg didn't go in for any of that diplomacy stuff. He was no good as a mixer. He didn't drink—not even when somebody offered, more in sarcasm than sociability, to treat him. There was little or no lounging in his place. He had an Eskimo or two to help him—which was cheaper than hiring a white clerk, everybody said. He was a little fat guy, smart as the devil, and had been in the country long enough to know a lot about it—but not miners' meetin's, evidently!

His stock was a good one, as near the right amounts of everything as a shrewd head could make it—and that was the bane of bean peddlin', having to guess in the fall just how much of the different things the camp would use up by spring—which is to say July—when you had no way of knowing what the private outfits had or what the other store men had brought in. Old Sol was a wiz at it.

Now, late in December it got noised around that flour, canned milk and butter was going to be shy. All of them had raised considerable but other things had too, just as they always do when the boats stop running before the freeze-up. Then flour jumped again—to ten dollars a sack. It came out afterward that that was mainly to men buying nothing else of Solberg—customers of the other stores; but that point

was lost in the shuffle, as you might put it. Ten bucks a sack—that's the fact that went from mouth to mouth. Think of it! Flour that sold in the fall for three—and you could peep under the canvas of his big tent warehouse and see a stack of it that looked like a stockade in an Injun country. That fact also got around at the same time. At first it was muttered, then it was rasped out, finally it was hollered by hot-stove orators; "ten dollars a sack!" The jumping gang had hated Solberg before—for he wouldn't give them credit—and now they felt murderous. That was the situation in Candle when "Squarehead" Lundstrom found gold in the benches.

Now figger it for yourself. This gang—Myers, "Big" McPherson and his partner Gregory, Flynn, "Formation" Judkins and a lot of others—as desperate a bunch of tough birds as you could have rounded up in the whole North country—had lawsuits hanging over their heads at Nome for jumping the Blankenshiff claims that that discoverer of Candle had plastered over the creek a year and a half before when—accordin' to him—a water-treadin' ghost had guided his wabbly old canoe across the Sound, up the Keewalik River and into Candle Creek. Those lawsuits didn't make the jumpin' gang any friendlier to the new "authorities" that had come north into Alaska from Congress or Oregon or somewhere. But it did make it necessary for them to get a clurn big move on if there was any mining they could do, for by next summer they was liable to be dispossessed. And now when Lundstrom's find leaks out, there is mining they can do—gold to be taken out before spring that they can sure get away with. So you see they were *goin'* to mine—put on men and take out pay dirt in spite of hell, high water or the price of grub! And as they had little money and no credit they just had to *take* the grub and supplies. They wasn't quite strong enough to dare to outright loot the place of the bean peddler they hated so they hit on a scheme of a miners' meetin', taking advantage of the big roar and agitation against Solberg to win over enough more Candle men to their side to swing their devil's game.

Big McPherson started the ruction—on the quiet. Flynn and Judkins, smaller men, were the tools. And the kind of tools they were was bellers—fanning a flame that was spreadin' over the disgruntled lawless ele-

ments in the camp. They waited till little "Judge" Keppler was called to Nome and old Jack Crabley had took the trail after a squaw man that had robbed some natives. Then they called a miners' meetin' "to consider the starvation question in this camp and take action accordingly." That was the way the notice read that was shown in the camps on the creek and in every shack and mud-plastered dugout in the town of Candle—except where they thought the occupants would sure be agin' 'em.

Saturday night it was pulled off—late February it was, and blizzly by spells. And the meeting was actually started before the man it was mainly intended for so much as knew about it—always in his store he was, unsociable, always working, at nights reading or figgerin'. You could see the light in the back of his place from the back door of the gainlin' annex of the Northern Saloon any evening till mebbe eleven or twelve o'clock.

It so happened I was in Candle myself that day, buying some supplies for the road house here. And early in the evening I was in Solberg's store. I was no ways in love with this Solberg or his prices, yet he averaged no higher than the others—maybe a hair lower. I knew, for I'd made the rounds. Fortunately for me I had plenty of flour. I was packin' a box with some jumcracks I'd bought when a delegation from the meetin' butts into the place and tells Solberg, in a commandin' way, he's wanted.

"Wanted? For what?" he asks testily, and they inform him he's being tried by a miners' meetin' for robbin' and starvin' the public.

Solberg is a plain, matter-of-fact, middle-aged piece of humanity with no personality to speak of. Few had ever seen him lose his temper. It wasn't business and it didn't pay. But he went red when he heard those words.

"There's courts in this country," he barks out but is stopped by a leerin' guffaw from the leader who is a remittance man from Canada or somewhere callin' himself Captain something or other—educated but no good—name not worth remembering.

"The court has gone to Nome, Mr. Bean Peddler," says this hooch fighter. "And the fellow you call the marshal has likewise betaken himself off. Your time has bloomin' well come, dear petty larcenist!"

There's a man named Frank Prattlow

looking over some blue flannel shirts. He's an old-timer of a different sort. Some called him "Fair-play" Prattlow. He's in business in the town, just for a while—looking after a small place for an old friend who is outside for the winter. But he's mainly a miner, himself.

"Go ahead, Solberg," he says to him, kind of advising. "I guess they'll give you a square deal. Anyhow, they can't more'n hang you!"

Solberg wears glasses, is bald and a little gray. Like the rest of his stamp of petty merchandise men, buyers and sellers, he's keener on qualities and sizes and weights than he is on gun stuff or fist fights; and he takes that last remark as a joke. But the whole idea of a meetin' to try him is no joke. He's good and mad, as I say, and he don't need to be dragged off!

"Come on!" he says to me and Prattlow and without so much as locking his till or stopping to put on a overcoat or parkey he beats it out ahead of the delegation and across the snow-filled space between his store and the Northern Saloon—which is *some* excited place. On chairs, benches, peg-leg stools and crap tables, filling half the long log building—and the rest standing—is several score of smoking, drinking, gesticulatin' men hollerin', "Hear, hear!" "That's the stuff!" "You're dead right, Mac!"—that's the way they're taking the speech that's being made.

Paddy Flynn, with an old green tie circumnavigatin' the neck of his greasy flannel shirt, is the chairman. An old ward heeler is Paddy and disorderly meetings is old stuff to him. He's in his element, as the sayin' is.

The feller that has the floor is Big McPherson—some orator, and he knows it! In the high spots of his speech he makes his voice tremble—mad or pitiful accordin' to the kind of thing he's saying. His line is something like this—where we break into it:

"And who are these men? Merchants, they call themselves. But, gentlemen, they're a disgrace to the name. A merchant is a man that runs his business legitimate. He's satisfied with a reasonable profit and let's the public live. These men are thieves, porch climbers, poisonous parasites sucking the blood of the honest hard-working miners that are the bone and sinew of this country, the only real perducers, that

dig the gold that gets into circulation all over the world.

"Here we are, trying to develop this creek, trying to find pay on the benches, poor men with a few hard-earned dollars. And these leeches, these vultures that never perduced a dollar's worth of anything in their lives, never worked a day in their lives, keep raising the price of grub, knowing we're shut up in here all winter and can't get out to get it anywhere else, that we got to have it, and making us pay them their merciless, outrageous, cutthroat prices—or else starve. Some game, gentlemen, *some game!*"

"*Some game!*" yells back the crowd.

"Right now," continues this demagogue, "there's four parties on the trail between here and Council City, hauling flour. Think of it—Council City a hundred and twenty miles from here! They're breaking trail, gentlemen, their backs bent to the howling blizzards, taking their lives in their hands, while these men—these swine—these filthy, bloated, petty-larceny bean peddlers—are sitting with their feet cocked up to their warm stoves, looking out through their back doors into their warehouses piled up to the ridge poles with flour. There they sit laughing at us—and raising the prices still higher! Are you gonna *stand* for it?"

"No, no! By God, no!" yells the crowd—or it seems like the whole crowd, though it isn't.

"Here he is—the worst of them—the one we got to make an example of!"

"Evidence, get the evidence," some one interrupts, impatient to get revenge.

"The chairman has the evidence—the names of men that—"

"I'll attind to that, Mr. McPherson," says Flynn dignified, jerking his head up—and the ends of the green necktie with it. It's all set beforehand, you understand. But the play is to hide the team work between the different men of the jumper gang.

One after another they step forward and tell how they priced flour in Solberg's place—ten dollars a sack. There wasn't but one or two that claimed they had to buy any. There was one man who bought a sailor needle—for fifty cents. The crowd laughed at that, but it was more dangerous, I believed, than the howls of anger they let loose over the flour. And some began to yell "Judgment! Judgment of this meetin'!"

"Hold on, boys!" It's the voice of Sam Mace, the town's biggest gambler. He's a miner, too, when he's got the dough, and a kind of leading citizen, you might say—as square gamblers with brains are apt to be up here. "Hold on, now. Let's see what he's got to say."

"Misther Solberg," comes from Paddy Flynn in a deep voice, "if ye've got annything to say in your own defince, now's your time. Ye can sthep forrod. But see to it ye spake respicful to the gentlemen!"

Aaron Solberg isn't red any more. He's gone white. But whether with anger or fear I'm blessed if I know to this day. Yet I think his idea was that he stood to be fined, mebbe a thousand dollars, or at the most be run out of town, stock and all—terrifyin' enough, no doubt, to a man whose business seemed like it was his god, but nothing like what's really brewing against him, or he would sure never have talked back the way he did to that murder-lusting crowd. He comes forward and stands, clenching and unclenching his pudgy fists, looking at them. Then he talks:

"You fellers don't know nutting," says the fool. "You make me sick. *You* is the poor man. *You* is the ones that work hard and has privations! The storekeeper—he don't do nutting, huh? Mats of rice and crates of bacon and sacks of flour you talk about—he don't pack them heavy goods on his back through muck and mud up to his knees to his storehouse! He don't see that bacon get moldy and no one buy it and a loss on his hands! Profit—all profit! You should have seen me at Mary's Igloo two years ago, and Teller one year ago, and before that at Golovin Bay—big booms with no gold there—and all the goods has to be moved to some other place, and the freight that's charged by them robbers, and the breaking and spoiling, eats it all up and I can't pay my debts. You don't think of that. You don't know that, huh? Ya! You don't know nutting!"

"You miners—you're de cream of the earth. And we're de scum. When *you* go to von camp, and it's no good, and you go to another which is a live one all you want is wages, hey? *You* don't want a big profit to make up for the hungry times in the last camp. Of course not. *You* don't take out all you can, or sell your claims for the highest figger you can get. Oh, no! But *me*—the storekeeper—when *I* strike a good

camp vere is something doing I got no right to make up for the hungry times in the last camp. I got to gif my goods away or work just for wages. You call that fair? What are *you*? And what is *me*? Ain't *I* got some rights? Ain't *I* a human being?"

"No, you're a damn rascal!" "No, you're a damn thief!" came voices of the jumping gang—hard-crusted men bound to get their revenge—and their flour. But others call out, too, men more open—just curious, skeptical. "How about that needle?" bawls one of these.

Solberg shook his fist—the rank idiot. It seemed to anger him more than the other accusations.

"What *you* know about goods?" he shouted in a high key—like a female. "Suppose that needle only cost me ten cents, or five cents, or two cents. How many do I sell—or that needle, and glover's needles, and darning needles and sack needles and different other odd kinds of needles that I keep shust for accommodation. In the whole year I sell not ten per cent of the stock. The rest rusts and gets lost when you fellers come pawin' dem over like you was bulls in a shina shop. You don't know nutting about merchandise *outside* and up here vere it's worse you know less than nutting what it is—what is damaged by water and what is stolen when the goods is lightered to shore and what is smashed and spoiled on the river and by rain leakin' in de tent and by you bums sitting on my counter—and fifteen per cent interest to the bank in Nome on what I borrow!"

"Ten dollars a sack!" "Bloodsucker!" persisted the enraged ones—still more enraged by his rebellion and contempt.

"Can't we storekeepers make up for last summer when we sold flour for less dan cost—when that schooner direct from Seattle was selling on us without paying no license, taking the bread and butter from our mouths? How about that? You didn't call nobody thieves then. No, nor you didn't thank us, either, for giffing flour away. We got no right, hey, to make up for that big loss—what *you* gained? And I tell you von thing more; it's credit, always credit you want; and when you're not worthy of credit you get sore! Say, you hard-working smart Alecks, I pulled flour on a hand sled, breaking mine back, right over the divide into this camp last spring. There's men that seen me—"

"Not this flour you got now, you damn liar!"

"No, you damn fool!" Solberg shouted back. "But if I lose money on *dat* ain't I got a right—?"

He was interrupted by hisses followed by a babel of profanity and yells for his punishment. It seemed like to me his talk was too keen to suit the jumper gang. They feared he'd win over enough men to give them trouble—men not hating storekeepers much less than they did, mebbe, but not conspirators, not banded together to get rid of Solberg, loot his store and then loot the Blankenshiff claims. Men like Prattlow and Mace and Sherman these were and among them there had been looks and whispers. They had drawn together as they got the drift of things.

"Let him talk, boys," shouted Prattlow.

"He's talked too much already," hollers back Formation Judkins. "Come on, fellers. Put it up to us, Paddy."

"Guilty or not guilty?" pipes up Flynn; and there's an answering roar that sounded like it might be made up more of "guilty" than "not guilty"—you couldn't tell. But you didn't have to. You could see it was all off with Solberg!

"What you gonna do wid him?" again shouts Paddy Flynn and the gang crowd roars back, "Hang him!" "Hang him!" "Throw him in the river!" And they press forward around the bean peddler—scared stiff, now, I reckon.

But on top of their shouts are shouts from the others, led by Prattlow and Mace; "No murder! No public murder in this camp!"

The other storekeepers were there, keeping their mouths shut, but moving with our crowd. And a great surge starts for Solberg, who goes down at once in the center of the vortex, with Dan Gregory, McPherson's partner and slave, over him, holding him tight.

"Anybody stops us will hang too!" It sounded like McPherson. And, "Keep back, you yeller guys, or we'll shoot!" came from another voice. And at that Frank Prattlow, leaping on the bar, draws a revolver and yells till every one's eyes are on him for the moment.

"Anybody says 'shoot' again or pulls a gun I'll kill him!" Then in a lower tone he says, more peaceable, "You leaders, there, you better come away a minute and talk this thing over."

"Let him up," says Mace, raising his long, slim hand. This to Gregory, who by now is manhandlin' the struggling Solberg.

Big McPherson, who is so tall every one can see him, don't have to wave his hands, but he does. "Wait a minute," he says to his gang. And after some snarling and haranguin' the main guys among the hangers and nonhangers got together in the back room and chewed the rag a spell.

I thought for a little while we'd have to fight it out—the fate of Aaron Solberg—then and there. And I cursed my luck that I had no gun on me. Many was armed, of course, including Mace. He always was; but if you didn't know it you couldn't have told it, for he never drew a gun in that camp—he was too clever to have to.

"Now see here, McPherson," he says, when he's got 'em calmed down a little. "You can mebbe outrastle us and shove that little storekeeper in the river. But as sure as God made little apples we'll go against you in the court at Nome—some time. Hell, man, it's too rough a play! Killin' is for murder, not for robbery—calling this duck a robber, which he may be all right enough, though he puts up a mighty strong talk."

"We're goin' to get that flour and the rest of the grub we got to have," blurts out Big Mac, cold-blooded.

"Ain't you willin' to pay for it?" asks Prattlow, innocentlike.

"Fair prices—next spring. I told him that, damn him!"

"All right," says Mace, follerin' that lead. "Make him agree to it and let it go at that."

"How you gonna make him?" inquires Formation with a nasty leer.

"You can scare him into it, if you like. Take him out on the ice and *make* him agree," answers Mace, shrugging his shoulders. And after a little more talk the gang leaders compromise on that and we all troop back into the main saloon where the factions are wrangling raucous.

Solberg, half stripped from the rough handling, breathless, wordless, pale, is stood on his feet, his coat is buttoned around him and he's hustled toward the door, the crowd turning and hollering "What's doin'?" "Where goin'?" "What's this bird gettin'?"

The gang leaders wave for silence. "He'll know soon enough," answers back McPherson in his booming voice. And they rush the man out upon the wind-swept street.

Close about them, like a guard, hovers Mace, Prattlow and the rest of us decent men, fearing treachery. Down to the ice of the river we tramped where Dan Gregory, having seized an ax at a woodpile we passed, cut with long, measured blows a hole in the thick ice till water spurted from below. Silently, determinedly, that sniping, claim-jumping gang watched what must have seemed to many the beginning of a horrible murder. The most, though, knew by now that the bean peddler was just to be scared to death—or near enough to it to make him come through with what was wanted.

"Here!" says Prattlow, forging forward, "Lemme handle him for you, Mac. Now, look a-here, Aaron. We've tried to give you a square deal. We pretty near got to killin' each other back there all on account o' you and your dog-gone flour. Stan' up there, can't you?"

The miserable man, weak from fright, had sunk to his knees among the flinders of ice and was staring down at the water in the bottom of the hole. He tried to rise, but Prattlow had to help him.

"We can't do anything for you, Aaron. They're gonna make an example of you—and take your flour. You got one chance. Give it to them—sell your stuff to them at summer prices. And to those that's got no money, wait till spring for your pay!"

"No, no!" wailed Solberg. "No, no. They never pay. I got debts!" It was a loud wailing, sinking off at the end to a murmur, as if he's half unconscious.

It didn't sound like a man in his senses. It couldn't be, of course. And Big McPherson, impatient, strode up to Prattlow, thrust him aside and seized the muttering bean peddler. He would wake the man into sensibility—into realizing the death waiting for him in that black hole—and gain from him, in the presence of all, assent to the terms they demanded.

His big fingers held Solberg up by his clothes—a sagging bag of quaking flesh and

Another story by Mr. Solomons in an early issue.



BUSINESS EVOLUTION

THE various degrees of some business men's prosperity have been achieved by living up to the motto: "Get on; get honor; get honest." That's what the wit meant when he said: "You see few profiteers because most of them made so much money during the war that they can now afford to be honest."

bones—while McPherson, towering over him, droned out the sentence.

"Understand—and take your choice. Say it's summer prices from now on, and credit for us men—or *under the ice you go!* Now, quick—say it!"

The fishy eyes of the little man looked into the hard, gleaming eyes of his enemy. A long moment they stared—like he was staring into eternity. Then suddenly he stood straight up.

"*No!*" he shouts. "Never! The goods—I don't care. I got more than I owe for. But I got a r-right—a r-right to sell what is mine—when I want—how I want—the price I want for the things dat is mine. It is a sacred right!"

In the moonlight his bald head shines white with cold. His few scanty locks of hair are flying in the cruel breeze. He's shivering with deadly fright. There's horror in his eyes. Yet he stands on his tiptoes and shakes his fist in their faces:

"*I die—but I keep my sacred r-right!*"

Prattlow, Mace, Sherman, had glided close.

McPherson, Flynn, Judkins, looked at them queerly.

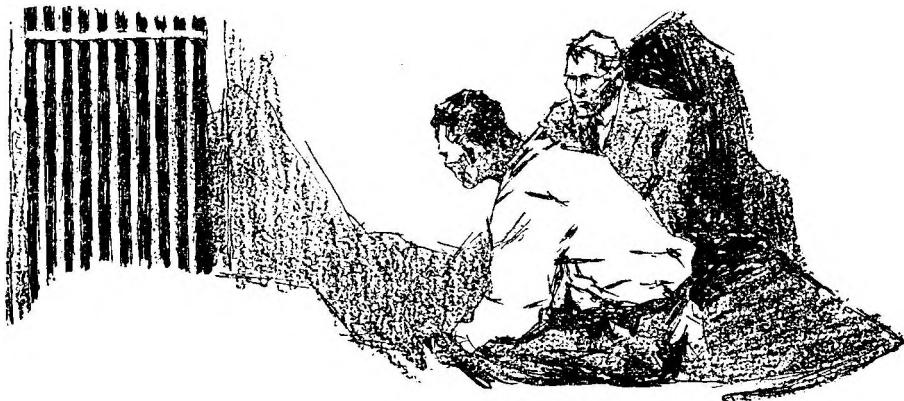
"We win," said McPherson in a strange tone. "You agreed!"

"You win," admitted Prattelow, a choke in his voice.

"*You lie!*" suddenly shouted McPherson, driving his clenched fist in his palm. "*We lose!* You can't kill a man like that!" And flinging his hands above his head he turned, followed by his gang, and strode away.

All but Paddy Flynn. The little ward heeler tore his green necktie from his throat and drew it around the neck of Aaron Solberg, weeping from the surprise of life thrust back upon him.

"You're an Irishman!" he said. And stooping to the cheated holt in the ice flung drops of water upon the bald head of the bean peddler, baptizingly.



The Cocaine Smuggler

By Ralph Durand

Author of "The Carlton Theater Mystery," "Set a Thief—," Etc.

Mayo, the revivalist-detective, shows that honor among thieves may be more a vice than a virtue.

THE usual dreary procession of cases passed in melancholy procession in and out of the Bruton Street Police Court. There were drunk and disorderlies, pickpockets, men for whose rent landlords were suing, men who had no lawful visible means of support, beggars, breakers of the peace—and with each the magistrate dealt in accordance with the law and his own common sense. Some were discharged with a few words of sound advice; some were remanded to be reported on by the court missionary. Some told long incoherent stories of bad luck to which the magistrate listened with apparently inexhaustible patience. Some were peremptorily sentenced almost before they had finished whining their stale excuses and shambled out of the dock muttering curses.

At the end of the list came a "case" of an unusual type; a decent-looking youngster about twenty years old in the uniform of a ship's officer. He stepped briskly into the dock and stood erect facing the magistrate while the clerk read out the charge that he, George Harmer, third mate of the steamer *Hampshire*, had been caught in the act of trying to smuggle cocaine past the customs.

"What do you plead, Harmer? Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, sir."

The magistrate looked up amazed. Such men as are accused of trafficking in cocaine usually lie and go on lying long after all chance of their being believed has gone.

"Have you nothing to say for yourself?" he demanded.

The youngster flushed but looked the magistrate squarely in the face.

"No, sir. I did it more for fun than anything else but I knew it was against the law."

"For fun!" The magistrate leaned over his desk and looked sternly at the prisoner. "You know what cocaine is, don't you?"

"Only that it's some sort of chemist's stuff. I was told I could get a good price for it if I got it past the customs."

"Don't you read the newspapers?"

"Not much, sir. Except for the football news. Seamen get out of the habit of reading them."

"Don't you know that it's a drug that drives men to poverty and women to the streets and both to the lunatic asylum a hundred times more quickly than drink?"

The seaman braced himself.

"No, sir. If I'd known that I wouldn't have touched the stuff."

"You wish me to believe that some unscrupulous scoundrel has made a tool of you?"

"No, sir."

"Yet I would like to believe it. You must know who advised you to traffic in the drug, who sold it to you abroad and whom you were going to pass it on to in this country. You are in fact, whether you realize it or not, a member of a gang of ruffians. If you will reveal their names and whereabouts you will be recommended for pardon."

"I can't do that, sir."

"You can't or you won't?"

"I won't, sir."

"Six months' hard labor," snapped the magistrate. "I'm sorry I can't make it more."

Harmer's was the last of the day's cases. The reporters closed their notebooks and hurried out of court. The unattached public followed them at a more leisurely pace. The magistrate was preparing to leave when a gray-haired man—a man with the jaw of a prize fighter, the forehead of a philosopher and the eyes of a saint—moved forward from the public benches and laid a card on his desk.

The magistrate picked up the card and looked keenly at the man who had offered it.

"Mr. Albert Mayo of the Eglinton Street Mission Hall? I've heard of you, Mr. Mayo, and I've heard you preach. What can I do for you?"

"I want you to authorize me to visit the man you have just sentenced in prison."

"Why?"

"I want to comfort the poor fellow."

The magistrate demurred.

"I know that you are called the criminal's friend, Mr. Mayo, and I appreciate the good work you do among men of that class, but I fail to see what special right to be comforted that young ruffian has."

Mayo was in a sense a bilingualist. When he troubled to choose his words carefully he spoke as an educated man. In moments of inspiration in the pulpit he spoke as an orator. At other times—especially when he was talking to or about criminals—his language was the language of the slum and the thieves' kitchen.

"There ain't no real harm in that man," he pleaded. "I spotted that first go off.

There's two kinds of prisoners, sir, as you well know. Some of 'em never ought to be sent to quod at all. There's others, real crooks, ought never to be let out. He belongs to one kind and the blokes that he's been trying to pass the dope for belong to the other. I'm afraid that life in the jug will harden him—make a real hard case of him—so that when he comes out he will be the kind that ought always to be kept in."

"If he belongs to the class that never should be sent to prison, if he was innocent of any wrong intention in smuggling cocaine, he had the chance to clear himself when I invited him to give evidence against his accomplices."

Mayo shook his head.

"He's not the kind that blows the gaff to save his own skin. The only way to get him to do that is to touch his conscience."

The magistrate shrugged his shoulders.

"If you think that cocaine traffickers have consciences worth touching, Mr. Mayo, you are more optimistic than I am," he said. "But I understand that you are a bit of a detective as well as a preacher. If you will undertake to try and get evidence against Harmer's accomplices—I don't care how you set about it—so that the police will be able to break up the whole gang, I will give you a note to the governor of Hoxton Gaol, asking him to let you have all facilities for visiting Harmer alone."

Two hours later George Harmer was pacing up and down the narrow limits of his cell when a warder opened its door, admitted Mayo and closed it again, leaving them alone. Harmer paused in his restless walk and looked his visitor up and down.

"Who are you?" he demanded truculently. "Some sort of sky pilot by the look of you. You can take your tracts somewhere else. I don't want 'em."

"I know just how you feel," said Mayo, seating himself on the prisoner's bed. "I've been in prison myself. Every time the door of my cell slammed—like yours did just now—reminding me that I was a prisoner, I felt like cutting my throat if I'd got the chance. Ten years penal servitude I had. But the way you are feeling just now there doesn't seem much difference between six months and ten years. It's being in prison at all that worries you, and you are thinking of the people at home and wishing you had just one hour of freedom so that you could go and tell them that you smuggled more for

fun than anything else and that you didn't know there was any special harm in the stuff you smuggled."

Harmer paused in his restless pacing of the cell.

"How do you know I only did it for fun?"

"You told the magistrate."

"He didn't believe me."

"But I did. I was a burglar, George, before I was pinched. And what do you suppose made me want to crack cribs? The sport of the game more than anything else. The excitement of it and the fun of being cleverer than the detectives. And I was, too, cleverer by a long sight, till I got careless."

A smile as at some unhallowed reminiscence crossed Mayo's face.

"I don't need to be told that nine out of every ten sailors smuggle every time they get a chance," he continued. "A bottle of scent or brandy or a few pounds of tobacco. And it isn't the little bit of profit to be made that makes them do it either. The game wouldn't be worth the candle if that was all. It's the excitement. A sailor's life is a dull life for the most part, so when he's on watch at night and there's nothing else to think about he likes to plan out how he'll dodge the customs next port he comes to. I expect it was that that first started you on the smuggling lay. And then some one who knew that you smuggled put you up to where cocaine could be got abroad and told you that there was big money to be made by smuggling it. And you thought you'd have a try at it. That was about the way of it, wasn't it, George?"

"Something of that sort," admitted the prisoner.

"I thought so. And the idea came into my head in court that as like as not you've got a mother and that if I knew her address and could go and tell her the way I see it, perhaps she wouldn't take your trouble quite so hard."

"You go and tell my sister that," said Harmer eagerly. "You go and tell her just what you've just said to me and it'll be the best day's work you've done for a long while. Alice, her name is—Alice Harmer, No. 17 Laburnum Walk, Hackney. Poor little girl! Typist in an office, she is, and doing well—till now. Always held her head high and made herself respected and now I've gone and dragged her name in the mud and made her feel that she's no better than

the worst of them. It's enough to make her give up trying."

"I'll go this evening."

Harmer sat down on the bed by Mayo's side.

"You're a white man," he said fervently. "I say! What's the special harm about this cocaine stuff?"

"Have you ever been drunk, George?"

"Now and again. But only by accident—if you know what I mean. I might take a couple of glasses or so—and then one more. And the last one would make me sort of silly and careless so that I hadn't sense to stop. And then if I was knocking round with the boys I might get drunk before I knew what I was doing."

"But you never even took so much as one glass without knowing what'd happen if you took too much. With cocaine it's different. A pal might offer you a sniff of it and you might take it just out of curiosity—and once you took it it'd be all up with you. You'd be as silly and reckless and as ready to fight or steal or do any cursed thing as if you were blind drunk. But you'd look sober enough; no one but an expert would know you'd been drugged. And once you'd touched the stuff you'd never rest till you could have it again. Supposing some one gave some of the stuff to your sister, George; how'd you like that?"

Harmer shuddered.

"It doesn't bear thinking of," he said. "Look here! The man I tried to run the stuff for can't know what it's like. If you want to do me another good turn go and warn him. Jack Drew his name is. You know Agate Street, Soho? There's a newspaper shop next the pub at the corner. Go there and tell the man you'll see behind the counter that you want to back the favorite for a place in whatever the next race meeting is. That's the password, you understand. He'll say that he has inside information that the favorite will be scratched. That's the countersign. Then you ask for Jack Drew and he'll tell you where to find him."

Mayo was taken aback. He had intended to persuade Harmer to denounce his accomplice or failing that to set to work as a detective and worm some hint from him that would set him on the accomplice's track. And now he had of his own accord given him all the information he wanted! A professional detective would have asked

nothing better. But Mayo's code of honor, a code that had been all he had in the way of religion in his criminal days, prevented his using the information without Harmer's express permission.

"Don't tell me Drew doesn't know what he's doing," he said. "A man that's doing a bit of smuggling just for the fun of it doesn't take all that trouble to cover his tracks. You're a good sort yourself, George, and the trouble with you is that you think everybody else is as straight as yourself. I don't need telling what sort he is. I'm an older man than you and I know more about crooks than you do. He's one of these hearty, come-and-have-a-drink sort of chaps that a fellow like you thinks is a thundering good sort till he does the dirty on you. I'm all for a man's sticking to his pals. There's a man doing time to-day who could get a big remission of his sentence if he blew the gaff about some things I did before I was convicted. But Drew isn't your pal. He's a dirty dog that used you for his own purposes. Split on him, George! If you split you'll get your pardon. But that oughtn't to count with you. What you've got to think of is the rotten work that he and his gang are doing. Split on him, George! Split on him and lay the whole nasty gang by the heels."

Harmer shook his head doggedly.

"I'm not going to split," he said.

Mayo saw that he meant what he said. He left the prisoner to his own thoughts and went to the office of the governor of the prison.

"Any luck?" asked the governor. "Did you get anything out of him?"

"I messed up the whole thing," said Mayo bitterly. "First I started out to try and get his confidence. And I was just a bit too clever. Then I tried to get him to split. But he won't. He's too good a fellow."

"He ought to be made to talk," said the governor. "And there's a way to do it, too, but one's got to be too soft with criminals nowadays."

"Thumblscrews?" asked Mayo.

"There's a more scientific way than that. In the days when thumbscrews were used a man could be made to say 'yes' to any question that was asked and the torturer was no nearer the truth than before. No. In a case like this we ought to be allowed to do what is done in some continental prisoners.

They watch a prisoner and as soon as he goes to sleep wake him up and ask questions. A clever man may go on lying without contradicting himself so long as he keeps his wits about him but he can't keep his wits about him if he's never allowed to sleep and sooner or later you get the truth out of him. Physical torture is no good. Mental torture is the scientific method. But we aren't allowed to use it."

"I dare say," said Mayo and went his way. He thought no more of the governor's words but they had without his knowing it, laid in his mind the seed of an idea that germinated and took root there.

At Laburnum Walk, Hackney, Mayo conveyed Harmer's message with so much sympathy and with such deep understanding of human nature that he was able wholly to blunt the edge of Alice Harmer's misery. Reaction from shame and anxiety opened her heart. She talked freely and eagerly and in half an hour Mayo knew almost as much about George's life and friends as she knew herself. She showed him a photograph of the crew of the *Hampshire*, taken when Harmer was second apprentice.

"That's the captain, of course, sitting by the wheel," she said. "And that one used to be mate, but he's left the ship since the photo was taken, so the second mate got his job and George got the second mate's berth. That one holding the life buoy is Jack Drew, George's great friend. He was senior apprentice then and—"

"And how was it that he didn't get the second mate's berth instead of George?" asked Mayo, making a careful mental note of Drew's face.

"He left the ship before then. He either came into money or got a well-paid job ashore. I'm not sure which."

"And your brother lost sight of him, I suppose."

"No. They always kept up with each other. George never comes home from a voyage but what Jack comes to look him up and take him to a theater. He has taken me once or twice."

"Ah! And do you like him?"

The girl hesitated. "I always like to be nice to Jack's friends."

Mayo took his leave, enjoining Alice to keep a stout heart and promising to get permission to see George again in prison and to bring news of him. Then he went to Agate Street. He wanted to see for himself

whether Drew was as innocent of any real intent to do evil as George Harmer supposed him to be. Real criminals are very easily scared and Mayo had no intention of scaring him unless he found reason to suppose that the estimate he had formed of his character was unjust. He called at his own lodgings, therefore, on his way to Agate Street and there changed into clothes that looked as if he had robbed them from a dust heap. In these, lounging against a lamp-post just outside the newspaper shop to which he had been directed he looked exactly like one of those individuals who stand outside public houses all day ready to mind a barrow, call a cab or undertake at a moment's notice any other temporary employment that does not involve hard work.

People went in and out of the newspaper shop at the rate of about one every three minutes. In most of them Mayo saw little of interest. But he took special note of a man whose tweed coat, stiff white shirt, white tie and black trousers showed him to be a waiter off duty; of a newspaper vendor; of a Chinese ship's steward in uniform; of a ship's stoker—a stoker may be known all the world over by the peculiar way in which his hair is cut—and of a woman dressed in the fashion of the week after next. On the heels of the last visitor came a man that Mayo recognized as Jack Drew himself.

Mayo shambled into the shop. The woman had disappeared into some inner room. Drew was standing at the counter glancing through the columns of an evening paper. The face of the man behind the counter stamped him, to the expert eye, as having originated somewhere in central Europe. Mayo, addressing him in a hoarse whisper, announced his wish to have a bob on the favorite.

"Who's the favorite to-morrow?" asked the man behind the counter to Drew.

"I shouldn't back the favorite," said Drew, scarcely glancing up from his paper. "He'll probably be scratched."

Mayo turned to him and still speaking in a voice that sounded beer sodden whispered, "George Harmer's in trouble. He gave me a message for you."

"Harmer? Don't know the name," answered Drew. He folded up the paper, tossed a penny on to the counter and walked out of the shop. Mayo walked away west-

ward, his hands deep in the pockets of his frowsy overcoat; his eyes fixed on the gutter. A casual observer would have thought he was looking for cigar ends, but he was deep in thought.

Two things were clear to him: Drew was not a man in the least worthy of Harmer's loyalty; the newspaper shop in Agate Street, Soho, was the center of a brisk trade in cocaine. A hint to the police would almost certainly result in the arrest not only of Drew but of a number of other cocaine traffickers as well. Could he give that hint? His curious code of honor told him that he could not without George Harmer's permission. He wracked his brains for some means of overcoming George's mistaken loyalty to an unworthy pal and recalled the governor's opinion that mental torture was the instrument that should be used.

There is a curious tendency among social birds of prey to frequent certain recognized haunts. This circumstance admirably suits the police. But the public, under the mistaken impression that the way to extirpate vice is to scatter it, occasionally denounces this or that restaurant or brasserie. The police then reluctantly force the establishment temporarily into the path of rectitude and thereafter find the task of keeping the birds of prey under observation a difficult one until they settle down again in some new haunt.

The haunt of the moment was a restaurant known to the post office as "Carlo's," and to its frequenters as "The Spotted Cat." The waiters spoke half a dozen European languages equally badly. Aged copies of *La Vie Parisienne* and *Il Messaggero* were on sale at a stall just inside its door. On a dais inside two fat men in dingy linen played apathetic music daily from six p. m. till closing time. The place had the reputation of being gay but such gayety as it had was supplied by its customers.

Chance led Mayo to the door of The Spotted Cat and a sudden inspiration prompted him to stop and keep it under observation. He took up a position in the gutter opposite the door and to avoid attracting attention took from his pocket a few pair of boot laces that he always kept there for such occasions. By this simple act—since boot-lace hawkers are a common object in London streets—he at once became an inconspicuous object in the crowd.

A very short period of observation showed

him that the time was ripe for the police to take official notice of The Spotted Cat. Within ten minutes several members of the half world, two of the clients of the Agate Street newspaper shop and a notorious confidence-trick spieler had entered the place. Then—Mayo's heart thumped against his ribs—Drew himself came. He was escorting a girl who was obviously not one of The Spotted Cat's regular customers. She was quietly dressed and tired looking and as the door swung open hesitated and half drew back.

"This isn't an ordinary tea shop," she protested.

"It's quite all right. There's a band here. It'll cheer you up," said Drew reassuringly.

Mayo could read the girl's face. He saw shyness, timidity and a certain amount of instinctive repugnance fighting with curiosity and the dislike of seeming a prude. She hesitated and entered. Mayo shambled away from the door and as soon as he was out of sight hurried to the nearest public telephone. After the usual delay, that always seems so much longer than it really is, he got into communication with Scotland Yard.

"Hullo! Mayo speaking," he said. "Is Detective Simmonds there? In the building? Good! Find him and tell him to come round to The Spotted Cat as quick as possible. He'll see me on the curb outside."

He hurried back to his place outside the restaurant door and stood there, having, so far as the casual passer-by could see, no object in life except to sell boot laces and very little hope of doing that, but inwardly seething with almost uncontrollable impatience. He calculated how soon Simmonds could arrive. He must allow five minutes for the messenger at Scotland Yard to find him, three minutes for him to get to a cab rank, seven minutes—

But before he had been at his post fifteen minutes Drew returned with his companion to the street and hailed a cab. A change had come over the girl. Her shyness had given place to an air of brazen recklessness. She carried herself like a peacock. She was laughing. Her eyes glittered and a muscle at the corner of her mouth was twitching spasmodically.

Mayo knew nothing of the symptoms of cocaine poisoning but he felt sure she was

drugged. His common sense told him that he could do nothing but his common manhood spurred him to action. He grasped Drew's arm.

"Where are you taking that girl?" he demanded.

Drew shook him off and beckoned to the uniformed doorkeeper. The man laid a huge hand on Mayo's shoulder. Then Mayo saw red. He drove his elbow into the doorkeeper's ribs and struck with all his force at Drew's face. But the doorkeeper was an ex-pugilist and had him pinioned before he could strike again. Mayo kicked, heaved, and, unbalanced by fury, used language that would have surprised the Eglinton Street congregation. The struggle lasted barely a minute. A blow from a policeman's truncheon, gently but scientifically applied to his funny bone, brought him to his senses and the realization that the cab was out of sight. The policeman then took him by the scruff of his neck and advised him to come along quietly without any more nonsense. Mayo would undoubtedly have spent that night in a lockup had not Simmonds, appearing in the nick of time, shown his police badge and carried the revivalist off to Scotland Yard.

"There was nothing you could have done," said the detective when Mayo had told the whole story. "There was nothing I could have done, without a warrant. Nothing can be done now to save the girl from the man. I'll get to work on the Agate Street gang at once. But Drew's the man we want. You get that fellow Harmer to give evidence against him and we'll smash the whole combine."

"I'll have another try," said Mayo. "Perhaps he'll be easier to handle when I tell him what I've seen to-day."

Early next morning Mayo returned to Hoxton Gaol and after seeing the governor was admitted to Harmer's cell.

"George," he said. "I've bad news for you."

The seaman dropped the oakum he was unraveling.

"It's not—not—nothing wrong with Alice?" he asked anxiously.

"I've got a shock for you. That man Drew—"

"Have they caught him?"

"Not content with ruining you, he has made your sister a drug fiend."

"I won't believe it."

"You've got to believe it." Mayo's voice thundered as it sometimes thundered in the Eglinton Street Chapel. "You're to blame for it and you can't undo the harm you've done by saying you don't believe it." Then his voice dropped and he spoke gently and softly. "It wasn't her fault, poor girl. She trusted him, like you did—that's where she went wrong. And he betrayed her. Listen till I tell you all I know. She was going home from her work, tired—and a bit heartsick, too, I expect. He met her and offered to take her to where she could have a cup of tea and rest a bit listening to music. He took her to a place where no decent man would take a girl. But how was she to know?

"When he had got her there he told her he had something that would take away her headache. He showed her the powder and said that if she sniffed a little of it up her nostrils her headache would go. She believed him. Why not? You trusted him, so why shouldn't she? The stuff made her feel better—not so tired and sad as she had been. So she took a little more. Better if it had been brandy! Brandy poisons the body, but that was cocaine, George, and cocaine poisons the soul without doing any harm to the body that any one but a doctor could notice. Her soul was poisoned, George, and she was as innocent of any intent to do wrong as—aye, a thousand times more innocent than you were when you tried to bring the accursed stuff into the country."

Harmer sprang to the door and hammered on it with his fists. A warder opened it, curtly told him he'd be punished if he didn't hold his row and slammed it in his face again.

"I forgot," said Harmer miserably.

"Aye, you forgot. You forgot that that

Don't miss the Mayo story in the next issue.

door won't open for all your knocking. You're not a free man, George. But the man you won't split on is free. There's no warder has any right to slam the door in his face as long as you keep loyal to him. He's free to ruin another girl to-morrow. He's all right so long as his pals don't split on him. It's fine to have stanch pals."

But Harmer was not listening. He was sitting huddled on his bed, gnawing his fingers, staring at nothing.

Four days later Mayo visited the cell again.

"It's all right," he said. "The home secretary has ordered your release. It was Drew they were after. Thanks to you they've nabbed him and your remission of sentence has come through. I've more than that to tell you. I've been to your owners. I told them that you had had your lesson and weren't likely to go on the cross again. The *Hampshire* sails again to-morrow night. If you are aboard by noon you can sail with her and nothing more will be said."

"I won't sail with her," said George. "I've got to see Alice—and stay with her and protect her."

Mayo laid his hand on George's shoulder.

"Can you forgive me, George?" he said. "I deceived you a bit—for your own sake and your sister's sake and for the sake of every decent man and woman. The girl that Drew ruined was my sister, too, George. Your sister and mine. '*We are all one*,' the Book says. But it wasn't Alice."

Harmer choked—laughing and sobbing at once.

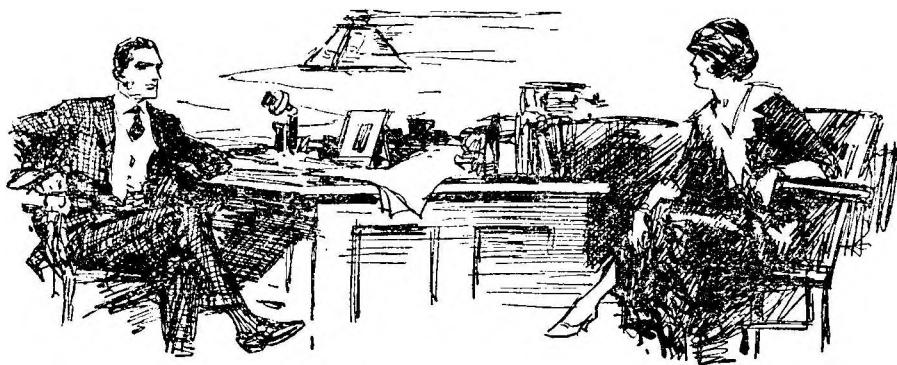
"Do you mean—that—that Alice—she isn't—"

"Alice is in the governor's office, waiting for you."



TAR AND FEATHERS "OLD STUFF"

AN old punishment that still is popular—with those who administer it, at least—is tarring and feathering. Once it was legal as well as popular. When King Richard I. of England started on the third Crusade he ordered that a convicted robber should have boiling pitch poured over his cropped head, "and that the feathers of a pillow shall be shaken out on him, so that he may be known." Apparently the ride astride a fence rail that often accompanies this form of punishment is a "trimming" added since the day of England's lion-hearted and heavy-fisted king.



A Man of Principle

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "The Man of Three Lives," "Out of the Deep Sea," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The story of Counselor Ambrose Hinkle, "Little Amby," is pieced together with significant fragments from the life of an amazing rascal. It is the patchwork biography of a man who, judged by every normal standard, was little better than a scoundrel, and yet who proved himself throughout his career a man of principle. In the pursuit of his single object, which was nothing more than material success—the acquisition of luxury—every road was open to Ambrose Hinkle save only one. Law to him was a ready shield, to buckler the unjust against the just. Honesty was a word to hypnotize the unwary and bend them to the will of clever schemers. Perjury was an ample cloak to hide the furtive face of sin. Only one consideration above the material ever gave him pause. He would not brook disloyalty. He was never known to betray a client or a trusted friend. Loyalty was his only principle. Surveying his early life in the slums of New York, the wonder is not that he was so lacking in principles as that he should have had any principle at all. As a boy, small and puny, he quickly learned that evil strength preys on weakness and prevails always unless weakness matches it with evil cunning. And so, being weak in the midst of evil, he learned to take his strength of cunning. As a law clerk he observed the clumsy devices current for twisting the statutes to the ends of evil. And he was confirmed in his belief that cunning only can prevail in a world full of evil strength. He professed the practice of law, but cunning became his accepted craft. It never occurred to him to attack directly. Stealth and cunning were his weapons. By stealth and cunning he became a factor in the political machine led by big Steve Hilley. By stealth and cunning, even, he planned his suit for the heart of Cissie, Hilley's daughter. In a world of honest men he could not have survived. But in the underworld of politics and crime he was fitted to climb the heights. For his philosophy was based on the assumption that all men are thieves—and most of them fools. In which, for the purposes of underworld existence, he was nearly always right. It is significant, however, that on the rare occasions when he encountered forthright honesty backed by strength he found himself at a disadvantage. It was so, for instance, when he matched his crooked craft against the bluff integrity and courage of Jim Kelleher, who happened to be in the underworld but not of it.

(A Two-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER XII.

THINGS don't look so rosy this fall," said Steve Hilley to Little Amby. The leader had conceived great respect for the abilities of the wily and unscrupulous little law clerk and advised with him constantly.

"Why? I thought things were fixed up with the other organization. We're to get the alderman, and the municipal court judge

and special sessions, and they're to take the rest of the county ticket. Isn't that the deal?"

"That's the deal; but Twickem says frankly that maybe he can't put over a deal this year. It looks like a Reform year. That Lexow investigation of the police department made a very bad impression on a lot of people that don't understand practical politics. I was down at the Long House in Four-

teenth Street yesterday and the people down there are feeling very blue. They say it looks like a Reform year. Twickem would like to beat Reform as much as we would, because they will take away from his ticket the best places, but he cannot afford to fight them or they will put up an independent ticket and trim us both."

"Reform can't win without an organization."

"Oh, yes, it can. Most of the voters in New York don't belong to any organization and the business men will vote for anybody that promises to cut the taxes. Well, we will promise to cut taxes but they will not believe us. Of course the Reform crowd will not be able to cut the taxes either, since the city is already committed to the extension of Riverside Drive and the building of the Parkway and other public improvements, and they will only make a lot of bad friends and have nothing to show for it and we will beat them two years from now hands down as we have always done after a Reform administration. But this looks like a Reform year. The leaders down at the Long House feel blue and they say there will be no money handed out this year, as we are licked already. At the same time they will have a black mark against me if I lose my district. But what can we do down here without a campaign fund?"

"We'll collect a little heavier right here in the district."

"But we can't! The keepers of all the resorts are feeling blue too and they think they will hold onto their money until after election and use it to make peace with whoever has the say-so then. They are a mean bunch and all they think of is their money. Billy Anderson was around to see them and not half of them said they would come across."

"Let's shut some of them up—that will teach the others who's who in the district right now!"

"They're too blamed mean," said Steve Hilley gloomily. "If I tried to shut that Frank Hatfield up he would squeal like a pig under a gate and run to the Lexow Committee with his tale of woe. These gamblers ain't got any sense of honor. And then there's this Parson Golden, who is peevish with us since we put something over on him while Campbell was inspector. He preaches against us day and night and he has organized his No-Partisan Club, and he has all

the soreheads in the district running to him. He has the backing of the local chamber of commerce and the East Side Business Men's League. I hear from Twickem that he is going to put up his own local ticket and that the Reform crowd are going to indorse it."

"I've got an idea," said Little Amby.

"Well?"

"There is an old saying, 'Once a sucker, always a sucker!' What is the matter with us going to the parson again and asking him to help us out of our troubles? We will tell him that we have changed our hearts and are willing to jump in and help him to clean up the district. If the business men find out he is working with us they will commence to shy off and probably they will decide to let matters be and take no interest in politics this year, according to the old saying, 'The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know.'"

"There is another old saying," sniffed Steve Hilley, "which says, 'A sparrow in the hand is better than a pigeon on the roof!' Supposing this parson don't take stock in our promises, but figures things are going along nicely, and he will just hold us where he got us? Supposing he asks us to prove ourselves?"

"Why, then," said Little Amby, "we pull out the list of the resort keepers who won't give up and we hand it over to him! He will be tickled to death and he will rush around and get evidence and lay complaints and he will shut these places up. Well, seeing where the blow comes from, the gamblers will not squeal; and meanwhile the others will be worried and will give up something handsome when we say we will square them with the fighting parson. They will believe that he is not on the level, seeing that they are not on the level themselves. We will explain to the parson that we do not want to appear in the matter, as these resort keepers all have got something on us from the old days. He will know that is true and he will not ask us to go to the front; it is like the old saying, 'There is no lie like the truth!'"

"I think you have got an idea there," said Steve Hilley, brightening up. "We will figure it out; it will take some careful handling. Another thing I was thinking of is to see if we cannot get up a little religious excitement against this parson. If we can represent his movement as sectarian the

other religions will rather vote for the devil with his horns on. That is something to mull over. And then I was thinking of doing some colonizing."

"Colonizing?"

"Sure. Bring in a bunch of men who will vote right. I figure that George Hughes over in Hoboken will help us out with some colonists. Two years ago he was attacked by a mean bunch of reformers over there and he came over to see me and I got Peretti to move a big labor gang over to Hoboken—it is all the same to those fellows where they live—and a couple of months later they turned up at the polls and voted solid for Hughes, and swung the election. We could sleep three hundred men in the lodging houses on the Bowery and they would not be noticed coming in. Hughes can get us a group of citizens from River Street who would just as soon live in New York as not, for the next couple of months."

So they plotted and planned. As finally arranged, a man called Jessup joined the No-Partisan Club and engineered the business of delivering the recalcitrant resort keepers over to justice. He was an ex-gambler; he was shot to death in late October of that year while sitting on a stool before an all-night refreshment stand on Centre Street. The proprietor of this outdoor restaurant was the only witness; the rather perfunctory investigation into Jessup's demise revealed only that the time was three o'clock in the morning and that Jessup was eating immediately before his demise his second order of pigs in blankets. His last words, according to the proprietor, were "These are the best pigs in blankets anywhere in New York!" "Pigs in blankets," said the proprietor, answering the coroner, "are oysters wrapped separately in strips of bacon and garnished with chopped green peppers and baked in the shell; mustard or mayonnaise has no part in them." A raking cross-examination failed to shake the proprietor's story. Steve Hilley got his campaign fund and the disgruntled resort keepers did not think it wise to hit back further. It is understood that they brought about the killing of this man Jessup.

Little Amby went over to Hoboken several times to see the Hoboken leader. George Hughes was the sheriff of Hudson County; he was the ostensible leader, though the brains of his machine was a lawyer named Mallon, or Mallow, who

united the offices of corporation counsel and district attorney. Hughes was generally to be found sitting in state on the bootblack stand in the basement of the courthouse. Little Amby sat in the chair at the leader's right hand and spoke into his inclined ear.

On his last visit of this series he was annoyed to perceive that the chair beside the leader's on the dais was already occupied. The middle-aged tenant of the client's chair wore a suit of a large black-and-white check, a Piccadilly collar, and cravat, and patent-leather shoes. He was speaking in an angry undertone to the leader, who had abated much of his majesty and who was shrugging his shoulders and spreading his hands in argument. The tenant of the chair was Pruitt. Little Amby was disturbed at sight of him; the attitude of the leader did not surprise him, in view of Pruitt's wealth and station. The little law clerk slipped back again into the crowd. To give Pruitt time to finish his visit Little Amby left the courthouse and walked over to Hudson Street to get his lunch at the Kohler House which was justly famous in those days for its Pilsener beer and its *Wiener schnitzels*. Little Amby liked nice things to eat.

He came out of the Kohler House an hour later with a toothpick in his mouth, his red-and-green banded straw hat on the back of his head and his light tan-colored fall overcoat on his arm; the time was early in September and the morning had been blowy, though the sun now shone hotly into Hudson Street.

"Hey!"

He looked out and saw Pruitt sitting in a two-wheeled gig, reining in a handsome pacer. Pruitt was scowling.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Pruitt," said Little Amby, smiling but wary.

"Come here," growled Pruitt. "I want you!" He swung the rig in to the curb, and flung himself out and hobbled toward the law clerk. In his hand was clutched his heavy ebony stick. Little Amby did not like the way he was balancing that stick, which for all its elegance was heavy enough to level a man at a blow.

"What seems to be the matter, Mr. Pruitt?" expostulated Little Amby, retreating.

"Come here!" snarled Pruitt, lifting his staff.

"Sorry," said Little Amby. "I'm in an awful hurry!" And he set to hurrying down Hudson Street.

"Stop!" shouted Pruitt. "Stop him, there! Stop, thief!"

If Little Amby had been an honest man, with an honest man's serene confidence in the prevalence of right and justice, he would, of course, have stopped and returned to outface Pruitt and he would certainly have had the best of that outrageous fellow. But Little Amby was a rascal, with a rascal's disabilities. He knew that Pruitt was powerful through his riches and he had all of Pruitt's own cynical confidence in the might of wealth and station. He did not lack for a sort of courage; he could fight with the cold tenacity of a weasel when the fight was on his own terms; but he always ran away from a fight when the other side brought on the issue. So now, perceiving an empty cab wheeling around a corner below, he took to his heels, intending to jump into the cab and make off.

"Stop thief!" bawled Pruitt.

The loafers along Hudson Street saw the little man running, and the fine gentleman waving the stick and hobbling after, and they joyfully took up the chase. Little Amby had over a hundred yards' start of them but they ran after whooping happily, wishing to be in at the death and to find out what it was all about. There was blood thirst in their voices.

After his first burst of speed Little Amby began to puff; his sedentary habits and habitual cigar smoking had stolen his wind. He had bellows to mend as he rounded the corner and thanked his lucky stars that he had to run no farther. He expected to see the cab some thirty or forty yards ahead and still wheeling slowly and invitingly along. He would bolt into it; the driver would see nothing unnatural in the fact that his fare had run to catch his cab; he would whip up and away they would go out of earshot of the pursuit.

But when Little Amby turned the corner the cab was not there. The driver had already whipped up; he was two hundred yards away and bowling along. Little Amby paled, for he heard the inhuman ululation of the mob.

On one side of the street into which Little Amby had turned was a high board fence; on his side of the street was a factory taking up the entire block front, except for the immediate corner. On the immediate corner was a saloon. The saloon was

closed; its doors were secured by padlocks; there was no door in the length of the factory wall. There was no cover anywhere in sight, except for a sentry box in the gutter; and in the sentry box was sitting a policeman asleep.

Before the whitewashed window of the dead saloon was teetering a single loafer, from one foot to the other. His eye was vacant and glassy; in his mouth was a dead cigarette. He was forlorn, as a last leaf; he was heroic, as the last of the Old Guard; he was faithful to his saloon, even unto death.

"Quick!" gasped Little Amby, rushing up to him, throwing the light fall overcoat over his arm and thrusting the straw hat with the red-and-green band into his startled hand.

"Huh?" gasped the loafer, snapping out of his trance.

"That man in the cab left these in the restaurant!" cried Little Amby, pressing a quarter into the loafer's other hand. "Two dollars if you catch him!"

He gave the loafer a shove and instantly he was speeding down the street.

Little Amby sprang over to the sentry box and shattered a glass pane with his elbow.

"Huh!" grunted the policeman, awakening. He lurched from his shelter.

"There he goes, officer!" cried Little Amby, pointing at the flying loafer.

"Been watching him for six months," grumbled the policeman with grim contentment. Javert must have grumbled so when at last he caught Jean Valjean with the goods. He leaped after the loafer like a loosed bloodhound.

Into the sentry box popped Little Amby. He pulled the door to and sank with a long sigh into the chair.

Around the corner came the forefront of the mob. After the policeman they tore. Past the other side of the sentry box swept Pruitt, standing in his gig and leaning beseechingly over his steed.

The rack rolled away into the distance. A last citizen, staid, pipe in mouth, strolled around the corner and peered frowningly down the street.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Search me," said Little Amby, closing the door of his shelter behind him with studious deliberation, and turning for his brisk walk to the ferry.

CHAPTER XIII.

When a great man writes his life he makes a neat job of it; he joins a long row of incidents in logical order, one fitting into the other, and shows us that he was indeed a steadfast fellow who knew what he was about, from the day he stepped out of petticoats to the day he ascended the final crowning height and took his pen in hand. But an outsider, coming to the writing of the life, can see no such instructive continuity between the great man's public appearances and he must supply the missing links with imagination and pious lies if he will make of it all an edifying sequence. His subject may have been successively, for instance, a weakly boy, a powerful athlete, a cowboy yip-yipping in the West, a grave and sedentary author, a New York policeman, a Washington office holder, a fierce soldier snatching reputation from the cannon's mouth, and then—hurrah!—the governor of his State, and—bang!—into the presidential chair. Here is need of piety, or of autobiography, if vagabondish young men are not to take heart of hope.

To write a convincing life of a great rascal is still harder, because the hero has taken pains to hide the sequence and relation of his actions. Approaching the writing of such a life is like gazing out from the shore and viewing some beast or beasts rising loop after loop from the dark and occulting sea; is this phenomenon, one asks with beating heart, in very fact a great and fearsome sea serpent replete with morals and warnings, or is it a mere line of purposeless and unrelated porpoises?

There is a host of men and women living here in New York who could give to us the complete biography of Little Amby, if they would unfold their several tales and contribute every one his bit. But there is no hope of that. They are Wall Street financiers, pretty ladies of Broadway, gunmen, parsons, politicians, sharpers and reputable business men. Many of them, and of the many a few of the honest sort, are his good friends to this day. They can be persuaded to talk of Little Amby, except as to their personal dealings with him; as to those dealings they have nothing to say. Under these difficult circumstances I have been obliged to limit myself at present to his early life, as to which I have pieced out a connected history; I have been obliged to

postpone the use of much colorful material having to do with his later career at the criminal bar. We shall have a glance at him in his heyday; and then something of his last end.

Hellwell ran for State senator that year. I have not been able to establish my suspicion that he resigned from the police-court bench under fire. The only legal proceeding bearing directly on the event of his resignation which I have succeeded in digging out of the dusty records is the *Quo Warranto* proceeding *In re Heisenbuttel*. This was a proceeding to set aside an order of Hellwell's committing Heisenbuttel to the city prison for six months for contempt of court; the argument of Heisenbuttel's counsel was directed to the point that Hellwell was not a magistrate at the time of the alleged contempt; the forward action of Heisenbuttel was not traversed. It seems that the attorneys who frequented Hellwell's court had decided to give the retiring justice some memento of their regard and esteem, and had agreed to present him with a copy of "Law, Its First Principles." When Hellwell made his special and final appearance on the bench to receive this handsome tribute to his learning and public service, the lawyers rose in turn and made speeches. And this Heisenbuttel, who had been sitting in the rear of the courtroom and making denigrating remarks in an undertone, reached forward and plucked a large and yellow cucumber from the basket of a housewife before him, and rose and "*hurled the said cucumber at and toward the said Hellwell, striking the said Hellwell at the base of the neck, thus disrupting and shattering the said cucumber, and scattering its body and contents over about and upon the said Hellwell, thus impairing the peace and dignity of the court in the presence thereof.*" Heisenbuttel's reasons for this eccentric behavior were extraneous to the argument and were not pleaded and therefore no stain or aspersion is cast by this *Quo Warranto* proceeding upon the retiring magistrate.

In fact, nothing was decided as to the merits of the controversy at all, the decision going off on the ground that *Quo Warranto* was not the proper remedy. As the decision—containing an exhaustive review of the history of the writ of *Quo Warranto* by Gaffney, J.—was not handed down until Heisenbuttel had served his six months in the city prison, the latter was obliged to

consider his honor satisfied and to let the matter rest.

O'Riley the hotel keeper ran for alderman; no one else who has appeared in this history was upon Steve Hilley's slate that fall.

The Reverend Golden's No-Partisan Club put a ticket in the field, having gotten the indorsement of the various civic organizations which were trying once again to rid New York of the ancient domination of the Fourteenth Street Long House. Their candidates were fine men all; Jim Kelleher had put himself down for the aldermancy, so that he might be in the forefront of the fight, a young New York Law School graduate was running for the assembly, and two elderly but reputable lawyers were candidates for the posts of judges of the municipal court and special sessions. This ticket had undoubtedly with it the good will of three quarters of the honest and public-spirited folk of the district.

"They can't beat us," said Little Amby to Steve Hilley on Election Day.

"They could if it wasn't for the two hundred and seventy-five voters we've rung in from Hoboken. And they might beat us, even at that."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I'm afraid of our own people! That gang that Pink Wheeler has got around him in the club are a nasty bunch with no sense of honor, and I wouldn't put it past them to try and dump us. You see, they don't know about the colonists, and they figure we're licked and they think that it might be a good thing to get us licked good and proper. If I lose the district, but get out a big vote, it will be all right this year, as every one knows this is a Reform year; but if I get snowed under altogether the Big Chief up at the Long House is going to get sore and he will be ready to back a new man for leader of this district. Pink Wheeler has got a notion that he would make a good leader. That's what I am afraid of!"

"And if we win out?"

"Well," said Steve Hilley, lowering his voice but smiling, "the Big Chief himself is getting old and he is losing his grip. There are some big men up at the Long House who think we need a new Big Chief; there is the Grand Sachem, and there is 'Little Tim' Harrigan over in the ninth ward, and there is 'Spider' Lefferts down in the first. That is the bunch I am training with and they

think this will be a good year to pass the Big Chief the black spot. Especially as he is going to lose his own home district, if certain arrangements work out. Now, if we carry this district I will have something to say up at the Long House in the executive committee as there will be mighty few other leaders who are not making excuses."

They were making the rounds of the polling places in Steve Hilley's buggy. There was a crowd packed about each election booth; in those days voting was done in booths on the street, and not in stores as now.

"Hello, there, Mr. Hapgood!" shouted Steve Hilley cordially to a local grocer who was walking toward a booth.

The grocer lowered his eyes and nodded shortly. "Hello," he said.

"He's going to vote the other ticket," diagnosed Little Amby.

"Watch me talk him over," grinned Steve Hilley. "I can buy a man like that with a good jolly and a cigar. Hey, Hap! What's your rush? Come here a minute!"

The grocer's lagging approach was fore stalled by a big and lean-faced fellow whose thick arms were stretching the seams of his Sunday suit. This fellow lounged forward and flung out a big hand toward the buggy.

"Beat it," he said. "Quick!"

"What do you mean?" grumbled Steve Hilley.

The lean-faced man tapped a shield on which was written "Our Jim, That's Him, Vote for Him for Alderman."

"You're electioneering near the poll," he rumbled. "So—beat it!"

"Why, it's a confounded outrage!" spluttered Steve Hilley as he drove off. "Can't a man speak to a friend on the street? I tell you what, this is dirty politics!"

"That's one of Kelleher's contracting gang," said Little Amby. "They've all turned out as watchers and they've got our men running up the alleys. They look like a bunch of shoulder hitters."

"Just as I thought!" exclaimed Steve Hilley furiously. "Pink Wheeler and his strong-arm men are laying down on us!"

They drove around the corner into the Bowery. Here, under the shadow of the new elevated road, was a booth. A crowd of roughs was gathered about it. The two men in the buggy saw a scuffle and then several of the roughs stooped and seized the booth and upended it, throwing it over on

its side so that its reenforced canvas door fell open and its occupant was decanted into the gutter. The roughs scrambled forward to lay hold on this man, but he flung his heels over his head agilely and landed on his feet, and righted himself, and then pelted away down the avenue, definitely resigning his right to vote in this election.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Steve Hilley, his wonted geniality restored on recognizing the roughs as some of his young men. "I guess two can play at that game, hey? Let Jim Kelleher send his shoulder hitters down here and we will see who will run up the alley! That was Pink Wheeler who flung the chair after that voter. I tell you what, Pink is all right!"

"They're rough-housing the poll, Steve!" called a little man who had run away from the voting place.

"Who are?"

"Pink Wheeler and his gang. They're drunk and they're punching our people and not letting them vote!"

"Punching *our* people?"

"Yep. Our people, Steve!"

Steve Hilley whirled the buggy about and sped off in the opposite direction to that of the poll. He swung it around the corner and in less than a minute had made half the circuit of the block.

"Pink ran into a hallway," he growled. "The coppers were coming and he ran into a hallway. He figures he will get through and out into this street if they give him a chase. Well, I am going in there and meet him halfway and I am going to give him the punching of his life!"

The leader flung himself from the buggy and bounded into a tenement hallway, leaving the vehicle standing in the quiet back street. Little Amby lifted the seat, pulled out a slung shot and went less impetuously after his master. He had no stomach for this rough work but he would not abandon a comrade in a pinch.

He went through the dark hall and out into a short court; an iron door in a brick wall at the farther side was standing ajar. He ran up to it and looked in. The iron door gave into a covered passage which apparently was a fire exit from the factory adjoining; the passage was lit by a single gas jet.

Pink Wheeler was standing at the farther end of the passage; his legs were braced apart; the eye of the pistol which he was

leveling was describing small and irregular circles. He was drunk. Before him, with his hands advanced and his neck stretched out stood Steve Hilley like a man pawing at an invisible obstacle.

"I'm going to kill you, Steve," said Pink Wheeler in a dulled voice.

"Drop that gun!"

"No, Steve. I'm going to kill you. You beat me up the other night. Didn't you, Steve? And you gave me a call. You did, Steve, didn't you? I'm going to kill you, Steve."

There was no anger in his voice. He spoke with tranquillity, as one who states a simple and undeniable fact. Had the leader not come upon him he would probably have forgotten the errand which had brought him into the passage and would have wandered out again or possibly have sunk to the ground in a drunken stupor. His brain was already torpid and he was walking in his sleep. The sight of his enemy had given him his last idea. He was as irresponsible as a loosed machine.

"Got a gun?" mumbled the leader over his shoulder.

"No," said Little Amby.

"All right for you, Pink," called Steve Hilley, letting himself slouch down. "If you want to kill me——"

Then he leaped, hurling himself at Pink Wheeler's knees. The latter waved the pistol aloft in stupid surprise and seemed to be trying to bring it to bear when the impact of the attack tripped him. He fell forward over Steve Hilley. He was a strong man and the shock roused him for an instant. Little Amby saw them rise to their knees and push and haul breast to breast like grappled bears. The light from the gas jet flickered on a blued barrel between them and then the pistol was fired. Its explosion was deafening in those narrow confines.

Steve Hilley thrust the rough away from him and scrambled to his feet. Pink Wheeler lay over on his side, with twitching limbs.

"He's got it," said the leader. "He fired the gun himself. I didn't have a hand on it. So help me, I didn't have a hand on it. He fired the gun himself. You saw him, didn't you?"

"Sure, I did," nodded Little Amby. "He fired the gun himself. He was drunk and he fired the gun himself!"

"Who fired that shot?" called a voice from outside the farther door of the passage.

"He fired the gun at him——" began Steve Hilley in a loud and argumentative way. Little Amby jerked his elbow.

"Pull yourself together!" he whispered tensely. "Let's get out of here!"

They turned and stole quickly from the fire exit. Little Amby gave the iron door a shove and they ran across the short court and into the tenement hallway. They regained the street. The buggy was waiting. They jumped into it and drove off.

They drove around the corner to the polling place again, in obedience to Steve Hilley's first impulse to make the affair known to the police.

"Don't do it!" urged Little Amby. "Of course they can't convict you of anything, as I was the only witness and you know you can rely on me, don't you? But what's the sense of getting into a nasty mess? Lots of people will believe you did the trick. Pink Wheeler had friends, you know, Steve. They'll hold it in for you and some time they'll put a bullet in you."

"That's so," said Steve Hilley, staring before him.

"What's up?" yelled Little Amby to the crowd about the entrance to the hallway into which Pink Wheeler had run.

"Pink Wheeler run in there and Jim Kelleher went in after him just now and somebody's got shot!"

A policeman pushed through the crowd and hurried into the hallway.

The crowd waited, milling excitedly.

The policeman reappeared, walking beside Jim Kelleher.

"Where's Pink Wheeler?"

"He's shot!"

"Is he dead?"

"Yep!"

"Pink Wheeler is shot dead!"

"Who shot him?" yelled Little Amby from the outskirts.

"Who shot him?" echoed several of the crowd. "Who shot him, officer?"

"I don't know. Get back!"

"Th'ell y'don't know!" thundered one of the dead gangster's friends, shouldering his way forward. He pointed at Jim Kelleher. "That's who shot him!"

"You're crazy," said Jim Kelleher contemptuously.

"Lock him up!" yelled Little Amby from behind the backs of the crowd.

"Lock him up! He shot Pink Wheeler!"

"Get back," warned the policeman,

punching individuals with his club. "Come around to the station house if you want to make a charge!"

"We'll all go! He shot Pink Wheeler!"

After the ambulance had come, Jim Kelleher walked with the policeman to the local station house and was attended on his way by the usual big cortège. At the station house a dozen voices charged him with the killing: several honest citizens said in their excitement that they had seen him do the deed, meaning only that they had seen him pursue Pink Wheeler into the hallway and that they firmly believed he had done the killing. He was brought before a police magistrate who was sitting to hear election cases and was held without bail.

"It ain't right," protested Steve Hilley feebly.

"It'll win us the district!" retorted Little Amby. "We'll get him turned out to-morrow, but to-day it will win us the district. That church-going crowd are not going to vote for a man accused of murder and the way we will spread the story we'll say he was caught red-handed! They will cut the minister's ticket as sure as God made little apples!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"Well?" queried Steve Hilley.

"Search me," said Little Amby, shrugging his narrow shoulders. His elbows were on his knees and his pointed chin in the heels of his hands. They were sitting in the upstairs council room of the Six Nations on the day after election.

"Licked," said Steve Hilley.

"They didn't beat us by much!"

"They beat us. It's got me guessing, how they done it. The minister's crowd cut Kelleher's ticket, just as we expected, when they heard he was pinched for murder. And we certainly held our own regulars. And yet—they licked us! It beats me. Where did those votes come from?"

"Telegram for Little Amby!" shouted some one in the echoing hall below.

"Bring it up!"

The receipt of the wire thrilled and flattened the little law clerk; in those days receiving a telegram was something to be mentioned offhandedly and dragged into conversations for months afterward. He coughed and sat up importantly.

His face fell when he had scanned the

message. He handed the paper to Steve Hilley:

Congratulations. The two-seventy-five from Hoboken were a big help, were they not? I am laughing all over, Mister Process-server.

PRUITT.

"There's what licked us," he said.

"The colonists!"

"Absolutely. George Hughes tricked us or Pruitt managed to have the trick pulled behind his back. Did I tell you I met him over there when I was going to see Hughes? He must have got to the leaders of that crowd we brought over and arranged to have them plump for the minister's ticket. And of course that crowd from Hoboken didn't care if Kelleher had done a dozen murders; they voted for him just the same!"

"We'd have won if it wasn't for those colonists!"

"Absolutely," said Little Amby.

"Funny how things work out, isn't it?"

"Yeah."

"I tell you what!" exclaimed Steve Hilley. "I got no use for dirty politics! If I had my way every election in this district would be fought out on the dead level—only it don't always look as if you can win that way."

"When I was a kid in school," said Little Amby musingly, "I was a great hand at speaking Shakespeare. There's one piece, I remember, that begins, 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.' It's a funny thing to think of."

"That is a wise crack, and we are the gents that know it. Who is this Shakespeare? Does he live in this district?"

"Hell, no."

"I thought you said something about speaking to him in school. Well, if you run into him again, you ask him to come around to the club. We want all the Americans we can get, as we got so many of these blamed foreigners here that it scares Americans off. We got to get busy now, and turn the new alderman out of jail."

"Let him lay there!"

"We can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Well, in the first place, it ain't right. He didn't kill Pink Wheeler?"

"Who did, Steve?"

"What do you mean?" growled the leader.

"Only what I say," said Little Amby, spreading his hands placatingly. "Don't get hot about it, Steve. Pink Wheeler had

a lot of friends and they are going to ask who killed him. We can make up our minds that there were big people behind Pink, because Pink was only a fool, but he was playing a game that was likely to make a big winning and there was bound to be wise men standing back of him egging him on and waiting to grab the stakes. That is how it always is, as a fool gets nothing but the honor of winning in this world. Now somebody crabbed Pink's game and the wise men are going to be very sore. They are going to try to convict Kelleher to get even. You are not going to clear Kelleher by putting yourself in his place, are you?"

"No," said the leader, rubbing his hands. "No. But I don't feel right about it. We ought to turn him out somehow. We got to turn him out!"

"What do you care about him?"

"Nothing!" snapped the leader aggressively. "What do you think I care about him?"

"I was wondering."

Cissie spoke to her father that evening.

"What did you do about Jim Kelleher, daddy?"

"Nothing," growled the leader.

"You know that Jim didn't kill that man!"

"How do I know? Somebody killed him and it looks just now as if Kelleher did it."

"Well, I know he didn't!" cried Cissie. "And you're going to get him out of prison, aren't you, daddy?"

"What do you care about him?"

"Nothing!" exclaimed Cissie, coloring. "Except that I know he didn't do it and it isn't right to put him in prison!"

"Don't bother me any more about it just now," said the leader irritably. "Oh, very well, I'll see what I can do."

"Say, Cissie," he said after a moment's impatient thought. "You know Little Amby. I got a notion he's kind of sweet on you. Well, he's in the law business and this is more in his line. Why don't you speak to him about it? Now, don't tell him I sent you and be awful careful not to say too much for Jim Kelleher. What I mean to say is, don't make him jealous."

"Jealous!" repeated Cissie with an effect of surprise. "What is there for him to be jealous about? I am sure that neither Mr. Hinkle nor Mr. Kelleher have any call to be jealous."

Steve Hilley smiled and nodded. "Be

careful, Cissie," he said. "You've got a wise little head on your shoulders. I think myself that Jim Kelleher didn't do the killing and I've got a hunch that Little Amby is smart enough to turn him out. But go carefully, Cissie; he's a shrewd and vindictive little devil!"

"But surely, daddy," exclaimed Cissie, widening her eyes reproachfully, "you don't think he would be so wicked as to refuse to help an innocent man!"

"I think he could help Kelleher if he wanted to," said her father.

She saw Little Amby two days later.

"That fellow Kelleher is going to be indicted for murder," he said cheerfully.

"Why, that's perfectly silly!" cried Cissie, turning pale.

"Oh, no. Somebody killed Pink Wheeler; and on the face of it it looks like Kelleher. He was an awful hot-headed fellow. I don't say, you understand, that he did it; I only say that it looks like it. And it might look like it to a jury. You understand, Cissie, it's not a question as to what the facts are, but as to the evidence which is presented to the jury. The other side is likely to make out a strong enough case to convict."

"But how can they *prove* such a ridiculous thing?"

"By swearing to it," said Little Amby with a gasping chuckle.

"But who would swear to it?"

"Witnesses. I got my ear pretty close to the ground and I've heard a lot of talk about this case. There are some pretty strong people who would like to convict Jim Kelleher of murder. In the first place he is a Reform alderman; in the second place he interfered with a big scheme to cook your father; and in the third place he has Pink Wheeler's pals to reckon with. If the people on top want to make a case against his life they will have no difficulty in getting any testimony they want from Pink Wheeler's pals."

"You don't really believe that they have any chance to convict Jim of *murder*?"

"They might."

"But he is innocent!"

"Is that all that's worrying you, Cissie?"

"What do you mean?"

"Are you in love with Jim Kelleher?"

"You have no right to ask me such a question."

Little Amby stared at her while the color

flooded into her cheeks; then he lowered his eyes with a faint and peculiar smile.

"I can't do anything for Jim," he said. "I am awfully sorry to see him in such trouble but I really can't help him. He has his own lawyers and they will advise him. For the matter of that, I'm not even admitted to practice yet. I'm awfully sorry, Cissie, but you can always count on me as a friend."

After they parted he hurried over to the scene of the killing and went over the ground carefully, familiarizing himself with it. He then went around to see the owner of the factory with which the fire exit connected. In the course of his punctual round he sat with Steve Hilley in his saloon that night.

Two days later the evening edition of the New York *Star* contained the following item:

Frank Hennion, plasterer's helper, of 610 Ridge Street, states that he was standing in the doorway of the tenement house on Selden Street at the time of the Pink Wheeler murder. Through this hallway the murderer must have escaped, if Alderman Kelleher's story is true; for this hallway is the only other means of egress from the passage in which the killing was done. Hennion states that he heard the fatal shot but did not leave his station until an acquaintance told him that Alderman Kelleher had been arrested.

The story of this witness, who was unearthed by a New York *Star* reporter, has two very important bearings. It would seem to limit suspicion to Alderman Kelleher, who was the only person in the passage when the policeman entered. On the other hand it makes more difficult the establishment of guilt, as there could have been no eyewitnesses to the deed. The statement of Hennion has been turned over by this newspaper to the district attorney's office for investigation. Hennion, who tells a circumstantial tale, explains that he did not come forward before because he did not understand the bearing of his evidence on the case.

Steve Hilley read this item with a tightening of the lips, knowing well the cunning little hand which had thrust forward this Frank Hennion. He thought he understood the purpose for which Frank Hennion and his story had been produced. He was only moderately grateful; he felt that the avenue to a straightforward explanation had been closed. His sense of guilt increased. He had not killed the gangster but he could hardly come forward and say so now. He felt committed to the story that he had not been in the passage. Little Amby was a subsisting witness to his inno-

cence; but he was more and more afraid of Little Amby.

That astute little rascal read the story in bed; he lay drowsing over it for an hour and nearly fell asleep without putting out the light at the head of his bed.

CHAPTER XV

The murder trial, *People against Kelleher*, was featured by the city press and the prominent part taken in it by Little Amby was the start of that lurid and amazing career which brought him to the unquestioned leadership of the New York criminal bar. You understand, of course, that Little Amby's leadership was built on success only; he won his cases but he knew little law; he was the first figure at the bar in the eyes of the public only, which has the cynical and lamentable notion that the whole office of an advocate is discharged in the winning of his case.

Several great newspapers of demagogic tendencies, and with reasons to hate the new Reform administration, had gone zestfully to work to convict Jim Kelleher of murder. The individuals who made up the personnel of these newspapers were severally good fellows, kindly and compassionate, had Jim Kelleher been a personal friend of theirs they would certainly have whooped as zealously in his favor, believing no evil of him. They had no personal animus against him and were actuated solely by that creditable and honorable yearning for justice in the abstract which impels any honest man to join in a thief chase, when he does not know the thief, and to shout passionately against profiteers in all business but his own.

The normal man knows that he is himself a creature of good impulses, who sins from human frailty under great temptation and never from sheer malice; he cannot know the secret motions of other sinners' hearts, and is of the opinion that they should be punished for their sins; he himself, if he is let go and no more said, will sin no more. If he is a landlord he will ask why the grand jury does not indict his shoe dealer for charging him fifteen dollars for shoes; if he is a coal operator he will see red when he thinks of greedy labor unions: in no event will he turn scandalized from an examination of his own balance sheets to yield himself up as a profiteer and

to demand a good stiff jail sentence as a deterrent and a warning. So now these newspapers took after Jim Kelleher, regarding him only as an abstraction and a symbol and not at all as a mellow human being, and intending only to register their creditable and honorable detestation of murder, hypocrisy and Reform administrations.

Van Boskerk & McGee were Jim Kelleher's trial counsel, an eminent and reputable firm. Van Boskerk tried the case; he was the author of "Van Boskerk on Estates Created by Will," and "Van Boskerk on Subrogation"—both of which treatises are authoritative to this day. He was a short and stout and bald-headed man who had a trick, exasperating through repetition, of lifting his spectacles from his nose and opening his mouth and pointing a forefinger at the witness in the chair and saying "Ah-h" and then replacing his spectacles and closing his mouth and bending over to consult a law book without putting the question. He was counsel for the Metropolis Surety Company, the Interurban Traction Company and the Bond & Mortgage Company of New York, and was a past president of the City Bar Association; but he hadn't tried a case in person for many years and was quite out of training. He was one of the men who had put the Reform administration in power; and he had promptly stepped to Jim Kelleher's aid, and insisted on trying the case himself. The judge looked upon him with the greatest deference; the jury yawned at him, not knowing him from any other fussy and fumbling old man.

There was a full attendance. Among the spectators was Cissie Hilley, sitting beside Little Amby. Steve Hilley lingered in the doorway and was repeatedly requested by the doorkeeper to go in or go out. The Reverend Golden was there, ready to testify as a character witness; Mr. Cronkhite spent odd intervals there, slipping in and out when he chanced to be passing by. There was a large delegation from the neighborhood of the Six Nations.

The orderly and leisurely unfolding of the trial frightened Cissie; the actors in this drama were so unmoved and unhurried; it seemed incredible that a man's life was at stake here. The judge was lounging in his chair with his back to the witness and his face upturned to watch the sky behind the tall side window. Two young law clerks at the foot of the counsel table behind Van

Boskerk were whispering and giggling. The stenographer beneath the judge's desk chewed gum as his pencil skipped over his pad and lifted his eyes to nod cordially to an acquaintance, and interrupted the witness in a loud and flat tone to get him to repeat his words. The jury were emotionless, like deaf men.

Here is an extract from the stenographer's minutes:

District Attorney. What's your name and address and business?

Witness. Sam Helfand, 214 Grand Street, Peddler.

Q. Where were you last Election Day?

A. I was standing in front of the Prospect House on the Bowery. I went there to vote. Pink Wheeler was there. I was talking to him and to a couple of blokes named "Nosey" Murphy and Joe Garrison. When all of a sudden a couple of blokes haul off and knock over the booth. Well, a couple of cops came running, and I figure they will make a collar, so I run into the Prospect House, and out the back and hop the fence, and get up on top of the fire exit from the factory, figuring I will get into the factory window and speak to the watchman who is a friend of mine. Well, Nosey Murphy comes lumbering after me and he figures he will get into the factory window, too.

Q. Was there a skylight in the roof of the fire exit?

A. Yes, there was. Sure, I seen it.

Q. Did you look through the skylight?

A. Sure. And I seen Pink Wheeler and Alderman Kelleher down there inside.

Q. Alderman Kelleher is the prisoner sitting there in court?

A. Sure. That's him.

Q. What was he doing?

A. He was shooting Pink Wheeler.

Q. Did you see him before he shot Pink Wheeler?

A. Sure. I seen him. He was hollering and carrying on.

Q. Did you hear what he said?

A. Sure. He had got a hold of Pink's pistol and Pink was backed against the wall with his hands up, and he said he would learn Pink to interfere, and then he plugs Pink, and says "Lay there, you—" He called Pink a bad name. I wouldn't want to say it. And then he throws the gun down beside Pink and walks off. And that's all I see, counselor.

District Attorney. Your witness.

Cissie's eyes and mouth opened in horror as this murderous lie was told.

"They *can't* say such things!" she exclaimed. "They're not true! They won't believe him, will they?"

"Sh-h!" cautioned Little Amby, glancing at the frowning court attendant.

"They won't believe him," repeated Cissie. "It's silly!"

Van Boskerk was not making much of a

hand at the cross-examination. The lying witness was letter-perfect in his short and simple story; he had undoubtedly been over the ground of which he spoke. Van Boskerk led him over it again, foot by foot, thus thoroughly stamping the tale into the minds of the jury.

Little Amby's lip curled with professional scorn.

"He may be a great lawyer," he said to Cissie, "but he's an awful dub at trying a case. He asks questions like a man looking for information! The first rule of cross-examination is never to ask a question of which you don't know the answer. If I was trying that case I would have a dozen trick questions ready for that fellow, which he nor anybody else could answer! Why, look—he knows from his inspection of the minutes of the grand jury that this 'Nosey' Murphy is going to swear to the same story; and yet he lets Nosey Murphy sit there and listen in! If he would send Nosey Murphy outside and then ask this witness questions such as 'Did Pink Wheeler have his hat on or off? Was Nosey Murphy standing behind you, or on which side? Were you kneeling down or leaning over?'—this low life would swear positively to such details because he thinks that is what he is here for and then Nosey would come in and contradict him and the first thing you know the whole story would smell bad—whether it is true or not."

"Whether it is *true or not?*" hissed Cissie angrily.

"It certainly sounds reasonable," argued Little Amby. "And it looks like there would be nobody to contradict it. Of course, you and I believe that Jim Kelleher did not kill this man; but the court and jury do not know Jim Kelleher and all they got to go on is what they hear right now. And it sounds like a straight story!"

The judge began speaking at this moment and the court attendant glared at the whisperers, and commenced to rap loudly on a seat back and to shout "Si-lence! No talking back there! Keep still back there, now, or I'll bring you up in front of the judge!" The judge's voice was drowned by this uproar but his abstract right to an attentive and respectful audience was vindicated.

Nosey Murphy was a glib and plausible man who was quite at home in the witness chair. As a matter of fact he was a professional perjurer. He confirmed Sam Helf-

fand's story and supplied the missing epithet which Jim Kelleher was supposed to have cast at the decedent.

A recess was taken for lunch. As they walked with the crowd into the corridor Little Amby and Cissie found themselves beside one of the clerks who had sat behind Van Boskerk. Little Amby pulled this youth's sleeve and drew him aside.

"Miss Hilley—Mr. Junkin. How does it look to you, Phil?"

"Bad," said the clerk after a cautious glance about. "The case is bound to go to the jury now and gosh knows what they'll do about it. Old Van is worried. He's got reason to be worried, if you ask me. I'll lay you a dinner for four that the jury brings in a verdict of guilty in the first or second degree!"

"Do you really believe so?" quavered Cissie, staring at the clerk with great dark-rimmed eyes.

"I'm willing to bet on it," he said. And added gallantly, "You will make one of the party of four, won't you, Miss Hilley? I can promise you a good time!"

"How is it going?" asked Steve Hilley, sidling up to the young couple after the clerk had gone.

"Not so rosy," admitted Little Amby. "But don't worry, Steve. I'll go to the front for him if I'm needed."

"You will, won't you?" asked Steve Hilley earnestly. "I'm relying on you to do it!"

Cissie had never seen her father looking so wretched and troubled. She did not know what to make of his confidence in the power of Little Amby to save Jim Kelleher.

Little Amby took her to Keener's Chop House and ordered for her an English mutton chop and a baked potato and a tankard of old ale. She sat listless at the table; under his urging she sipped a little of the liquor but would not touch the food. He ate and drank with excellent appetite, finishing his repast with green-apple pie and a large mug of coffee. He lit a cigar and chewed it into the corner of his mouth.

"Cissie," he said, "is there anything between you and Jim Kelleher?"

"No--nothing!"

"That's good. You know why I'm travelling around with you so much, don't you, Cissie? I want to marry you, that's what it is. The way I'm going I'll be able to take care of you very soon, and—"

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"Don't!" she pleaded. "Don't speak of such a thing just now!"

"Why not?" he asked with a pretense of stupidity. "Maybe you think I'm only talking, Cissie. I tell you I'm going to make good! Why, right now I could turn Jim Kelleher out with a word and if I keep still he'll be convicted of murder as sure as gunshot. I just mention that as an instance to show you that I'm not talking through my hat."

"Then why don't you speak the word?" cried Cissie intensely. "Why do you let this ridiculous trial go on?"

"I don't know if I'll speak it or not," he said, looking straight into her eyes. "If I say the word I'm going to make myself bad friends with some big people who are behind this attack on Kelleher. What is in it for me?"

"What do you want?" she demanded, drawing back from his reaching hand.

"Will you marry me, Cissie?"

"No!"

He raised his eyebrows with a faint air of concern but continued leaning on his forearms. He was looking past her; he blew out a long thread of smoke reflectively.

"Going back to the courtroom this afternoon?" he asked casually.

"Of course!"

"I'll see you as far as the steps. I've got business uptown. Perhaps I'll see you to-night, after the trial is over."

He rose, and helped her into her coat solicitously, and led the way from the restaurant. They walked as far as the courthouse steps. Neither of them spoke.

"Good day, Cissie!" he said, smiling brightly and lifting his smart soft hat. "I've got to run uptown now. I'll try to see you this evening or to-morrow!"

She caught his arm.

"Come in," she said in a fierce whisper. "If you don't—I will kill you!"

He yielded to the pressure and walked beside her up the steps. The judge was again upon the bench and the case of *People against Kelleher* was resumed.

CHAPTER XVI.

Frank Hennion, plasterer's helper, of No. 610 Ridge Street, took the stand in the afternoon and told of having been standing in the passage through which Steve Hilley

and Little Amby had left the scene of the killing. The jury listened attentively to his tale, as they had listened to the stories of Sam Helsand and Nosey Murphy. When it was done the jury settled back with a sigh of satisfaction and looked at Jim Kelleher. Jim was leaning forward with knitted brows and clenched fists, listening to these men swearing his life away. His expression of balked ferocity was not lost on the jury.

"That's the case," said the district attorney.

"Any motions?" asked the judge formally.

"I move," said Van Boskerk, taking his glasses from his nose and restoring them, several times, "to dismiss the complaint on the ground that the people have not made out a *prima facie* case."

"Denied. Call your witness."

The judge glanced at some papers on his desk. "How long are you going to take to put your case in, counselor?"

"My direct won't take ten minutes. I have only the defendant himself, and some character witnesses."

"To save time," said the district attorney, who was a young and cocky assistant, "I'll concede that these witnesses will testify to the prisoner's good character—as many witnesses as counsel pleases. I'll concede, if he likes, that the prisoner will deny the act itself!"

He smiled cordially at the jury, several of whom grinned in response.

"I won't take that concession," said Van Boskerk stiffly.

"You can save time by limiting your cross-examination," said the judge to the district attorney with a trace of petulance. "I'd like to conclude this case within the hour. It seems to be perfectly simple and boils down to an issue of veracity, and that's for the jury to decide. I am going to ask you to make your summing up as brief as you can, so that we can get this case into the hands of the jury within the hour. *People against Palmer* is the only other case that will be called this afternoon; witnesses in all other cases are excused until ten o'clock to-morrow morning!"

The force of Jim Kelleher's testimony was lessened by the fact that everybody knew what he was going to say. Nor was his delivery prepossessing; he growled and glared like a bear in a trap. The judge listened with attention and asked a courteous question or two; upon his face was a puzzled

frown, for he knew the accents of truth. The jury were not favorably impressed; they had looked for a theatrical performance, ignoring the fact that theatrical performances are ordinarily rehearsed and their effects premeditated. Trial by jury is merely a necessary evil; it defends us against dishonest or prejudiced judges, at the cost of putting our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honors at the mercy of a haphazard and motley group of men who know no law and who are often incapable of understanding a complicated state of facts.

When the last of the character witnesses was done and had been waved away from the stand by the confident district attorney without cross-examination, the force of the testimony against Jim Kelleher had not been counteracted. Cissie's face was drawn with anxiety.

"Is that the case?" asked the judge briskly, reaching over to shuffle the papers in *People against Palmer*.

Van Boskerk did not answer at once. He was standing, reading a pleading, as though he might find the necessary evidence in the well-thumbed document. It is fair to suppose that his mind was confused by the sense of impending calamity.

Steve Hilley was sitting behind Little Amby. Now he caught the young man by the shoulder.

"Go on!" he growled. "Get up there and tell them the truth—it's all up with him if you don't!"

"What do you say, Cissie?" asked Little Amby. "Will you do what I want?"

"Yes," she breathed, with a dry sob.

Little Amby smiled, rose and went forward to the counsel table. He spoke to Van Boskerk, who glanced at him, shook him off impatiently and then suddenly dropped the pleading to the floor and caught him by the forearm as Little Amby persisted.

Van Boskerk sat down. Little Amby drew a chair up beside him. They spoke together earnestly but without gestures; they did not seem to know that the judge and the jury and the lawyers and reporters and the crowded spectators were bending over them. It grew so still in the chamber that the faint hissing of their voices was audible to Cissie.

Van Boskerk rose.

"I have another witness to call in rebuttal, your honor," he said.

"One witness?"

"Perhaps several."

The judge pursed his lips and pushed back the papers in *People against Palmer*. He was a busy man, harassed by an overplus of work, and he had to get ahead with it. He was a man of wide and generous human sympathies but he was under the necessity of not permitting his emotions to become engaged.

"No other case but the case on trial will be called this afternoon!" he announced loudly and disconsolately.

"Mr. Hinkle!" called Van Boskerk.

Little Amby walked around behind the jury box and seated himself in the witness chair beside the judge.

"Ambrose Hinkle," he announced, leaning toward the stenographer. "Lawyer!"

"Lawver?" smiled the judge who knew Little Amby.

"Since last Tuesday," whispered the new witness confidentially. "I was admitted last Tuesday on motion."

"Mr. Hinkle," asked Van Boskerk, "were you at any time in the fire exit where Pink Wheeler was killed? If so, tell the jury when?"

"I was there on the fourteenth of November, six days after the killing!" said Little Amby in a loud and clear voice.

"Objection," said the district attorney.

"I'll admit it, subject to being connected," said the judge.

"Tell the jury if there was a skylight in the roof of the fire exit at that time!"

The district attorney half rose to file again his objection and then sank back as the implication of the question struck him.

"There was no skylight there at that time!"

"What's that?" snapped the judge. "What is this, Mr. District Attorney? Isn't there a skylight in that fire exit?"

"Certainly there is! I saw it myself last week!"

"Is there a skylight in that fire exit now?" asked Van Boskerk.

"Yes, sir," said Little Amby.

"Do you know when the skylight was put in?"

"I do. It was put in during the night of the fifteenth of November, seven days after the killing of Pink Wheeler."

"Your witness," purred Van Boskerk, sitting down.

"What were you doing in that fire exit on

the fourteenth of November?" asked the district attorney.

"Just a moment," interrupted the judge. "Where are those two witnesses who testified to what they saw through the skylight? Come up here, you two! Sit right down there and don't leave until I tell you to! Go ahead."

"I went into that fire exit to look the ground over. I'm a friend of the prisoner's and I wanted to see what the situation was."

"And you didn't see the skylight?"

"No. It wasn't there."

"You say it was in the nighttime?"

"I didn't say so. It was in the daytime."

"Did you look for the skylight?"

"No. I looked for a place to put it in."

"You looked for a place to put it in?"

"Yes. I put in the skylight. That is, I hired the men to do it and watched them doing it, on the night of November 15th."

"Why did you put that skylight in?" asked the district attorney.

Little Amby smiled at this opening. "Well," he said leisurely, "I believed that my friend Jim Kelleher was innocent; and I suspected that perjured testimony might be brought against him. Now it occurred to me that the perjurers might have a hard time of it, as they would want to testify that they had seen Jim Kelleher shoot Pink Wheeler, but would not be able to say how they did it. They were certainly not in the passage when the policeman entered and they had not passed out the other end, as this witness Hennion testifies he was standing at the other end and saw no one pass. I thought it would be a good idea to put in a skylight so that they could testify they looked through that. I was not afraid that the people who are trying to get Jim Kelleher would notice the change in the fire exit, as they would not ordinarily prepare the case against him immediately after his arrest, but would only want to have it shaped up for the January grand jury. So I had the skylight put in at once and the people who got up the case saw the skylight when they went there and naturally it looked to them like a godsend."

"Who put the skylight in?"

"Thanatofsky & O'Toole, a firm of roofers. They're sitting back there right now. There's the owner of the building—that gentleman just coming in."

"Call him!" snapped the judge.

Edward Channing Gibboney, the owner of the factory and the fire exit, took the stand.

"On the evening of November 14th last," he said, "I was visited at my home by this young man who has just left the stand. He gave me a lawyer's card and said he represented one of my employees who had had a bad fall while going through that fire exit. Many of the employees use it in going in and out. He said my employee did not wish to sue and would be satisfied if I would light up the passage properly; this young man suggested a skylight and said he could get it done for forty dollars. Well, I was glad to avoid a lawsuit and I knew the passage was dark, so I told him to go ahead and I would pay the bill. That's all I know about it."

"No skylight was there before November 14th?"

"No, sir."

"Call the contractors!"

"That's not necessary, your honor," said the district attorney. "I see that I've been grossly imposed on. I am convinced that the skylight was not there at the time of the killing and that these two witnesses lied under oath. As their testimony falls to the ground there is no case against the prisoner. I ask that the indictment be dismissed on my motion and the prisoner set at liberty."

"Motion is granted," said the judge. "Mr. Clerk, make out an order of arrest for these two witnesses. I propose to make it my personal business to see that these two conscienceless scoundrels are given the limit of the law for their attempt to swear away this man's life."

"I cannot close this extraordinary affair without a word as to the part played in it by Mr. Ambrose Hinkle. Come forward, young man. Take this for the record, stenographer.

"Mr. Hinkle, there was nothing criminal in what you did; in fact, it was hardly censurable, especially in view of the end you sought and which you have attained so cleverly. I am not going to question the method by which you had that skylight put in; I am going to presume that you acted in good faith and did not deliberately lie to this factory owner.

"But I must say, in view of the fact that you are a very young man and that you have just been called to the bar, that your handling of this incident is not calculated

to inspire any one with confidence in your character. You have displayed a peculiar hardness of mind, an appalling cynicism in your confident reliance upon the use of perjury against your friend. You have prevented a grave miscarriage of justice, but you were instrumental in bringing about this perjury in its present form. It is no part of your duty as an officer of this court, which you are, to shape the testimony of perjurers; and it is inconsistent with an honorable mind to regard all other men as base and criminal.

"I am sorry to have to address this reproof to you at the outset of your career, but I feel that it is my duty as a lawyer and as an older man to speak to you in plain language. You are a very young man and you have seen rascals favored by fortune and honest men cast down. I am three times your age and I tell you solemnly that I have never seen an unprincipled man who did not come to his day of grief, and I have never seen the man of honor and principle who was ultimately forsaken."

The judge had spoken quietly. He now looked in silence and very earnestly at Little Amby. Then he released him with a short nod, and rose to leave the bench.

Little Amby was seized on by the reporters.

CHAPTER XVII.

He paid assiduous court to Cissie during the following three weeks. He did not mention the matter of her promise but sought to obtain her good will. He was always a man to clothe his iron hand with velvet.

Her demeanor was cold and listless. She took no joy in his entertainment and was at all times pale and teary-eyed. He came to her one afternoon to ask her to inspect his new law office. He was in buoyant spirits.

"I've got enough business ahead of me now to assure me six or seven thousand per year," he bubbled. "And that's only a beginning! I'm going up, Cissie. I'm in right and that's the whole secret of getting ahead in this world. I know how to manage people, Cissie, so as to make them do what I want. We'll have a fine apartment with a couple of servants and we'll live in clover. Come on over and take a flash at the works; and then we'll go down to the track; and after that we'll have dinner at the Oriental and then we'll sit out front as happy as

two stuffed owls and listen to Sousa's band. What do you say?"

"If you want to," she said.

"It's not a question of what I want, Cissie. It's what you want. Don't you want to have some fun?"

"I don't feel so awful funny."

"What's wrong, Cissie? You haven't been right for a long while. Is anything worrying you?"

"Yes. But don't let us talk of it."

"Oh, no," he said determinedly. "I don't believe in dodging facts. Look here, Cissie—is it getting married that worries you?"

"Yes."

"You don't want to get married?"

"No."

"You promised me!"

"I know I did. And I'll stick to my word—if you want me to."

"But you don't want to?"

"No. I don't."

He rose from his chair, frowning. He crossed to the window and stood twisting the shade string about his fingers and glaring into the street. He felt that he had been cheated somehow. He did not want an unwilling wife. Where had he slipped up in his calculations?

"Are you in love with Jim Kelleher?" he asked suddenly.

"I don't know."

"Listen, Cissie," he said, going over to her and sitting beside her. "You haven't got to marry me if you don't want to. That was all nonsense. I just wanted to show you that this fellow Jim Kelleher didn't amount to anything and I wanted to show you what I could do. And I thought that if you once made up your mind to marry me you would come around to see that it would be a grand thing for us both. I had no notion of trying to force you to marry me and I guess you are not such a fool as to keep a promise like that. Well, it didn't work out, so let's forget about it, and I'll wait until you come around to like me in your own way. Now come on down to Manhattan Beach!"

"Oh, Amby!" she laughed, jumping in her place and embracing him before he could lift a hand to aid or hinder. "I think that is perfectly wonderful of you! And I'm just crazy to hear Sousa's band. I won't keep you waiting two minutes!"

He was well satisfied with the first results of his generosity: but when he encoun-

tered Steve Hilley two days later in the Six Nations clubhouse he received disconcerting news.

"They've gone down and gotten the license," said Steve Hilley.

"Who?"

"Jim and Cissie. They were in here just now. They're going to be married in June—a big church wedding up at St. John's on Spring Street. That's next week, so we will all have to hustle around and get our wedding garments out of soak. Well, it is certainly a nice match. He is a very fine young fellow, clean and honest and with a good head for business. And a jolly and well-spoken lad too. I am well pleased."

He chewed his cigar with glistening eyes.

"You were kind of sweet on Cissie yourself, weren't you?"

Little Amby made no answer.

"It is just as well you didn't get too serious, as you and her wouldn't hit it off. You are too hard a proposition for Cissie. And as far as I am concerned, I am frank to say, Amby, that while I think the world of you and all that sort of thing, I cannot see you as a son-in-law with a spyglass. No, I cannot see you at all."

"I thought I was going to give you a chance, Steve. I thought an awful lot of Cissie."

"Is that so? Well, to be frank with you, I suspected as much. How did you come to lose out? You are not a bad-looking boy, what there is of you, and you are certainly clever enough."

He puffed his cigar. His contentment put him in a philosophical mood. The marriage of his daughter would mark for him the end of another chapter and he felt like moralizing.

"The matter with you, my boy," he said in the tone of a man who feels that there is nothing the matter with himself, "is—you are a bargainer! You are always figuring on getting good value for everything you give and when you can get something for nothing you are tickled to death. Well, that may work out all right in business, which is a game of skinning your neighbor; but it don't work out in love and friendship and all that sort of thing. Everything in this world that is worth having you get for nothing, which is a way of saying that you do not get them unless you deserve them, and you will not be able to buy them or to job anybody to give them to you."

"That goes for contributions from gambling houses too, don't it, Steve?"

"Well," coughed Steve Hilley, knocking the ash painstakingly from his cigar and taking a hearty and defiant puff, "that is another matter, as you might say. What I am giving you is the theory, and it is straight stuff and you can tie to it as a general proposition, but when it comes down to cases a practical man will maybe have to hedge a little in order to get along."

Little Amby laughed harshly.

"You remind me of some law books I have read, Steve," he said. "In your text you're strong on abstract principles and you lay down the law in fine shape; but when you come down to cases in your footnote your cases are all against you and so your fine principle goes blah! As the copy book says: 'Example is stronger than precept.' I have been learning from you by example; and I guess you are doing what you think is right, unless you are a fool."

"Every man is a fool, more or less," said Steve Hilley. "When a man finds that out he is on the way to learn something. A wise man is a fellow who knows the fifty-seven varieties of fool that he is, and is thus able to watch himself. Where are you going?"

"I got a date with a client," said Little Amby importantly. He was standing at the window looking down into the street. A cab had stopped there.

"Be around to the club to-night?"

"Maybe. I guess I won't be able to hang around the club so much after this. I'm opening up a law office and I'll be busy. Don't forget to put my name on the next list you hand in to the judges for references and receiverships!"

"I won't forget you, my boy," said the leader paternally.

He lounged to the window and watched Little Amby getting into the cab. The young lawyer and his client drove off, chatting and laughing companionably.

"Smart boy," murmured Steve Hilley. "Never saw smarter. He'll go far and high and he'll make a barrel of money. But a man don't finally cash in a winner and go home happy if he don't play a straight game, or as straight a game as he can. I'll enjoy watching him play; but, for all the money he'll make and all the name for smartness he'll win, I wouldn't be in his shoes! Good luck, Little Amby—good luck!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

On Centre Street is the Tombs, the New York County prison. Perhaps you have passed the Tombs and glanced up past the short flight of stone steps at the arched doorway closed with iron through whose slits a uniformed guard looked speculatively back at you. Perhaps you have entered the Tombs, passing through the arched doorway and through the doors of iron—as prisoner, as sight-seer, as lawyer, as anguished friend of the prison bound.

You ascended the stone steps and the iron doors were rolled back with a noiseless interplay of well-oiled joints. The guard nodded and smiled, giving you to understand that here too was friendliness and human sympathy; and then the iron doors rolled smoothly back into place and the guard slid again into place the powerful bolts. It is easy to get into the Tombs; getting out is harder, and a more formal business.

You or your sponsor signed your name in a book, quite as though you were entering a correct club. You stated your errand; you wished to see a prisoner.

A guard sitting before an inner door unlocked his iron portal and passed the word echoing down a stone passage. After a short wait in the quiet and decorous precincts of this outer chamber you saw the prisoner coming toward you down the stone way. You caught the faint clash of iron doors behind him. The turnkey who was with him spoke to the guard at the inner door, who called out the name of the prisoner and passed him through. The prisoner was dirty, coatless and collarless, unshaven. There was no incentive to be otherwise in the dim and dirty cell where he waited and waited, idly, for the slow process of law by which he would be brought forth for his trial.

Perhaps you stepped forward with outstretched hand to speak a word of friendship and of hope. You were waved back. The law had this man and it is a jealous tenant. You saw the prisoner led across the chamber to an iron cage, the rattling door of which was opened for him and locked behind him. You could then approach him and speak to him through the bars.

The bars were reënforced by a network of iron, such as is thrown about the cages

of fierce and treacherous beasts in zoölogical gardens that they may not thrust their claws forth and rend and tear incautious spectators. There was something of the repressed and contained look of the caged beast in his eyes as you approached the bars—though you were his mother, you still could not touch his hand, but could speak to him only through the bars. Though you were the merest acquaintance, the merest sensation seeker—so that you were not of the hopelessly damned breed which thanks God it is not like the rest of men—you felt the threat of the Tombs and its chill fell across your heart.

If you were a lawyer you might enter into his cage, for then you were an officer of the court, a familiar here, an ally of his keepers. He would whisper to you then, pouring out the fruit of his long and solitary meditation, watching vigilantly his jailers over your shoulder. You had to cut him off, and shut him up, while you drilled into him the story whose bold telling might set him free. You left him, and he was led away, nodding and smiling at you over his shoulder, endeavoring with his last least look to add something to your friendship.

You left the Tombs, being passed out into the sunlit street only after close scrutiny and the indorsement of the warden, and you crossed the street to the criminal courts. High above your head and above the street was the airy Bridge of Sighs, connecting the prison and the courts; no prisoner escapes here while on his way from cell to trial.

You came to the broad flight leading up to the criminal courts, which flight is flanked on either side by couching sphinxes. The sphinxes impressed you; they were like all other ancient doorkeepers, of very wise aspect and very commanding presence. Perhaps they daunted you so that you hesitated and looked behind you; if you were a lawyer you probably looked behind you. You looked across the street at the house of Little Amby.

It is a three-story-and-basement structure, sandwiched in between Hungerman's Brass and Bent Iron Works and a dying Raines' Law hotel on the corner. A city marshal has his den in the basement now, and people go in there to have tenants evicted and to set the marshal onto defaulting debtors to seize their goods in discharge of judgments. A Hungarian restaurant is on the second floor, where people resort to

get stomach complaints through eating a thirty-five-cent table d'hôte. A large sign surmounts the cornice and runs the length of the house front; the false gold of its lettering has blistered and reddened and faded; the name of the former tenant is quite obliterated, but one can still make out the legend "Counselor at Law." If you are a lawyer you can supply the missing name—"Ambrose Hinkle."

It is six years since little Amby left the house on Centre Street; for twenty years he practiced there. Now that he is gone he seems an incredible and irreproducible phenomenon; his memory is like that of any tempest that has passed. The lawyers who are amazed by the recollection of him now, and who say that he can have no successor, would do well to recall that six years ago, while the gilt was bright on his roof sign, he seemed as fixed and inevitable a feature of the legal landscape as was the dreadful Tombs itself, or the harrowing criminal courts.

He was the undisputed leader of the New York criminal bar. It was commonly understood in New York that to secure Little Amby's advocacy was tantamount to winning. He charged for his services. Good reckoners have estimated that he made during those twenty years seven and one-half millions of dollars. When he left the house for the last time he was practically penniless. Fast living got it all.

His was a frank buccaneering enterprise; it was his avocation to cheat the prison and the court of their rightful victims. He was the friend and confidant of New York's criminals, which means that he was feared in the counting house and in the mansion as he was in the dive. There were several determined attempts to burn down the little house in Centre Street after he left it; the people who instituted these attempts, with the notion that incriminating documents might be hidden there, were the sports of their own bad consciences; Little Amby kept no records. He did a strictly cash business, entrusting ticklish matters to the spoken word. He kept his word when passed and other people did not fail twice in their word to him.

It was a somber place, that little house on Centre Street in Little Amby's time. One entered at the street level through a low and narrow hallway which was lit by a single flaring gas jet. Coming from the bright

street the passage seemed untenanted; faces of men lounging against its walls stared out at the visitor. Process servers were loitering here, law clerks, marshals, professional witnesses, gunmen, private detectives. They loafed here in the hope of catching a word with the little man who was their master; when he passed them by, brushing by them as though they were not there, they pressed back against the dirty walls without a word. They lived by terrorizing and bullying, but they were themselves in mortal fear of Little Amby. He owned their souls. He could bind and loose.

Private cars and taxis lined the curb; from them, at a peremptory snap of the fingers from Little Amby's manhandling bouncer, slouched potentates of New York's underworld—gamblers, gang leaders, drug dealers, all the controllers of illicit industry. They swaggered into the little house, frowning down their secret fear, elbowing the loungers aside. Captains of legitimate business entered the little house, suave and brainy gentlemen coming to outthink Little Amby. Actresses, ladies of fashion, adventuresses, came to confess themselves.

Punctually at nine in the morning came Little Amby in his car; until five he received his motley clients in an upper chamber overlooking Centre Street. Outside this chamber the house in its many rooms and passages was dirty and disordered; cobwebs festooned the discolored and crazy ceilings and torn law books and broken umbrellas and discarded rubbers heaped the corners; but inside his private room all was elegant. The furniture was mahogany, massive and shining and crimson, and bound at all angles by heavy and glittering brass. A brass girandole five-light electric candelabrum stood beside the desk, an antique Persian panel in a pierced brass frame stood under the window; a marble bust of Mercury—the god of thieves—was on the bookcase; a Tiffany Faville glass vase held flowers; a Palace Famenine carpet was on the floor. Upon the walls were signed portraits of contemporary great men, not all of whom have been diminished by the perspective of the years. It was an insufferable room. He liked it.

He was still the dapper little fellow who had been the protégé of Steve Hilley. As it was his dubious fortune to seem old in his boyhood so now he seemed hardly more than a boy as he entered middle age. Age

comes upon us through our bodies, hardening our arteries, stiffening our joints, slowing us up; or it comes upon us through our spirits which are oppressed by the ever-lengthening drag of years. He was physically enduring; mentally he was still care-free, bland, undoubting, unregretting.

His feet gleamed in patent leather with pointed tips; he wore a checked suit which had cost him one hundred and sixty dollars and looked every nickel of its price. He wore four diamond rings on each hand; he loved diamonds and his were big and pure. Thugs in their own haunts had looked longingly at those diamonds and had forbore to take them because their wearer was Little Amby. His hair was still jet black, sleeked down; his eyes were full and bright. There were fine little lines about his eyes and the lines from nostrils to mouth had deepened. He was not of the type that bloats; he was the kind of man that dries up and is suddenly perceived to be wizened.

His ruin was brought upon him, as you know, by his handling of the case of *Wilson against Pruitt*. Oddly enough, Pruitt of Hoboken, through whom he got his start, appears again in the story as the instrument of his downfall. *Wilson against Pruitt* and *People against Hinkle* are of public record; I shall confine myself almost wholly to such new and explanatory matter as I have been able to gather apart from the record.

We see Little Amby then sitting at his desk in his office on Centre Street.

He pressed a button beside his desk. Cohen, his clerk in charge of the outer office, motioned to a client to go in.

This client had been showing signs of impatience. He was a man of about seventy, a decrepit dandy. He was dressed in a gray walking suit which had been extensively padded; from the limpness of his upper body and the slim erectness of his waist one might have guessed that he wore a sort of corset. He had been leaning forward in his seat, clutching with both hands a heavy ebony stick, champing with retreating lips at a perfect set of false teeth, and working up and down a heavy pair of black eyebrows. The eyebrows were probably dyed, but it was good work, as was the thick and curly head of hair which was cut off too smartly all about. His black mustache trailed down to the upper hand upon which his chin rested and which clutched the cane.

He rose, tottered, caught himself, and went down the passage to the private room.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Hinkle," he said.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Pruitt," said Little Amby after a single studious glance; and he went on writing on his desk pad while his visitor lowered himself slowly into the chair with a cautious hand on the small of his back.

"Very clever of you, my boy," chuckled the man from Hoboken. "Quick as a flash, eh? You knew me, didn't you? You knew me right away, eh? Deep—deep!"

"Why, you haven't changed a hair, Mr. Pruitt," said Little Amby, swinging around and grinning at him openly. "Not a hair! How in the world do you do it? It must be—let's see—twenty years? You must be all of—fifty?"

"Very nearly, my boy," said the old rake plaintively. "I'll be fifty very soon. Well, I know I don't show it—so they tell me—but I feel it sometimes. Yes, I feel it sometimes. Yes, I feel it. Well, well, my boy, you've made a wonderful success. Perfectly marvelous! The newspapers are full of you. I want to congratulate you. Really, from my heart!"

"It must be very gratifying to you," said Little Amby. "I like to think that I've pleased my old friends."

"You have, my boy. You have indeed. I've followed your career with the greatest interest. Are you very busy just now?"

"Yes."

"Glad to hear it. I don't waste my breath on people that have time to sit around and talk. Drop whatever matter you are engaged on there, my dear boy. I suppose you know that I'm a rich man?"

"I've heard so."

"Oh, yes. I've done well since we last met. I let my men of business attend to details but I direct them in a large way. I made over a million in oil alone last year. Seeing the chance to make money I ordered my men of business to give the market situation in oil their immediate attention and to use their best judgment as to whether they would buy or sell. I leave details to them. Oh, yes. I suppose I'm worth twenty million. I must really ask my men of business for a statement one of these fine days. I can afford to buy your attention away from these beggars who are taking up your time. My boy, I'm thinking of getting married!"

"Congratulations."

"Thanks. Thanks, my boy. Thanks! Yes, I'm thinking very seriously of getting married. But the trouble is that I'm married already. It's the damnedest thing—excuse me, but it *is* the damnedest thing, but I've never yet thought of getting married that I wasn't married already!"

"You should think of staying married, for a change, Mr. Pruitt. But you were being divorced when I knew you last. Didn't you stay single after that unhappy experience?"

"Yes, indeed, I did. For eight weeks. But that one ran away with a painter. Well, perhaps that one ran away with her riding master. You know, my boy, it is the *damnedest* thing—"

"At any rate, you're married now."

"Perfectly charming woman. Charming, my lad, is not the word for it—she is *charming!* I really thought I was going to be happy with her for the rest of my days, but now the time has come for us to part. I have met a more charming woman. I have positively met the most devilishly charming woman—"

"And you want to get rid of Mrs. Pruitt number—"

"Eight. Eight, my boy. Eight."

"Eight. What complaint have you to make against her?"

"None. None in the world. Except that she's divorced. And somehow I never feel just right about being married to a divorced woman. Call it delicacy, what you will. I have that feeling. When I say that she is a divorced woman I mean that she was granted a decree against her former husband. She was not at all at fault. The decree made no reflection on her. But still I have that queer feeling!"

"Do you propose to make charges against her?"

"Not unless it's absolutely necessary. She is a dear woman, my boy. I thought perhaps you could get me rid of her in some nice way. You lawyers are up to all kinds of dodges."

"What was her former name?"

"Wilson. Mrs. Gerald Pitt Wilson."

"And her maiden name?"

"Van Gulden."

"Van Guiden!" repeated Little Amby, frowning slightly.

"Yes. Oh, yes, my boy! She's a Van Gulden. You know what that means. She's

a Knickerbocker. I've always had a weakness for blooded women. And her stock is the real old Dutch blue. But that's the very devil of it, my boy; you can't play pitch and toss with people like that. They won't put up with it; upon my word, they won't. They'll get devilish uppish. Oh, this will be a nice business, or it won't come off. Kid gloves, my boy—kid gloves. No reflections on the lady. Heavens, no! There would be pistol work; there would, indeed."

"I suppose you know the statutory grounds for divorce in this State," said Little Amby, reaching into his desk for a Corona de Corona. He chewed the cigar. "There's only one ground, Mr. Pruitt, and you don't want me to apply on that. Well, I've never refused to do work for a client yet merely because he asked an impossibility. Only—you understand that miracles come high."

"Whatever you say," said the client, blinking.

"Ten thousand dollars?"

"Agreed!"

"Ten thousand dollars," repeated Little Amby, leisurely scratching a match on the tun belly of the bronze Buddha which was his paperweight, "as a retainer, Mr. Pruitt. As a retainer! Forty thousand when the court frees you of your encumbrance. That is the figure which occurs to me to-day. I admit that I have not fully considered the matter of expense."

"It's robbery!" gasped Pruitt, glaring at Amby.

"Is it yes or no?"

"Oh, curse it—it's yes," growled the client.

Little Amby inhaled his smoke and stared at his visitor.

"Let it go at that," he said after a moment, throwing himself forward to ring for a stenographer. "We'll make a little note of our agreement. You can sign it. You won't need a copy as I'll remind you of anything you forget. Fifty thousand dollars—and expenses, Mr. Pruitt."

"Expenses?"

"Expenses," breathed Little Amby softly. "Expenses, Mr. Pruitt. If you don't like my terms you are welcome to buy your miracles elsewhere."

He would have taken Pruitt's twenty million and thrown him into the street to starve without a qualm.

CHAPTER XIX.

Two days later Little Amby pressed the buzzer and Cohen sent in the client who was in turn. She was a stately matron of some two hundred and twenty-five pounds weight; she was in her late thirties, and had many blooming years before her, but she was undeniably Junoesque. She was attired in black taffeta and a swathed turban. Her color was somewhat heightened, as though through nervousness.

"Won't you sit down, madam?" asked Little Amby, who had not raised his eyes at her entrance.

Then he looked at the large and handsome lady. She was staring at him and he got the impression that she was likely to cry.

"Mrs. Kelleher, isn't it?" he said, with a sudden lightening of the eyes.

"I wondered if you'd know me," she said, laughing relievedly.

"My dear girl!" he protested, rising to take her hand. "But is it Mrs. Kelleher?"

"Why, certainly!"

"I didn't know but what you'd married again," he said. "I saw a notice some years ago of the death of a James Kelleher; and here now you flutter in on me wearing black."

"It's my favorite color. We stout ladies, you know—"

"Have you grown stouter, Cissie?" he interrupted surprisedly.

She glanced at him gratefully.

"No, Jim is very much alive. But he's in awful trouble. The poor fellow hasn't slept for weeks on end. It's business troubles. He's a contractor in a big way now—he has the new Astoria Bridge—and he's had to borrow an awful lot of money and now the lenders want him to pay it all back."

"Contemptible of them, I call it."

"That's what I think, too," she said vigorously. "It's mean; they know perfectly well that Jim can't pay them right now, what with the city being so slow in paying him. Jim's lawyers say they can't do anything about it, but I made up my mind that I would do something about it! I want to hire you as Jim's lawyer."

"Does Jim know about this?"

"About my coming here? Oh, no. I thought I would hire you and have you straighten the matter out and then I would tell him and surprise him."

"That's a great idea, Cissie. How much money does Jim owe?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars."

"All of that? Whom does he owe it to?"

"Well, I don't rightly know, but a man called Fortescue is the head of it."

"What Fortescue is that? Is it the president of the Tyler Trust Company?"

"Yes, that's the same man. I heard Jim speak about the Tyler Trust Company. He told Jim that if the money wasn't paid by to-morrow morning he would throw him into bankruptcy. The bridge is about finished, and Jim hasn't got half his money yet, and he told this man that he would pay him easily in three weeks. Jim's lawyers say that they want to throw Jim into bankruptcy so as to get the big payments for the bridge into their hands."

"I can handle the matter," said Little Ambry. "It won't take me half an hour. I know this Fortescue."

"Oh, is he a friend of yours?"

"He will do anything to oblige me, I'm sure. But who's going to pay me for my work?"

"Why, I am!"

"My fees are pretty stiff, Cissie."

"How much?"

"Ten dollars?"

"That's perfectly awful!" she protested, more than half in earnest. "Ten dollars for a half hour's work? Very well, then. There's your ten dollars."

He picked up the telephone. "Let me have Mr. Fortescue of the Tyler Trust Company!"

"Hello--this Fortescue? Ambrose Hinkle speaking. Yes, Ambrose Hinkle down on Centre Street! I say, Fortescue, I have been retained to take care of the interests of James Kelleher, the contractor for the new Astoria Bridge. I understand that you hold an obligation of his for two hundred thousand dollars. What's that? . . . Yes, I know it's overdue, but you can wait a few days. . . . Oh, poppycock, there's no danger in waiting two or three weeks. . . . Yes, I said weeks. I'll say *months* if I find it necessary, Fortescue. . . . Oh, no, I'm not getting angry, my dear fellow. Not at all! I won't see you lose anything. I tell you what I'll do: I'll satisfy myself within the next half hour that James Kelleher is solvent and then I'll call you back and tell you how much time I want. My present idea is to give you a

five-per-cent bonus for a month's extension and to give you my personal word that you'll get your principal. . . . No, I can't do that. No, don't come down here. . . . I say don't come--there's nothing doing along those lines--I've been retained to act for him, I say!"

He put down the receiver.

"Tell Jim to go and see Fortescue again."

"I was sure you could arrange it," she said gladly. "Wasn't it lovely of Mr. Fortescue to agree so quickly!"

"I have always found Mr. Fortescue a very agreeable person," he nodded. "Some people think he is hard but he has never been so with me. He is a trustee of a church uptown. The church corporation owned a very valuable property on Broadway and when a certain operator wanted to buy it I was intrusted with the mission of persuading Mr. Fortescue to vote in favor of selling. I persuaded Mr. Fortescue. Oh, he is a highly reasonable man! I have his signature there in the safe to a paper connected with that sale. He knows now that I have it. He'll do anything I ask him to do."

"I think it is lovely for a man to be like that," she said.

"Was there anything else, Cissie?"

"Yes, I wanted to speak to you about my Ambrose."

"Your Ambrose?"

"My second boy. I have six children now. The oldest boy is nineteen and Ambrose is eighteen. He is a regular book-worm, always stuck in a book, and I thought I would like to make a lawyer out of him."

"What does he think?"

"Oh, the boy has no notions of his own about such things. I thought perhaps you would take him in here and teach him to be a lawyer. He's a very good boy."

He looked into her eyes. He wondered if Ambrose Kelleher had eyes like that, so clear and sunny and untroubled. Probably he had, as she found him a very good boy.

"I don't think that would be a good thing to do, Cissie," he said, with an air of confiding in her. "The law business is not all it's cracked up to be. There's really no money in it; a man can hardly make an honest living. You may think that we make plenty of money, just because I made ten dollars so quickly to-day, but let me tell you that there are days when we don't take in a cent. And I'm under a steady expense

here of nearly forty thousand dollars per year! Of course it will be a good thing for the boy to study law; it's a fine trade to carry. It will come in useful, no matter what he takes up later. I'd suggest that you send him to one of the schools; Columbia and Harvard are about the best. They'll give him the history and the theory; he'll be more of a lawyer the day after he enters one of those schools than he would be after twenty years of knocking around the New York courts. He'll have plenty of money; and then, if he wants to practice, he can afford to take a nice office in a good building like the Mutual or Equitable and hire a scrub to attend to details while he advises the clients. You know I'd love to have him here; but I don't think it's the best thing for him."

"You think he ought to go to one of those schools," she nodded thoughtfully. "I'll tell him so. Good-by, Amby."

"Good-by," he said, rising to hold the door for her. "And thanks for the business! I was certainly glad to get it."

"Oh, that's all right, Amby," she said kindly. "I was glad to give it to you, as an old friend."

He pressed the buzzer again.

"Has that man Wilson come in yet?"

"He's waiting outside," said Cohen.

"Send him in."

"Sit down," said Little Amby, after a thoughtful stare at the gentleman who then entered.

"Wilson," he said, snapping open a legal document, "I sent for you in connection with the matter of your divorce from Janet van Gulden. I have the complaint here, with the affidavit of service. It says here that you were served with a copy of this complaint on January 2, 1904, at Bopp's Circle Café. That's over twelve years ago. Do you remember the occasion?"

"Very well," nodded Gerald Pitt Wilson. "We had a New Year's party down there two nights before and I was still hanging around."

He was a man of about Little Amby's age, but seemed much older, being burned up by drink. His hair was shot with gray, his cheeks were red veined and his long white hands were tremulous. His shoes were broken, he slouched in his chair and the back of his coat collar was turned awry.

"What are you doing now, Wilson?"

"Nothing."

"Do you want a job?"

"No."

"Do you want to make some money?"

"How?"

"By signing a paper."

"Yes."

"Were you in jail about that time, Wilson?"

"No."

"What were you doing during the month before you were served in Bopp's Circle Café?"

"I can't remember."

"Well, think of Christmas. What were you doing around Christmas?"

"I can't remember. Wait a minute. I was having that party in Bopp's to celebrate something or other. Now I got it! During Christmas week I was in Hanlein's Sanitarium on Fifty-eighth Street, taking the cure, and I went around to Bopp's to celebrate being cured. That's how it was."

"What was the matter with you?"

"Booze. Hanlein gave me the silver cure."

"You're sure you were in the sanitarium during Christmas week?"

"Positive. You ask old Hanlein; he's doing business up there yet. I was there and I was in bed on my back. That's Hanlein's system; he keeps you down while he feeds you his cure and if you don't lie down he ties you down. He makes you sign a paper."

"Where have you been since?"

"Nutting around. Down South most of the time."

"Have you seen your wife since the divorce?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"Absolutely. I tried to find her but I couldn't. She moved out of the city."

"While you were looking for her, did you tell anybody she had divorced you?"

"No. They'd wonder why I was looking for her if I told them that."

"Why were you looking for her?"

"To shake her down."

"Didn't the people you talked to know you were divorced?"

"No. It was one of those quiet divorces, before a referee. No scandal. I figure now that I was a fool not to make a fuss, as her people would have paid me something nice. My wife was a real great lady. I met her down in the Village, where I used

to bat around. She was only eighteen at the time, with notions in her head, and she married me to reform me."

"Reform you of what?"

"Booze. I married her because I thought she'd get over her notions. Why, I couldn't get along without booze, counselor."

"You do what I want, and I'll see that you drink yourself to death," said Little Amby. He rang for a stenographer.

"Take this, Miss Suydam:

STATE OF NEW YORK } ss.
COUNTY OF NEW YORK }

Gerald Pitt Wilson, being duly sworn, deposes and says: that he resides in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York. That he is the Gerald Pitt Wilson mentioned and described in a certain Complaint in Divorce entitled *Janet Van Gulden Wilson against Gerald Pitt Wilson*, filed in the County Clerk's Office January 3d, 1904, and being now filed under County Clerk's number 842301. That he has read said Complaint in Divorce, and the affidavit of service thereto attached.

Deponent says that he was never served with said Complaint, and that the allegation that he was served on December 26th, 1903, at Bopp's Circle Café in this City is wholly false and untrue. That on December 26th, 1903, and for several days immediately preceding and immediately following that date, deponent was confined in bed at Hanlein's Sanitarium in this City as appears by the affidavits hereto attached. That deponent made many attempts to find his wife after that date, but was wholly unable to discover her whereabouts. That deponent did not know of the granting of a decree to his wife, and did not have any information concerning it, until it came to his knowledge during the past week, when deponent immediately retained counsel to have said decree annulled and the divorce set aside.

Sworn to before me this
16th day of October, 1916.

"Make four copies, Miss Suydam. That's all."

"But, listen, counselor——" protested Wilson.

"Listen to me," interposed Little Amby. "This thing is as safe as New York City bonds. I've been all over it and it's dead easy. The lawyer who acted for Mrs. Wilson in that case is dead for five years and his office is closed up. The process server who swore to that affidavit has disappeared, and he wouldn't have the least personal recollection of the matter anyway, as it was just a detail in his day's work. You sign that and you'll get a hundred dollars per week for the rest of your life."

"Here's a retainer for you to sign. You're retaining me to set that divorce decree aside,

understand? If you open your head about this thing outside you'll lose your income and I pledge you my personal word that you'll go to jail."

"Give me a thousand down!"

"No."

"All right, counselor. I'll sign up."

"Send in Henshaw," said Little Amby to his managing clerk when Gerald Pitt Wilson had passed out.

A clerky looking man with a repressed manner entered the room. He sidled to a chair and sat on the edge of it and commenced slowly revolving his soft hat in his delicately made hands. From his erect carriage, alert gaze, and evident sensitiveness of touch one might have gathered that he was about to perform some engaging trick with his hat.

"This paper, Henshaw," said Little Amby, "is an original filed paper which has been taken from the office of the county clerk. If it is discovered in your possession you will be arrested, as no one has the right to remove it from the files except under an order of the supreme court. Take it."

"You see that the affidavit of service mentions the date of January 2, 1904. Change that date to December 26, 1903. Do your best work on it and return it here by tomorrow noon. This is a confidential matter, Henshaw."

"Yes, Mr. Hinkle," said Henshaw in a hushed voice. He took the stolen document and left the office.

CHAPTER XX.

"Now this is one office that I hate to clean," panted an old woman who was wielded a broom in a dark little chamber in the rear of an old Ann Street building. "This tenant is the particularest, crankiest man in this whole cranky old madhouse. He hasn't business enough," she declaimed, giving a chair a petulant shove which overthrew it, "to keep snuff in his cranky old nose, but the way he goes on you'd fair think people were following him around to pick up his newspapers and put them in curio cabinets. Of all the grouchy, nasty, cantankerous old curmudgeons——"

"Aw, shut up, ma," drawled a plaintive voice.

"Shut up, is it?" cried the skinny little old woman, clenching her toothless gums

and glaring at her daughter, who was on her hands and knees with a scrubbing brush. "I'll have my say, and I can tell you that!"

"Yes, you'll have your say," sighed the daughter. "You'll have your say. Yes, ma, you'll have your say."

"I say I'll have my say!"

"And I say you say you'll have your say. Aw, shut up! Give me a hand at wringing this, ma. My back is broke."

"The crankiest, peculiarest old stick-in-the-mud," grunted the mother, twisting the rag as though it were the offending tenant's neck. "He puts his papers on the floor and empties his wastebasket into his desk. I do believe, and when he can't find what he looks for he says the cleaning woman took it."

"You make my head ache, ma."

"I'm to shut up, am I? Well, if I talked more and had my say you'd never have married that loafer of a husband. The idea of marrying a man because he had a gold tooth!"

"Yes, and if you talked less I'd have him yet. I'll always claim that it was just your eternal gabbing that made him sell our furniture and run off to the war while I was out cleaning. I got that against you, ma."

"Good riddance," cried the mother. "Good riddance to all men. They're devils. God bless the war that gives poor women a chance at good wages! Shut your clack and give me a hand with this nasty big brute of a desk."

"Whatever he wants with such a desk I don't know," she panted, "seeing that he only puts his feet on it. He's a broker. Ha, ha! He's a fine broker. I'll bet you a penny he bought this desk at an auction."

"Aw, shut up, ma."

"Do you call me a liar?" demanded the mother. "Look there, down here, there's the chalk marks! There's the auctioneer's red chalk that he ain't had the brains to rub out, and him claiming to be a broker. He bought this desk at an auction of some dead man's goods, that's what he did. 'A dollar—a dollar—a dollar! Can I get two? A dollar—a dollar—a dollar—sold to the gentleman in the plug hat!' And the worst bargain in the house. Did you ever see such a shak'y old beast of a desk? I'll bet you a penny it turns into a four-poster bed and mirror back if you can find the spring. Rush, Sara, there's a good girl!"

The cranky old roll top wabbled and

creaked under their urging. They moved it aside at last.

"Here's a letter, ma," said Sara, stooping. "It fell out of the desk."

"Put it back."

"I can't. The desk's locked. And anyways I don't know where it fell out of."

"Why, it's a new letter!" said the old woman, taking it. "It's never been opened. Can you make out the postmark?"

"It looks like 1904."

"Then it's an old letter. If we don't put it back where it came from he'll miss it and he'll have us discharged for opening his desk. And if we keep it to give him he'll think it's a trick to get a tip."

"Let's tear it up."

"We'd be arrested for that. Maybe it's valuable."

"Let's open it and see if it's any good to him."

"Open a letter? We'd get twenty years in jail!"

"Maybe there's money in it."

"It ain't ounr."

"Why ain't it, ma?"

"Because it ain't. And you ain't going to open it, neither. I'm an honest woman and I ain't going to jail for no dirty old letter. I wish you wouldn't be finding such things. We better put it back in the letter box and say nothing, and then it will go off to him again, and he can't say nothing. Can you make out the address?"

"You know I can't scarcely read, ma. I got that against you, ma."

"Shut up and give me that new stamp you got off the envelope in the wastebasket in the other office!"

"Aw, ma!"

At the end of their work they dropped the old letter, newly stamped, into a mail box. They then went off to their home—two hard-driven and impotent atoms in the mighty maelstrom of New York's financial district. How lowly and hidden are the lives of such—how petty—how unmeaning to great folks are their small problems and decisions!

A week later Cohen announced a Mr. Jastrow to Little Amby, sitting in his office in the house on Centre Street.

"I see that a decision has been handed down in the case of *Wilson versus Pruitt*," he said smilingly. "I saw the notice in the *Law Journal* this morning. I congratulate you, Mr. Hinkle. You have won very hand-

ily. The divorce decree has been set aside and Mrs. Pruitt is now once again, by due process of law, made Mrs. Gerald Pitt Wilson!"

It was handsome of Mr. Jastrow to speak so, as he was the attorney who had represented Mrs. Pruitt in the action. He was taking his defeat very amiably. He was a lawyer of the old school, one of the courtly sort which had not forgotten the great and dignified traditions.

"I saw the notice," said Little Amby.

"It seems to give you complete victory, Mr. Hinkle. We'll appeal, of course, but as between lawyers I do not see much hope of a reversal. The decision went off on a question of fact, the question as to whether your client Wilson was ever served in that divorce proceeding. Frankly, the court above is extremely unlikely to reverse."

"Why appeal?"

"Oh, I must! The family is furious—quite beside themselves. Perhaps you know the Van Gulden pride; they would consider a marriage with a European nobleman as a misalliance! I must say that Pruitt, poor fellow, stood nobly by his wife throughout this whole distressing affair. He is heart-broken by the event—no doubt."

"Well, you can have any time you need to make your case."

"That's very decent of you, Hinkle." Jastrow was lying back in his chair, smiling at the ceiling. The good humor of the man puzzled Amby. He could see nothing for it but that Counselor Jastrow had dined very well.

"This is one of the oddest cases I have ever had to do with," rambled on Jastrow, smiling at the ceiling. "There is no question in my mind at all but that Wilson was in Hanlein's Sanitarium during Christmas week of that year. The testimony of the physicians and of Hanlein, who were evidently disinterested parties and honorable men was convincing. And the affidavit of service certainly states that the service of the complaint was made on December 26th. It is extremely unfortunate that Mrs. Wilson's lawyer at that time—Franklin P. Thom—is dead and could not be brought forward to explain. He would certainly have been held sternly to account. It is unfortunate that his office records are gone; you know that his executor sold everything out at auction. It is patent on the face of the evidence that he worked an outrageous

deceit on the court. And it was so unnecessary! He could just as well have served Wilson in the sanitarium."

"You know these process servers," suggested Little Amby. "No one blames Thom; the process server made the affidavit."

"That's one explanation. And still, Hinkle, I firmly believe that Wilson was served in that proceeding."

Little Amby shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"Do you believe in luck, Hinkle?"

"Yes."

"Good! I don't ask you if you believe in God, or in Providence because that is a personal question. But you believe in luck. You believe that there is a mysterious method even in chance; you've seen it. Here's a copy of a letter which came into my hands this morning; read it and tell me what you make of it."

He slid a typewritten sheet across the expanse of mahogany. Little Amby glanced at it and then raised it sharply for his close attention.

New York, January 15, 1904.

FRANKLIN P. THOM, Esq.
18 Exchange Place,
New York City, N. Y.

DEAR MR. THOM: Well, Mr. Thom, now that I let your man serve that complaint on me in Bopp's like I said I would, what are you going to do for me? You know I can make an awful lot of trouble in this case yet if you don't treat me right, and don't you forget it. You may have the goods on me for a divorce from my wife, but I got the goods on other people, too, and I can make an awful stink. You told me on the telephone that time I called you up that you would see my rights protected if I would let your man serve me, and I took your word for it like a gentleman, and called you up after that New Year's party in Bopp's, and told you to send the papers around. Well, what is in this for me? What are you going to do for me—send me a birthday card? You better call me up, and be ready to talk turkey, or something is coming off in this town. I'm a gentleman, and I insist on being treated like one, and that means Cash. GERALD PITT WILSON.

"You have the original of this thing?" asked Little Amby, flipping the sheet back across the desk with a jerk of the index finger.

"I have," said Jastrow, lowering his gaze and sitting up in his chair.

"Does it look authentic?"

"No doubt of it. I have compared the signature with that on the affidavit sworn to by Wilson. He wrote this letter! It was

turned over to me by Thom's executor, who says it came to him through the mails after having gone to No. 18 Exchange Place. He says the letter was apparently never opened."

"A very mysterious affair," said Little Amby.

"Startling, isn't it?"

"Startling, if you will."

"A complete surprise to you in every way?"

"Certainly."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Mr. Hinkle. You are prepared then to give us every assistance in getting at the truth, even if it involves restoring the present Mrs. Wilson to the honorable status of Mrs. Pruitt."

"That goes without saying."

"Let us consider the situation then," said Jastrow, soberly but evidently not without enjoyment. "Taking this letter as authentic, we have Mr. Wilson popping up from nowhere after the lapse of many years and making the most strenuous efforts to set aside his divorce. He is so set on doing this that he retains the ablest criminal lawyer of the day."

"I thank you, Mr. Jastrow," bowed Little Amby. "I take compliments from wherever they come, from the right hand or from the left."

"This Wilson has been a common disorderly character about town. He has no credit and apparently no money nor resources. And still he is able to retain you to represent him. Is this a charitable work on your part?"

Little Amby raised his eyebrows and stared until Jastrow looked away.

"Any reasonable man," continued Jastrow, "knowing the value of your services, would conclude that Wilson had command of a great deal of money. Now, where did that money come from? Why did he spend it? He has been a notoriously evil liver, and his wife could get another divorce from him to-morrow. When my mind fastens on this problem, I see at once before me the figure of Mr. Pruitt, the good and loving husband from whose tender arms his supposed wife is about to be torn by legal process! The discovery of this letter will be a great joy and relief to Mr. Pruitt, I am sure."

"I don't know the state of the gentleman's feelings. Are you insinuating that Pruitt is back of this proceeding?"

"I'll say so in so many words. There is no doubt that Pruitt is back of this damnable thing! I have a proposition to make to you, Mr. Hinkle, and I want you to listen quietly. You may say anything you please when I am done.

"The Van Gulden clan have strongly suspected their precious brother-in-law Pruitt of having engineered this thing from behind the scenes. That suspicion became conviction this morning when I showed this letter to several of the elders of the family. They know Wilson and they know that he could not have financed the scheme, and they do not see where he could have profited by its success.

"Pruitt, it is patent, must have worked through you. Now, the family does not know you, except by general repute, and they have no special animus against you; but they are enraged against Pruitt! He is the man they want to drag into view and put behind bars—and frankly, some one is going behind the bars for this business. You know the character of Wilson, the tool, and you know that he will turn State's evidence. Now, who is to be the victim?

"I have no right to judge you, Mr. Hinkle. You are an attorney and your certificate to practice is a *prima facie* certificate to your honesty. I am willing to give you a chance to shield yourself. I propose to hand you the original of this letter, under proper safeguards, and let you yourself turn it over to the district attorney for action. You know that the fact that you yourself produced the letter will be an answer to any charges that may be founded on it. All I ask of you in return is that you give up Pruitt. You will know how to shift the blame very adroitly."

"Shift it to Pruitt?"

"Rather, let us say, let Pruitt bear it, since it is his. We realize that we cannot get at Pruitt except through you. If you will aid us we will have justice on him. If you stand between him and us you must expect to bear the brunt. And I warn you, Hinkle, this is going to be a bitter business."

Little Amby picked up the copy of the letter again and walked with it to the window. He read it slowly and carefully, stopping to reflect on its every phrase like a workman going over the links of a chain. Then he dropped his hand to his side and gazed from the window, staring at the crim-

inal courts and at the Tombs and at the fluted bar connecting them high in air which was the doleful Bridge of Sighs. He saw figures passing there: prisoners were being led to their trials, prisoners were being led back to their dim cells to await the day of sentence.

He shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of surrender and faced the implacable Jastrow again.

"You say that you believe Pruitt is my client," he said quietly and almost sweetly.

"He is."

"And you say that you will let me sidestep the responsibility if I give my client up to you?"

"Exactly."

"Here is your paper," said Little Amby, with a smile in which there was an odd admixture of triumph. "Go as far as you like. Do what you please. Your terms are refused. I will not help you."

Jastrow glared at him for an instant. And then the meaning and the perverse nobility of the little man's refusal was borne in on him. He took the paper with hesitation, lowered his eyes to the carpet in thought and then put forth his hand.

"Shake," he said in a low voice. "Damn it, Hinkle—you're a man of honor."

He turned and left the office.

When the door had closed behind him Little Amby hurried to his safe, spun the combination and jerked back the door. He plucked out a thick sheaf of bank notes and sprang to the door of the chamber.

"Cohen!" he shouted. "Cohen!"

His managing clerk kicked back his chair and bolted down the hall and into his master's room. He had never heard that tone before.

"Here!" snapped Little Amby, thrusting the roll of money at him. "Get out! Get Wilson! Take my car! Get Wilson out of the country! Go! Go!"

Little Amby jumped to the telephone to call in his men—to rouse to battle that secret and country-wide organization with which he had for so many years defied the law of the land. He was fighting for his life.

You know the rest. The history of that fight—perhaps the greatest legal struggle this country has known—is a matter of public record and my concern is only in giving you the unwritten story of Little

Amby. You know that Wilson was eventually caught and you know that he turned State's evidence. You know that Little Amby's cunning contrivances and plots were mysteriously brought to naught—except in his unyielding determination to shield the worthless scoundrel whose money he had taken as attorney—his client, Pruitt. Pruitt was never brought to book.

Mysteriously brought to naught! There is a fatality which attends the evildoer. There is a plan and a texture in the universe and a tide in the affairs of men. There is law. There is no such thing as chance, not in the measured decisions of men, not in the blowing of the wind, not in the rolling of dice. He who sets himself up as his own law is still merely an instrument; he too has his use and purpose and for him is a time and place appointed. His luck breaks, his scheming becomes foolishness, his tested devices grow suddenly refractory.

Here is an extract from the opinion of the court of appeals, in *People against Ambrose Hinkle*:

(Opinion by Hiller, J.) It is not within the province of this Court to upset findings of fact by a lower tribunal when such findings are not inconsistent with the evidence. The Court below, having heard the witnesses testify, and having observed their demeanor under oath, is better qualified to judge of their veracity than are we who have before us the bald record of their words. We should not reverse in this case, even if an ordinary reasonable doubt were in our minds as to whether justice had been done here. That would be to usurp the constitutional prerogative of the jury.

But, I am bound to say, such a doubt does not arise in this case. The evidence was direct and convincing. My learned colleagues and I have given due weight to the fact that Wilson was an accomplice, and that Henshaw was an accomplice. But their stories bear the stamp of truth.

We are presented then with the distressing spectacle of an attorney flouting his professional oath, of an officer of the Court deliberately leaguing with criminals against the law. His attitude throughout has been that of a hired bravo, putting his services up in the open market for the highest bidder, with no regard for the law or for morality. He alters public records; he corrupts witnesses; he buys the testimony of perjurers, and then he fights to the last extremity when called to account. And the only point that counsel could suggest in his favor was that he shielded and continued to shield the beneficiary of his criminal proceedings.

The judgment and sentence of the Court below, finding the prisoner guilty on all counts and sentencing him to eighteen months in State's Prison, is affirmed.

The sentence carried with it automatically disbarment. Ambrose Hinkle was no longer an attorney of the State of New York.

CHAPTER XXI.

What I am going to tell you now would have to be under the seal of secrecy if I gave you names and place. I cannot pledge you, and therefore I cannot repose this confidence in you; and it is not necessary for our purposes. You may take what follows—and I would as lief you took it so—as a mere pretty story, a chapter designed to round a tale and to touch its dark ending with something of light and promise.

The Kellehers, Jim and Cissie, were making an automobile excursion last summer in a State adjoining New York. They had been on the road for two weeks, jaunting along, seeing the country. Toward the close of one day they were looking about for a place to put up for the night. They scanned the roadside ahead and the hills about with growing eagerness, for darkness was coming on and the country was wild. They had left the State road in their sight-seeing and had lost their way; and now the rocking and bouncing car seemed to be taking them only farther afield.

"There are men working in that field!" exclaimed Cissie.

"Scarecrows," sniffed Jim, after a steady look at the motionless and shrouded figures.

"But there's a bell ringing somewhere!"

The steady and melodious tolling of the bell ceased. The figures in the field erected themselves again from their drooping attitudes, and resumed their hoeing.

"The bell was ringing somewhere behind the hill," said Cissie.

Jim drove the car ahead over the rough road, whereon it undulated like a tractor crossing ditches. The car slid onto the crest of the hill and Jim halted it, while the engine trembled and roared as though trying to recapture its fiery breath.

Far below them they saw the river; the sight of it advised them that they were several miles from the nearest road shown on their maps. It would be hours away, gauging the time by the gait at which they had bumped and crawled through the last mile. And already the horizon had swallowed up half of the red sun.

Between them and the river they saw a

long wall of mason work. Jim jumped from the car, and went to it.

The wall evidently was a retaining wall, holding back possible landslides from one-story structures of rough gray stone lower down on the hillside which overlooked the river. There were three of these structures. The two lower down were each about six feet wide and one hundred feet long; they paralleled each other, fronting the river on separate terraces; Jim could see nothing of them except their concrete roofs. He was unable to guess what their purpose might be. The third seemed to be a human habitation; it was a square building, with a doorway and glazed windows. Steps, cut in the living rock, led down to the doorway.

He returned to the car and shut off the engine.

"Come on, Cissie," he said. "There's some kind of a place down here where we may be able to put up."

They walked to the edge of the hillside and descended the rock stair. They paused before the doorway of the square building. One of the doors, which were of weathered deal planks hung on heavy hinges of hand-wrought iron, was ajar.

"What a strange place!" whispered Cissie, pressing closer to Jim.

Her slight voice echoed loudly from the walls of the alcove cut in the hillside. They heard a slither of feet within and a man appeared on the threshold. He was clad like the silent workers in the field above, in a brown robe with cowl and girdle; the robe fell to his ankles; his feet were bare, except for wooden soles held on by thongs of leather over the insteps. He had a friendly face, broad and commonplace, with little twinkling eyes.

"Can we put up here for the night?" asked Jim, after surveying this apparition with puzzlement.

"Certainly, sir," said the man, in a loud and level tone informed with a foreign accent. His manner was amicable but formal. "Will you come in?"

They entered a chamber floored with plain concrete and with a window at the further end overlooking the river and the landscape beyond. There was a table of heavy planks supported on three trestles each of which was cut from a single wide plank. A half dozen stools of like simplicity were ranged on either side of the table. Both sides of the chamber were faced with

unpainted planking in which were rows of doors.

"Can I get you supper?" asked their host, standing back and rubbing his hands as they looked about.

"If you will. What have you got?"

"It will be all the same," said the robed man, walking away and disappearing in an alcove at the farther end.

"Apparently he means that there is only the table d'hôte," said Jim, reacting to his surroundings with an attempt at flippancy. They seated themselves on the stools.

The robed man came back bearing two large candles. The sun had gone down and shadows were deepening in the room. He set a candle in an iron sconce at either end of the long table, and lit them. He set out two crockery plates and knives and forks and spoons of burnished iron. He returned again with a sort of tray divided into compartments; from the several compartments he ladled boiled string beans, boiled potatoes and boiled beets onto the plates. He filled two crockery mugs with clear water and set a small brown loaf beside each plate. He invited the guests forward with a courteous gesture.

"Can't we have something more?" asked Jim, after looking over this severe repast.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the robed man in his loud and uninflected voice. "But it will be all the same."

"What is this place?" asked Cissie.

"The Brotherhood of San Roque, madam. And this is the brotherhood's house of entertainment for travelers."

"Oh, I see. A sort of a monastery?"

"A sort of a monastery. Yes, madam."

He stood behind them while they ate; it seemed to Jim that he eyed them inquisitively.

"May I ask your name?" said Jim, making conversation.

"Yes, sir. My name is Brother Boniface, sir. I am a lay brother, here sir, in charge of this house of entertainment."

"I suppose you are wondering how we came here."

"I may not ask you questions, sir."

"But you are wondering all the same," said Jim with a laugh. The brother looked to him surprisingly like a head waiter whom he had known in New York. "Things must be rather monotonous here at times, brother."

He then entered into a rambling conversa-

tion with their host, touching on a variety of topics and informing him by asking him questions, quite in the Socratic manner. At one point Brother Boniface made as if to seat himself to listen more at ease, but he caught himself in the act. He seemed a simple and amiable person. He refused Jim's tender of a cigar, but his nostrils quivered and expanded as the smoke of the guest's weed drifted by him.

He stiffened as a cowled figure appeared from the alcove. The newcomer, who wore list slippers, glided silently forward, his eyes meeting Jim's as he approached. Here was the true ascetic type, with bloodless face and luminous eyes. He glanced at the table and at the wooden Brother Boniface, and was passing.

"Good evening, sir," said Jim.

"Good evening," returned the passer-by tranquilly.

"Who was that?" asked Jim of the lay brother.

"That was the prior, sir."

Brother Boniface showed them their rooms, cell-like little chambers with bunks on which were mattresses of drill stuffed with new straw. There was no other furniture. Hooks for clothing were on the plank walls. He withdrew, promising to call again at six in the morning, which was hint enough for them to retire shortly.

They went to bed and quickly to sleep, being wearied from their day in the open air.

Jim awoke with the first gray light of day. He dressed, and glanced in at Cissie, and went to the doorway for a breath of morning air. He stood in the alcove cut in the hillside outside and looked down at the buildings below. Smoke was rising from the rear of the house of entertainment; the lay brother was evidently already astir.

Two members of the order were walking up and down the path of beaten earth behind one of the buildings; Brother Boniface had said that these buildings contained the thirty individual cells of the brotherhood. One of the men looked up the hillside and Jim saw that he was the prior. The two were engrossed in a low-spoken conversation. The prior's arm rested on his companion's shoulders momentarily, as though in encouragement or appeal.

The unseen bell tolled again and the two men separated and went down out of Jim's

sight. But before the smaller of the two disappeared he looked up toward the house of entertainment for travelers, and Jim saw that he was Little Amby.

When he returned he did not speak of the matter at once to Cissie.

He asked to see the prior before leaving. He was shown into a small and uncarpeted room containing a desk, a wall cabinet and three stools. The prior sat at the desk.

"I want to thank you for your kindness to us, sir," said Jim. "May we pay something?"

"Whatever you like," said the religious. "But not more than one dollar."

"I saw you this morning talking to one of your people. I thought I knew him. Is it permissible to ask his name?"

"I do not know his name. I do not know what station he held in the world. He came to us two years ago."

"Is he a member of the order?"

"No. He came as other men come to us out of the world, for a period of retreat and meditation, and is remaining here from day to day of his own will. Such guests are always welcome and we ask only that they observe our rules and live our life while here. I do not know that he is even of our faith. We do not inquire, as we know that none come here but those who are earnestly seeking peace and a rule."

"This man was my friend. I'd like to help him if I could."

"You can do nothing for him until he re-enters the world. No one can help him; he must work out his own salvation, coming to the light through meditation and prayer. Even I can do nothing for him. Faith, the moral sense, cannot be communicated through argument. The sense of moral responsibility to God and man is arbitrary, justifying itself. Greater men than I, saints and doctors, have striven to reduce the matter to syllogisms and to encompass it by reason; they have succeeded but only to the contentment of those already walking in the light; it would be idle to refer a darkened soul to such works, from Augustine's

'City of God' to the vast work of the holy 'Thomas of Aquin.' Our brother is earnest in seeking a rule; he will find it. All men seek peace and a quittance from the distraction of the senses; our brother has sought it in the world through giving full rein to his passions; he is now seeking the peace which the world cannot give."

"You think he will become reconciled, so as to face life again?"

"I have the greatest confidence in him, and the liveliest hope. Having been a great sinner, he is of the material of great saints. 'Rather one sinner who does penance, than a hundred just men needing not penance!' Rather such a man as our brother, than a hundred of the tamely righteous. Rather the one lost sheep, than all the flock which never strayed from the fold. Rather the Magdalen, rather the thief on the cross."

Jim was silent as he piloted the car again that morning toward the State road.

He was meditating upon the connection that seems to exist between the utmost license in living and the bleakest asceticism. From his school books he recalled the tale of the pagan Alcibiades, who outraged luxury-loving Athens by his profligacy and then edified stern Sparta by his self-denial. He recalled the Emperor Nero, who had been in his young days a shining example for Roman youth. He recalled examples from sacred histories of several peoples, seeing with new surprise how commonly great moral leaders are compounds of sensuality and pure spirit. He perceived that just men are not those who live by the letter of this code, or who believe in the letter of that creed, but are all men of good will doing the right as God gives them to see the right. And always in the background of his thoughts was Little Amby, a figure no longer completely enshadowed, but lit by hope.

"What in the world are you dreaming about?" protested Cissie, as they lurched over a tree root.

He snapped out of his reverie with a short laugh, and sent the car ahead. Before them was the State road.

THE END.

Mr. McMorrow will have a short story about Ambrose Hinkle in the next number.





Salt That Was Sweet

By Talbert Josselyn

Author of "Finders Keepers," and other stories

The flaw in Spence Harner's scheme was that he wasn't the only one who knew what he knew.

HARVEY DRUMM, aged seventeen, laid a consoling hand on his mother's shoulder.

"That's all right, mother, we'll drill somewhere else on the land where there isn't any salt. We'll get a good well of irrigating water yet, see if we don't."

Mrs. Drumm looked into her son's eyes and made a brave show of reflecting the spirit that flamed there.

"I believe you're right, Harvey. But before we have them drill again we'll talk it over with some one who knows the country better than we do, like Judd McKelvey or some of the men in town. We can get the drillers down at Grimes' place if we want them again. They said they were going there next. Now you rustle around and see if you can't get a rabbit and I'll start a fire and we'll have an early supper. It's growing on toward four o'clock now."

Mrs. Drumm rose hurriedly from the empty canned-goods box and began a fine display of culinary activity until Harvey and his shotgun had disappeared among clumps of greasewood. Then the busy hands fell by her side and the shoulders drooped and an infinitely tired look came into her eyes. Slowly she took in her surroundings

—the wagon with steps at its rear leading to the boxlike house set high and wide above its wheels; the tent where Harvey slept; the small horse shed and corral; a battered and ancient automobile; and lastly, a shapeless heap of wet mud at one side of a round hole in the earth. Longest did she look at the abandoned well. Salt at twenty feet, and with it had gone the dream of fertile fields, alfalfa, schooling for Harvey. Twist of fate had given widow and son the worthless acreage of the region.

A flat, sullen country with greasewood-covered mesa rimmed far away by low slag-dump hills, red and brown and black against a white-blue sky, where the wind had wide and open opportunity to blow and took full advantage of it. Yet land hunger drives people far and those who have slim purses cannot haggle at the richest counter. The soil was good, once water was put on it; those who had settled first, in the lower and more level land, were in a fair way to reap the reward of their enterprise. Into the mesa, away from the confining city life that had so swiftly shortened her husband's years, had come Mrs. Drumm with Harvey; a late arrival, she had been forced to be content with an upper, outlying half section

where it would be deeper drilling for water—and where they had found salt.

The sound of an approaching machine broke in sharply on her thoughts. The twisting, go-as-you-please, greasewood-lined road at length disclosed a touring car with a small, lean man in shirt sleeves hunched over the wheel. Although incredibly lined his face had something about it of the appearance of a snapping turtle, possibly because of the mouth, which lay flat without the slightest sign of indentation at the corners; and there were those who had gotten the worst of a business deal from Spence Harner, who maintained that when this mouth closed down it made the far-famed snapper seem a putty-jawed creature by comparison. But these contentions, as has been said before, came from disgruntled people not Mr. Harner's friends, and as hotel keeper, storekeeper and chief factotum of the town of Harner and its outlying provinces this gentleman of the shirt sleeves and black undented soft hat had many a stanch acquaintance ready to shout his name to the skies.

"Howdy, Mis' Drumm," said Mr. Harner, stopping the motor and lifting at the brim of the undented hat with two fingers. "I just thought I'd drop by. I saw the well drillers leaving as I was going cross lots on my way back to town and I says they can't have struck water this quick so I overhauled 'em and blamed if they didn't say they'd run into salt. Say, I'm mighty sorry." Mr. Harner shook his head and made several clucking sounds, half shutting his eyes, which made him look more like a turtle than ever, as he had no eyebrows. "That's too bad."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Drumm, "it is. A bed of salt at twenty feet doesn't look very good for sweet water, does it?"

"At twenty feet! That's what the drillers told me but I couldn't scarcely believe it so that's why I came up to see for myself. You don't mind if I do?"

"Oh, not at all. We had thought of getting you along with some others to give us your opinion as to what we ought to do. We can get the drillers again if we want them but they didn't see any need of our wasting any more money than we had to on a well that might be worthless; and now, if it does seem worthless and we can't get water anywhere on the half section, after the expense we've been to—it isn't much

for some people, I know—but to us," and there came a catch in the speaker's voice, "to us it might mean everything. They went a number of feet into the salt—"

"A number of feet, hey?" demanded Mr. Harner and what had once been eyebrows went up and came down again. He was now stooping over the heap of mud and sludge that marked the findings of the drillers. "H'm!" said Mr. Harner. His hands burrowed into the mass; they came out filled and he sloshed the muck into a bucket of water standing near just long enough to rid it of its slime, then fell to studying the residue critically. "H'm!" he repeated and held up a smooth rock crystal. He touched it to his tongue. "Phew!" His jaws snapped together traplike, then opened slowly in conjunction with his eyes. "Salt's no name for it!" He threw down the crystal and rubbed his hands.

"Well, Mis' Drumm, I'm sorry for you. You sure deserve better than to run into such hard luck. It's probably a big bed of salt and deep; the drillers was wise to stop: yes, you bet they were. And if you did find water lower down and try to put it on the land that'd make the saline table rise and burn out the roots of the alfalfa. And of all the people on the mesa you got it. H'm!" Mr. Harner again shook his head. "Now Mis' Drumm," and he put out a deprecatory hand, "don't you go and carry on about it. I guess there's some folks in this region—say, I guess I ain't been in this country all these years for nothing; you bet not! Now you just let me think. Most people have an idea that all the good land's taken, but those who know —h'm! There's a quarter section or maybe a bit larger about three miles west of town that a friend of mine put the desert act on to and then let it lapse. Now since you came out here to ranch for yourself and Harvey, by thunder, I'm going to see that you get the chance too. You come on down and look that piece over and if you like it it's yours for filing on. And you won't find no salt under it, either."

A pink-faced Mrs. Drumm got no further than a half uttered, "Why, Mr. Harner, I couldn't think—" before Mr. Harner had waved a silencing hand and was again speaking.

"Now don't say a word about it. You get Harvey."

"Harvey's off hunting and—"

"I'll get him then;" and Mr. Harner, mouth down, strode to his car, where he began a series of strident notes on the horn.

Five minutes later the hunter appeared breathless, with two rabbits dangling at his waist as he ran. His mother explained; so did Mr. Harner.

"Gee!" said Harvey, "that's fine! Let's go down and look at the land right now."

"That's just what I've been saying," agreed Mr. Harner. "I'll drive your mother; you get in your car and follow. I got a little business that I've got to do first and then we'll go on and look the piece all over; and if you like it you go ahead and file on it and if you need any little money advanced, why you'll know where to look. Now we won't say a word but we'll get along because the afternoon's going and you'll want to be back here before dark. There ain't anybody else on the place, is there?"

"No," said the Drumms.

"Then let's go," urged Mr. Harner.

Had the Drumms not been in quite such a hurry they might have remarked that it was Judd McKelvey's habit to ride over late afternoons from his ranch to the Drumm place; but then again Mrs. Drumm might have said nothing of it for the comings of the smiling Judd had in them something of the advances of a bashful suitor. Away went the Harner machine, followed by Harvey in the venerable Drumm car.

An hour passed. True to his custom, over the flat land dotted with greasewood and sage rode Judd McKelvey, a light whistle on his lips, his quirt absent-mindedly tapping the shuffling roan on the flank as it weaved among the lengthening shadows. With the eyes of a man trained to the open through many years he took in the shift and change of the surrounding country without appearing to be giving any heed to it. Hence it was that at the same time that the roan's ears shot ahead questioningly he saw above the small-leaved branches of a greasewood clump two figures hastening on foot around a corner of the Drumm shed. A half-uttered phrase came to Judd's lips; for a moment he stared in puzzlement; then he was out of the saddle with a silencing pat on the roan's neck and was peering tensely through the foliage. From behind the shed shot an auto with the two men in it and swiftly sped down the twisting road. "Big Ed" Gaff, who ran the butcher shop in

the town of Harner, at the wheel, and Clyde Tobin, of the Royal Pool Hall, seated beside him; but this told Judd McKelvey nothing. With a grunt he threw himself into the saddle and urged the roan toward the shed.

Nothing lay on the far side of the shed save the tracks left by the machine. The two Drumm wagon horses thrust their heads out of the shed doorway and nickered their greeting. Judd pursued his search. "Hello the house!" he called. He received no reply.

Judd's eyebrows came down. He rode up beside the house wagon and thumped its side with a hand and again called. He swung down, dropping the reins over the roan's head and clumped up the house steps. His knuckles beat sharply and then he swung open the door. No one there. He dropped to the ground and strode to the tent; it likewise was empty. He stared hard about, jaw jutting, then his face cleared and his fist smacked into open palm. The Drumm car was gone; they were away; nothing had happened to any one. That part was all right. But it didn't explain the actions of the late visitors. Again Judd's heavy brows snapped down.

The heap of muck by the abandoned well caught his eye; swingingly he walked over to it. He peered down the hole, tapped the muck with the toe of a boot, slowly rubbing chin with knuckles the while. Of a sudden he uttered an exclamation and bent over at one side of the heap; his swift-moving fingers caught up a small white lump that looked like molten glass that had been allowed to cool. Critically he inspected it, ran a thumb over it, touched it to his tongue.

His hand closed hard upon the lump; so hard that his knuckles suddenly showed white. His boot heels dug into the earth, his eyes narrowed and in cold deadly earnest he began to look about. From the cleared space surrounding the well his gaze shot to the encompassing greasewood; each clump he examined in turn. He shifted position and again took up the search. Then a grunt that was more of a growl came from his throat. Half hidden in the thickest growth was a cone of heaped-up earth some two feet high.

"A location monument. The swine!"

Judd dashed at the cone. With vicious boots he kicked it flat—kicked it flat and kicked into sight an empty tomato can that

went spinning across the ground. With a face like granite he retrieved the can, pried open the ragged top and took out a folded sheet of paper.

"I thought so," he said.

He unfolded the paper and read hurriedly down it, stopping only here and there:

"I, Edward Gaff, citizen of the United States, and this State of do hereby locate as a mining claim and more properly described as that part of the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section for the purpose of mining borax Dated this twenty-fifth day of September Clyde Tobin, witness."

The paper crumpled in Judd McKelvey's hand.

"The swine!" he repeated.

He flung the wadded location notice as far as he could and hurled the tomato can after it; then raced to the roan and leaped into the saddle.

"Home, boy!" he cried, "and let's go!"

They went. That part of the mesa had never before seen quite such speed. Stopping only long enough to unsaddle the pony and turn him into pasture a flaming-eyed Judd McKelvey leaped into his roadster and roared for town, and whatever the little car lacked in paint and style it made up in the manner that its driver urged it along. On the outskirts of town, however, it was brought down to a slow jog and thus leisurely and inconspicuously did it putter up the main street and come to a stop in front of Henry Grassman's tobacco store.

Henry and Judd were friends. Judd asked questions.

"Why, yes," said Henry. "Spence Harner and Mrs. Drumm came into town about an hour and a half ago, with Harvey Drumm followin' 'em. Spence was in his office a while and then they all put out to the west. Yes, it wasn't ten or fifteen minutes later that Ed Gaff and Clyde Tobin went by in Ed's car, off to the east; they ain't got back yet and neither have the others. Anything I can do for you?"

"No," said Judd. "Except half a dozen cigars. I may need 'em to-night."

He lit one of the cigars and drove slowly west along the street; once in the open he gave the little car all that it had. Twice in the next several miles he stopped at ranch houses and asked questions, altering his course according to what he had learned. Dusk was coming on as he saw bobbing toward him a small weather-beaten car. He

pulled his own machine to the side of the road and signaled a halt and when a radiant Harvey had drawn up he motioned that they follow him in their car, silencing the questions that arose by a grim shake of the head. A hundred yards off the road he put on the brake, snapped out of his car and put a foot on the running board of the Drumm machine. Looking Mrs. Drumm full in the eyes he told his story in crisp sentences bare of detail. "And that's how it is," he concluded.

"But," said a white-lipped Mrs. Drumm, "the land's ours!"

"For agriculture, yes. Bu' the law reads that anybody can locate mineral on it. If those drillers hadn't been green to this region they would have recognized borax in that form when they saw it. Old Harner did and if I don't miss my guess he's making tracks for Cerrito to record the claim right now. Which way did he go when he left you?"

"Off that way," said Harvey. "Said he'd be away a day or two on business."

"I'll bet he will," grunted Judd.

"Can't we overtake him?" demanded the boy.

"He won't be alone. He'll wait at the main road for Gaff and Tobin to come along—or they'll wait for him; they dodged town—and then they'll all streak it for the county seat; and they'll be armed, too. Harner'll go along to make sure that these henchmen of his record the claim as he wants 'em to; his name won't appear because he doesn't want to get into any trouble. That's why he used Gaff and Tobin."

"But can't we do *something*?" appealed Mrs. Drumm.

"Did you think I'd play horse-and-auto racer if I didn't think I could?" rallied Judd. His teeth showed in a quick grin. He put a hand upon Mrs. Drumm's—she was near collapse.

"Locate the ranch ourselves as a mining claim," volleyed Harvey, "and beat 'em to the Cerrito courthouse?"

"First part's all right," nodded Judd. "You bet. But nobody'll beat 'em to the recorder's office. Way they'll drive they'll get in about eight to-morrow morning. Recorder's opens at nine and Harner'll see to it that it's on the records before that time. When there's as much as this at stake he usually manages to get things done."

"Is the borax deposit worth as much as that?" said Mrs. Drumm.

"Is it? With the commercial demands of the world for that product—chemists and soap manufacturers and such—the value of the stuff under your land would run into hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"Oh," said Mrs. Drumm. "And he told us our place was worthless and that if we'd take up his friend's quarter section he'd see—"

"I know, I know," gritted Judd. "Well, we may see, too. And now we've got all this off our chest and know just what we're up against, let's go! I'll explain things when we're doing some locating on our own hook back at the ranch. There's just one chance and we've got to take it."

Night had fallen in earnest when Judd McKelvey's car sputtered away from the Drumm half section and took the twisting road like a cottontail rabbit zigzagging away from hounds. Its driver had discarded the broad-brimmed hat for a nondescript cap; he wore a coat, unbuttoned at present, but for which there would be need during the early-morning hours. He was settled firmly in his seat, like one who knew just how much long, heavy work lay ahead.

At the town of Harner he stopped for gas, oil and water, filling to the limit, then was bucking away again along the rutted road that stretched toward the westering horizon. Ten miles farther on he drew up at the combination gasoline station and grocery store of a struggling new settlement, bought a plug of tobacco and made some casual inquiries. When he came out of the store his jaw had a slightly grimmer set than before. Harner, Gaff and Tobin were in Harner's car, with Big Ed Gaff at the wheel, and he was known as a hard driver; they were an hour ahead—over that road, a good twenty miles. Viciously did Judd step on the starter; once more his lights penciled the tricky road. A flat road for the most part, thrusting endlessly across the great plateau, now and then circling the base of hill ranges, now cutting across dry lakes a mile or two miles wide and as level as a billiard table; but treacherous going—the face of the plateau cut and recut by narrow, steep-banked dry washes into which one dipped without warning and rose out of as suddenly; among the hills, sharp ledges of rocks, rough as gigantic rasp files; along

the dry lakes which seemed smooth as velvet, potholes into which a wheel could drop and crumple with appalling swiftness.

The half moon which had ridden high in the heavens at the beginning of night fell fast away to the west; now it was a hand-breadth above the dark hills; now it was the width of a little finger and copper glowing; now it was gone. Belted Orion and the Little Dipper climbed hand over hand up the eastern sky. A wind eddied into existence. Judd drew his coat about him and settled himself once more.

He was half out of the road with one wheel climbing a bank before he knew that he had drowsed. Wildly he jerked the car back in again. The shock kept him awake for half an hour; then once more his head drooped and once more the jolting snapped him back to consciousness. Now the cigars came into play, one being lighted from the butt of another; cigars, and the rapping of knuckles on the steering wheel, harder and harder rapping until the pain dinned his brain awake. Doggedly he fought the enemy that comes so lulling to those who drive alone through droning black hours; continually he stared ahead for a telltale bobbing ruby light.

Dawn ran its fingers along the eastern ledge of the world and slowly pulled itself up; one by one the stars went out like lanterns of home-going night watchmen; hills detached themselves from the flatness of the mesa, brush and rocks took on perspective. Yet nowhere could the straining eyes of the lone driver pick up the fleeting object of his search. A great range of mountainlike hills bulked into the west. On the other side of them, two hours away, lay Cerrito, the county seat. Two roads struggled through their passes; one, old, short-cutting, steep; the other newer, longer. With still another tug at the throttle Judd McKelvey urged his racking steed at a now distinct cluster of buildings forming the town that squatted at the base of the range and the forking of the roads, and as he swung sharp from a tributary street into the chief one he came bang upon the other riders of the night.

The dust-plastered Harner car stood before a gasoline station, with the yawning owner of the place filling its tank. Young Clyde Tobin was at the wheel, Big Ed Gaff sprawled asleep beside him, Spence Harner was curled up in a blanket on the rear seat. All this Judd took in with a single glance

—took in, and was taken in. The eyes of young Tobin widened; he pulled himself upright. Judd rocketed down the street and into the newer, longer road. A mile out of town he looked back. The Harner car was in pursuit.

For the next five or six miles the smaller car almost held its own, taking the first stretches of the up grade into the hills with a fine show of power; but the road steepened and at length where it pulled sharply out of a small flat to ascend narrowly along the face of a bluff the panting leader slowed down and down, bucked forward and almost stopped, struggled on again with a wild gritting of gears and a spurning of rock and loose earth, fought its way up to the steepest pitch, faltered, coughed and went dead. With a thrashing of arms Judd threw himself to the ground; the pursuer was not a quarter of a mile behind, in plain sight and coming like the wind. He yanked out the front seat, spun the cap to the gasoline tank and made swift survey; then rummaged pawingly among the tools, turning over a junk assortment of wrenches, files, bits of wood, wire and nails; he caught up an empty grease gun, cleaned its snout with a nail set in a chip of wood, and hastened around to the back of the stalled machine, kicking a stone under a wheel to block it while in transit. Up reared the Harner car, muffler wide open, Clyde Tobin sawing at the wheel. It plunged to a stop a scant length from Judd McKelvey.

And now no matter what tumultuous feelings may have surged through him Judd became outwardly cool and genially self-possessed. He waved the grease gun at the glowering Harner party and drew alongside their car.

“Howdy!” he greeted above the exhaust. “I thought that was you when I passed you down at Carlin but I was going so blamed fast that I didn’t have time to make sure. Well, I ain’t going fast now—I’m out of gas. Haven’t got enough to make the hill. Say, can you spare me enough so that I can get up?”

The looks that the three bestowed on the questioner would have taken the corrugation out of a sheet-iron roof, had it been corrugated, and put corrugation in it, had it been flat. Most malevolent of all was the reptilian gaze of Spence Harner.

“I’m in a whale of a hurry,” explained Judd. “I got a telegram last night along

eight o’clock from a man over beyond Cerrito with whom I’d been dickering about a piece of property and he said that if I wanted it bad I’d better come over quick because he was going to sell it to the first comer, he needing the money. So I cranked up the little old snort cart—”

“Hell!” stormed Spence Harner. “Do you think I’ve got all day to sit here and listen to your blab? Get that heap of yours out of the way!”

Judd looked slowly at the speaker. “That’s what I’m a-going to if I can get some gas. I can’t go up this grade without any and it’s too narrow for me to try and turn around to back up. Of course she had to die right here.”

“What the devil do I care where it had to die? You’re obstructing travel. Get it out of the way!”

“Huh,” said Judd, “you seem to be in a good deal of a hurry yourself. Say, you didn’t get a telegram too, did you, about any land?” His face puckered. “You going to Cerrito or beyond?”

“None of your business,” snapped young Tobin. His heavy-jowled features had not been made any more prepossessing by lack of sleep and an overnight beard.

“Short and sweet,” said Judd. “Well, Spence, if I’m to get out of your way I’ll have to have some gas.” He held up the empty grease gun. “Gas tank’s at the rear, I suppose? I’m in a sweat of a hurry.”

“Hi,” cried Mr. Harner. “Hi—stop him, Ed! Cut that muffler, you blamed fool Clyde, so I can make myself heard.”

Stolid Big Ed Gaff went out one door, young Tobin, snapping off the switch, leaped out the other. Mr. Harner sprang over the side of the tonneau. The three closed in on Judd just as his hand was on the gas cap.

“You heard what I said,” rasped Mr. Harner. “Get your hand off there or we’ll break your neck.”

“Oh, all right,” grumbled Judd. “But you’ll have to back your car down the hill, then, so that I can back down after you until I can find a place to turn around.”

The speech into which Mr. Harner aviated was forceful in the extreme but it did little toward solving matters.

“He’s right, chief,” acknowledged Tobin. “That’s the only way we can get around him. I’ll back down onto that flat—and I hope you break your neck coming after me,” he added to Judd.

"Thanks," said Judd and patiently began to maneuver the stalled car down the road in the wake of the riding Tobin and the walking pair of Gaff and Harner.

"Come on, come on!" barked Spence Harner, sawing the air as his own car swung over the edge of the road and out upon the flat and Judd's hung slowly on the turn.

"All right," said Judd. "Now go to it, but if you think you're going to get far, just think again." His finger indicated one of the rear tires and the inclimbing Spence stopped with a foot on the running board. With a swing of his leg Judd dropped from the derelict, at the same time catching up a pair of pliers from the seat. "If you birds that drive so fast would pay a little more attention to a thing or two now and then you'd be surer of getting where you're bound on time." With a tweak he drew from the tread a head-deep nail and a flat chip of wood and held them up. "Nice thing to run over."

"Hell and high water!" screeched Spence Harner. "That'd have been all right if you'd let it stay in, and we'd have only had a slow leak." Viciously and futilely he pressed a thumb over the hole. "Ah, confound your meddling! Get that spare off, you two, and be quick about it. We've lost more than time enough already."

"So've I," said Judd. "I'm going to back up the grade. Adios to all of you. Think I want to miss that man at Cerrito?—I mean that man beyond Cerrito."

The suspicion with which Spence Harner had regarded Judd McKelvey from the first, flamed high at this slip of the tongue. The snapping-turtle mouth went trap shut; the little eyes narrowed; then his face became as bland and ingenuous as it was physically possible to make such a face.

"Say, now, hold on a minute," he said. "I'll give you some gas just as soon as we get this tire fixed. Think we want you getting stalled again in our road?"

Judd smacked his hands together. "That's fine! Here, let me help with that tire."

Heavy-jowled and pasty-faced young Mr. Tobin relinquished his share of the work with a natural alacrity augmented by a meaning glance and nod from Mr. Harner. He rose from detaching lock nuts and sauntered to the front of the car and there the snapping turtle gentleman joined him. Together they conversed in low tones.

Judd whirled the last lock nut free, drop-

ping it to the dusty ground alongside its mates, then hammered the rim loose, rolling rim and tire forward out of the way. The two confrères broke short off, looked hard at Judd and looked away. Judd bent his brows and peered at the front tire. The two, bringing their gaze back to close objects again, allowed their eyes to follow his.

"Judas!" bawled Mr. Harner.

"Well, I'll be damned! We must 'a' run over a nail factory," wailed the puffy-faced Clyde.

"We run over something," said Mr. Harner and his beady eyes became glass hard.

Stolid Big Ed Gaff made his first comment. "That's what comes from not carrying two spares. We got to take the whole insides out of that thing and repair it."

"That's what comes from a good many things," retorted Spence Harner, "and the first of 'em's right here." He applied the toe of his boot to the bending Judd. "You get up from there!"

Judd went forward against the spare that he was swinging into place and the suddenness of his going spilled a folded paper from the inside pocket of his unbuttoned coat. As he rose and swung about he saw it and he clamped a foot down upon it. But Spence Harner had seen it too.

"Hi, boys!" he cried and came at Judd.

With a snarl Judd caught him by the shoulders and shunted him lurchingly into the advancing Ed Gaff, then whirled on Clyde Tobin, already at his throat, and struck out with a smash. Clyde went lummily down. Free of the entangling Spence, huge Ed lunged at him and strove to pin him against the car. Judd ducked and swung hard on the ribs as he darted past. Ed grunted, spun about and lunged again. Again Judd evaded him and swooped down upon the paper; he rose with it clutched in one hand; but brief as the interval was it had given Ed Gaff time to close in. An iron-like paw fastened upon Judd's shoulder. Judd cracked at the wrist, twisted out of his coat and turned free to find himself looking down the barrel of an automatic held by Clyde Tobin.

"Put 'em up!" Clyde croaked.

Judd's eyes met Clyde's. He put up his hands.

From a semirecumbent position on the ground Spence Harner rose cacklingly to his feet. "Take that paper away from him," he commanded Ed Gaff.

Judd's hands wavered.

"Keep 'em up," warned Clyde.

Ed snapped the paper free and handed it to Spence Harner. Long that gentleman studied it and when he had finished there was a smile on his face, but it was a smile that was not pleasant to see.

"So," said Mr. Harner. "Sort of thought you'd locate a little borax yourself, eh? I had a hunch that that was what you had been up to when you went ripping by. Going to see a man over beyond Cerrito about land—yeah. Well, my curly-lock friend, you'll just have to go without that pleasure this once; that and seeing the inside of the county recorder's office ahead of us." He again studied the paper. "Had it put in your own name, I see. Figured you'd get the widow sooner or later but wanted to be sure of this."

"You——" began Judd.

"That'll do," said Mr. Harner crisply. "Tie him up, boys. Ropes under the front seat. Shove a handkerchief in his mouth. Sit him down on the running board out of sight of the road. I'll figure out what to do with him when you've got done with the tires. Smart guy with nails, wasn't you?"

Half an hour later a panting Ed Gaff and a wheezing Clyde Tobin left off working a decrepit tire pump. "That's hard enough until we get into town," commented Clyde.

"Won't have to drive fast anyhow," chuckled Mr. Harner. "Whatever need there was for it this considerate gentleman here has took away. And now, you two, do you see this old abandoned road going across the flat and back to the left up that gulch? Well, that goes to the Beile Mahone Mine that ain't in existence any more. About five miles from here. Mighty fine place this was to have stopped, after all. Just put our friend in his bug and take him easylike over the bumps up the Belle and turn him loose, minus his boots. He'll find them and his car somewhere along this road wherever we're minded to leave it. While you're gone on this pasear I'll light up my pipe with this nice twisted little paper pipe lighter." He held up Judd's notice. "Better get going."

The returning Messrs. Tobin and Gaff grinned broadly as they drove up to the awaiting Mr. Harner.

"He sure was cussing pretty when we left," beamed Clyde. "Had to hold the gun toward him as we pulled out so's not to get

a bouquet of rocks. Shall I take the rattle trap up the hill? But say, how about gas?"

"There's plenty enough gas in it," said Ed Gaff. "I looked."

"Huh. Well, whatever his game was about getting stalled on the grade, it didn't work." And five miles farther on, climbing out from the McKelvey car at the side of the road and depositing himself in the Harner machine, Clyde Tobin repeated these sentiments. "I'll say it didn't," said Clyde. "Say, chief, how about a whacking good feed in town before we sign up at the recorder's as borax maggits?"

"The eats are on me," said Mr. Harner, affably showing his teeth. "Nothing's too good for you to-day."

So it was that the three, with toothpicks set negligently in mouth, sauntered into the hall of records as the courthouse clock pointed to some time after ten. A young recorder's assistant stood behind the wicket. On a settee over against the wall, outside the wood and grille work reposed a rubicund individual in a spotted blue suit busily working his jaws. He looked up on seeing the three.

"Why, hello, Spence," he greeted.

"Hello, Jake," said Mr. Harner.

"Something to record, eh?" said the first speaker. "Of course it ain't worth much or you wouldn't be having your hand in it," he bantered.

Mr. Harner's face became more wrinkled than ever. He sidled over to the seated figure. "I'll have something to tell you in a minute or two." Slowly he closed an eye.

"Fine!" said hanger-on and semiofficial Jake and delightedly slapped a shiny-blue thigh.

"Just have that put on the records, Bub," commanded Mr. Harner, drawing a paper from out of an inside pocket and thrusting it through the recorder's wicket. "It's a dollar for recording, if I don't mistake," and he passed in a coin.

The assistant studiously perused the document; perused it a little longer than the waiting Spence Harner liked.

"It's all right," he snapped. "Located by Edward Gaff, the gentleman here, and witnessed by Clyde Tobin, the gentleman here."

"I wasn't questioning about the names," protested the assistant. "I was just thinking how kind of funny it was that there

should be two locations for borax on the same identically described spot in the same quarter section and township. You see, a woman and a boy came in here not over twenty minutes ago—”

“Huh?” cried Mr. Harner. And then silence fell, so heavy and so complete that the assistant had no trouble in continuing and in making himself heard.

“Yes. Recorded this same piece of land all shipshape. Dollar down and everything.”

Mr. Harner continued to clutch at the grille work. From the settee rose the listening-in Jake and came busily forward.

“I seen 'em come in. Thin, worried woman, kind of pretty looking, maybe thirty-eight or forty, and a boy sixteen-eighteen. All the time she was having her paper recorded she kept up a nervouslike line of talk as to how her boy had driven

so wonderful all night, with her taking turns now and then to let him sleep, and how at the town of Carlin they had taken the old short-cut road over the hills like some fellow named Judd or Judge or something like that had planned the night before for them to do; and now lemme see—yeah, over and over she kept talking about how clever this fellow Judge must have been to have delayed some bunch of skunks that she said he had gone up against until she could get here first to do the recording. Say, now, is there anything that I can do for you, Spence?”

Whatever Mr. Harner, and with him Messrs. Tobin and Gaff, had lost in speech during the last moment they now amply made up for. But sweeping and picturesque and almost poetical as it was it had no effect on altering the ownership of the Drumm borax mine.

Look for another story by Talbert Josselyn in an early issue.



WHERE "YANKEE DOODLE" WAS BORN

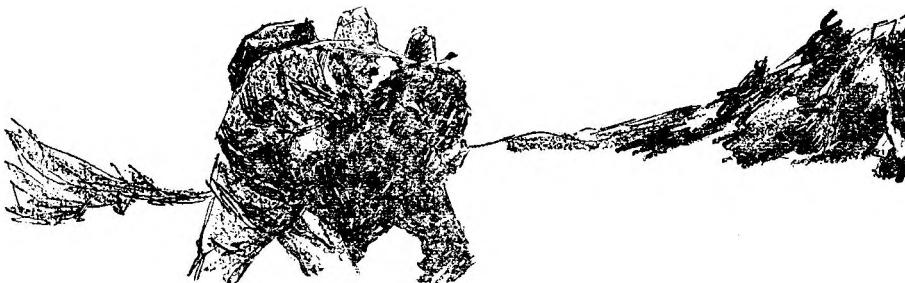
IN Albany, New York, overlooking the upper reaches of the Hudson River, stands the old Rensselaer House, a massive brick structure that has the double distinction of being supposed to be the oldest house in the United States and of being known to have been the birthplace of "Yankee Doodle." The sturdy old building was erected in 1642 and traces of its former state and charm remain in the huge, rough-hewn oak timbers and the great fireplace. Now, however, the house has fallen on evil days and the rooms that once knew the presence of stately patroons and distinguished generals now are used for the manufacture of cement blocks. Desiring that the house be preserved its present owner, Mrs. van Rensselaer Strong of Philadelphia, has offered to give it to the State of New York for museum purposes, but at this writing the authorities have not accepted her offer.

In 1755 the Rensselaer House was the headquarters of General Abercrombie, in command of a force of British and Colonial troops marching to attack Fort Ticonderoga at the head of Lake George. One fine day Surgeon Dick Schuckburg of his majesty's Colonial army, seated on an old well near the house, was amused by the appearance and unsoldierly actions of some frontier contingents whose rough-and-ready ways had given the troops from more civilized regions many a laugh. Being a gentleman of pretty wit, Surgeon Dick dashed off some verses for the amusement of his comrades, beginning:

Father and I went down to camp
Along with Cap'n Goodin':
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty puddin'.

The song spread rapidly through the army and was accepted by the Yankees as their own. Later it was sung by the Americans when Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in 1781 and the Revolutionary War was won.

Restored to something like its original condition this old house would be a valuable and interesting addition to the too-short list of buildings that remain as reminders of the America that was. It is to be hoped that if the final decision of the State is against taking over the property some patriotic society will undertake the work of preservation and repair before time and hard usage complete their work of destruction.



On Kochuk Bench

By Robert Russell Strang

"On Kochuk Bench" is the noteworthy product of a newcomer to these pages who writes like an old-timer. We think Mr. Strang is a "he" yarn spinner. His work has the quality that seems to go with the fragrance of wood fires and the muttering of blackened pipes, out under the stars. This is the kind of a tale that a man tells to men. Its art is in its very artlessness. It is the story of two individuals of the North who lived and acted in the belief that there was "no justice"—at least for them—and who found out, too late, how very wrong they were. It is also the story of a chechahco who brought to the North the heart of a sour dough. We know you are going to feel—as we did when we read it—that this yarn is all too short. And we think you are going to want more like it.

(A Novelette)

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT the same time that Charlie Cogswell arrived in France to help the A. E. F. finish a big job, a band of incensed gold diggers kicked two undesirables down the front steps of arctic Alaska with injunctions to keep moving in the general direction of the equator. Aside from a pair of snowshoes, a robe, twenty pounds of flour and two of salt, each was liberally supplied with matches and with wire of the sort employed in snaring rabbits.

The charge against these two was that they had reaped where others had sown; in other words, were suspected of having perpetrated a series of sluice-box robberies just before the mining season closed. True, the evidence submitted at the miners' meeting had failed to completely establish their guilt; nevertheless it had been of a character sufficiently damning to justify their

expulsion from the district without the customary twenty-four hours' notice.

"If they'd only given us time to get that four hundred ounces of dust out of the fire box of the stove," complained the taller of the two.

"If they'd started us down the river instead of across country," growled his companion bitterly, "we might have had a chance to get somewhere. For a bean I'd go back and—"

Both knew that safety lay in obeying the injunction to the letter, so kept their snowshoes headed south.

A week later a young miner from All Gold Gulch dashed into Coldfoot and announced that on his return from a ten-day hunting trip he had discovered that during his absence his brother had been murdered and their poke of dust stolen. But before passing out, he went on to relate, his brother, using his blood as writing fluid and

a piece of caribou thong as a brush, had printed on the smooth side of a milk case: "Big one squirrel teeth. Short one hair-lip. Both shavers. November 2d. Good-bye, Jim."

Which was a good skeleton description of the outcasts.

A heavy fall of snow in the interim having obliterated all trace of the murderers, the miners voted pursuit out of the question. The murdered man's brother thought different. He struck into the wilderness next day, alone.

Four weeks later "Bud" Caulson and Zack Shively—as the outcasts had decided to be known in the future—arrived in the head-waters of what, at a later date, they came to know was the left fork of the Porcupine River. Unwittingly, they had swung east by north. Here, a day or two later, they ran across an old prospector named Shiloh Kane. Him they glibly informed they had been prospecting over Chandalar way; had lost their winter supplies when their cabin went up in flames, and were then headed for the Yukon with the view of earning another grubstake. The old man invited them to stick around and rest up, a course which they had already decided upon as the one best suited to their interests.

Early in the fall Shiloh Kane had hopped on to one of the biggest mining propositions lying loose around Alaska. This was a bench of low-grade gold-bearing gravel two miles in length, a quarter of a mile wide and two hundred feet high. It was big in the sense that the character of the pay under the moss equaled that on bed rock itself. Indeed, no matter from what part of the bench Shiloh took a panful of dirt, so uniform were the prospects obtained that the pans might have been salted.

The old man knew perfectly the value of the Kochuk Bench, as he had named it. On the other hand, he had been in the hills alone since the previous March and to keep silent regarding his find, even in the presence of men he knew nothing about, proved impossible. The secret percolated through his good nature.

"But," he rushed on, "like every gold mine wuth a hoot it has its drawbacks. In the first place the pay is too poor to be handled profitably by the pick-and-shovel method; and in the second, water. Fortunately, near the head of this valley—mebbe ten miles from here—there's a big lake.

Link that to the bench by a big ditch, turn the water through giant nozzles and see the gold the Kochuk will kick out!"

"Boys, I've dreamed a lot about striking it rich, but the reality has made 'em all look like pikers. The proposition is so almighty big that when I go out o' mornings and look at it I feel like a worm."

Caulson and Shively were interested listeners.

"Where," asked the former, "are you goin' to dig up the dough to dig the ditch?"

"Why, in the fust place," returned Shiloh, "I don't mean to dig any ditch myself. In fact, pussonally, I have no intention of mining the bench, bein' too big for an old man like me. But out in Frisco they's a big mining man by name Harvey Dennison, the same I sold my placer tin proposition in the Nome country to. He told me at that time if ever I happened on a dredge or hydraulic proposition about his size to get in touch with him. Big enough! Huh, the Kochuk Bench is big enough to interest the biggest dozen mining men on the coast! And because I know just what she's wuth, I mean to ask Dennison a cool million for it. And if after the ditch is built they don't clean up two and a half times that amount every summer for the next twenty years, then I don't know a prospect from a pinch of corn meal!"

Shiloh rose to prepare supper.

Next morning Caulson announced that he and his partner would stick around a while and help him do his assessment work.

"Gosh, that'll be fine!" exclaimed Shiloh. "They's enough frozen caribou, birds and grayling in the cache to keep a layer of fat between all three of us and the cold till spring. And you could do worse, because grubstakes are not easily picked up in winter. Stay as long as you like."

But when Caulson and Shively, bearded to the eyes, drifted down the Porcupine to Moosehead City the spring following, Shiloh Kane wasn't with them.

Caulson and Shively recorded Kochuk Bench in their own names; also swore in the assessment work for the year. Then a letter was written and dispatched to Harvey Dennison. Which important piece of business off their minds, being leery, as Caulson phrased it, of lingering around a camp where in summer steamboats with passengers on them choo-choo'd up and down the river, they ducked over to the Beaver min-

ing district where, when they couldn't get liquor to drink, they worked until fall. And when they returned to Moosehead City it was behind a dog team that had lately belonged to some one else, and with a new rifle and other personal things which had cost them no money.

Upon making inquiry at the post office they were handed a letter from Harvey Dennison. The promoter informed them that he could do nothing until after the war was over, but advised them to keep in touch with him.

The partners stared at each other.

"How are we a-goin' to pick up a winter grubstake?" Shively wanted to know. "We can't skip the assessment work on the bench—that's something we can't afford to neglect. How——"

"Watch me," grinned Caulson.

The summer mining season having just closed Moosehead City was alive with men who had anywhere from five hundred dollars to fifteen hundred dollars in their pokes and a feeler out for the "great opportunity" which had driven them north to within a stone's throw of the arctic circle. Caulson who could call up a decidedly friendly manner on occasion and, besides, could relate an anecdote pithily, hooked a young miner with a thousand dollars' worth of dust in his jeans, a jack-in-the-box imagination, and no trading experience whatsoever.

The terms were these:

The party of the second part to put up eight hundred dollars' worth of provisions and agree to work on the Kochuk Bench until May 25th of the following year.

The parties of the first part promised to transfer to him an undivided one-third interest in said Kochuk Bench on June 1st on receipt of an additional sum of two thousand five hundred dollars. *But*, as they carefully explained to him, his share of the gold dust from the pay dump taken out during the winter would amount to a sum far in excess of two thousand five hundred dollars, so that in reality he was getting a third interest in a very valuable mining property for eight hundred dollars cash, plus his winter's work.

This chechahco went out with Caulson and Shively and worked about two months on the Kochuk Bench. They made him work like a slave; baited him, ragged him and browbeat him. He might have stuck it out longer had there remained the shadow of a

hope that his share of the clean-up in the spring would approximate the two thousand five hundred dollars necessary to secure a deed to his interest; but hope had completely deserted him. He returned to Moosehead City and began all over again.

There were millions of dollars in gold dust locked up in the Kochuk Bench but all that Caulson and Shively cleaned up in the spring was a little over twenty ounces. Worked by primitive methods the property was a starvation proposition. But with a good head of water forced through a single giant nozzle, in ten minutes one man could have separated the gold from as much gravel as Caulson and Shively had handled all winter. So much for the power of water.

Once more these worthies drifted down to Moosehead City and swore in their assessment work. The war, they were informed, was still going full blast. They hunted out an old shack a mile or so back from the river; purchased seventy-five dollars' worth of groceries and spent the rest on moonshine made from dried apples.

In the fall they interested the second engineer of the *Hannah*—frozen in a few miles below the city—in their proposition. Him they froze out on the sixth day on the trail by compelling him to eat his own cooking. This was the man of steam's first and last stab into the wilderness.

When Caulson and Shively again returned to the Yukon camp they discovered that the war was over. Also, to their infinite joy they received a communication from Harvey Dennison. An agent of his, they were informed, would arrive in Moosehead City around June 15th to inspect their property: tidings which were fittingly celebrated.

The mining engineer arrived as per schedule. Before the day was over he had hired six men, purchased a small prospecting boiler, knocked down, and some steam-thawing gear; bought an outfit of provisions and got in touch with the owner of a launch. Next morning the *Klootchman*, a small freight scow at her port side, chugged her way up the Porcupine.

The agent of Harvey Dennison wasn't prepossessed either by the manner or appearance of Bud Caulson and Zack Shively. So after they had shown him the boundaries of the Kochuk Bench he coolly shipped them back to Moosehead City on the *Klootchman*, whose owner had been instructed to return for the outfit September

15th. The agent was taking no chances of having his prospect holes salted.

Caulson and Shively, being broke, decided to take a chance in the Moosehead diggings for the summer. But they were on hand—and again without a dollar—when the mining engineer sprang from the *Klootchman* and climbed the river bank on September 18th.

"Well, mister—" Caulson could get no farther. He aired his half dozen long yellow teeth.

The engineer glanced at the debauched faces of the owners of Kochuk Bench and for a moment was silent.

"You've got a good property up there," he at length observed. "I mean to report favorably on it."

Caulson and Shively both drew deep breaths and exchanged glances.

"Ca-can we have a couple of thousand dollars in advance?" begged Caulson.

"That is a matter without my province. On the Outside doubtless such a request would have received attention; here"—he shook his head—"I'm afraid you'll have to stick it out till the first of next June."

"You think, then—" stammered Caulson.

"Harvey Dennison will himself be on hand to talk business with you. He wouldn't make a trip into central Alaska in winter, you know, and the Yukon will be closed a month from now."

"And—and you think we'll get our money then?" breathed Caulson. "A million dollars?"

"Well, men don't carry sums of such magnitude about with them," returned the other, "nor could you cash such a check in Moosehead City. Doubtless, however, a certain percentage of the purchase price in cash will be paid to you at that time." The speaker paused and glanced away for a moment. "Anybody else after the property?" he asked casually.

"Nope," instantly replied Caulson.

"Well—I think the Kochuk Bench is practically sold. But keep that to yourselves," he added hastily, "and don't forget to faithfully perform the assessment work this winter," he cautioned. "Nor"—he smiled—"to be on hand here June 1st."

With a curt nod he left them and started away in the direction of the office of the commissioner. There he got a transcript of the records of the Kochuk Bench.

At eight o'clock that night he left on the *Susie* en route to the Outside.

"Worth a million dollars," bitterly complained Shively, "and we've got to go out and hunt up a pick-and-shovel job!"

"We—don't—have to."

Shively started. They looked into each other's eyes.

Three days later a sluice-box robbery was reported from 6 below Discovery on Birch Creek.

CHAPTER II.

When Charlie Cogswell returned from France in the spring of 1919 he was met with "Very sorry and all that—break up the organization. You know how it is? Hope you'll soon drop into something good. Call again. Good day and good luck."

Charlie was still smiling when he stepped off the elevator. On the way up he had been scared to death he would be requested to report for work next morning.

Before the war Charlie had been an up-and-coming young man with rather a fairer future ahead of him than others similarly situated, and had done all his adventuring by proxy. Within the past few days he had made a vow to be his own boss in the future and attend to the adventuring in person. He was five-and-twenty; had a technology training and possessed, free and clear, one hundred dollars.

He hurried back to his furnished room and there on slips of paper wrote the names of those regions west of the Mississippi in which mining was the chief industry; tossed them into his hat; mixed them up, then chose one.

"Alaska" stared up at him.

He gasped. "Alaska goes!" he cried; "but I guess I'll have to stick a feather in my tail and fly part the way."

When Charlie arrived in Seattle his interest in the oblate spheroid stood at "0." He hurried aboard the *Seward* and, the chief engineer failing him, jawed a job out of the chief steward and earned sufficient on the trip to Skagway to pay his fare over the Chilcoot Pass to Whitehorse.

Here he offered his services to the mate of the *Fly-By-Night* in such convincing words that he practically hired himself.

Six days later he quit the Yukon flyer at Moosehead City; hiked the thirty miles to Birch Creek with his pack on his back, and there convinced "Spieler" Gibson that

what he didn't know about a ten-horsepower hoisting engine afflicted with asthma, could be written in capital letters on the back of a postage stamp.

Charlie made good and in the first week of October returned to Moosehead City with seven hundred dollars in his poke.

He was now become a capitalist on the lookout for the Big Chance. Gloom enshrouded the burg. The piano thumper at the White North dance hall had taken the last upriver boat of the season en route to the coast. Charlie in an idle moment was caught fingering the instrument and pressed into service. This, despite the fact that the gentlest passion he could have stirred in a harmony hound would have been mayhem. For three weeks at one hundred dollars per Charlie made the big sound and let the dancers pick their own time out of it.

For a few nights the terpsichoreans tripped it to the crunching of the ice in the Yukon and the wails and snarls of a blizzard of sandlike snow. Between dances at three o'clock one morning a sudden silence compelled the dancers to assume the attitude of listeners. Then a man flung the outer door open and announced that the river had stopped.

A shudder passed over the assembly.

"What do we care?" shrilled "Wind River Annie." "Let 'er rip!"

In spite of this invitation the leaven of joy and jazz ceased there and then to ferment in the beings of the moccasined men. Now they could travel. Far, silent places called them. Their holiday was over. Next morning they would hitch up their dogs and hit the trail, with which act not a few of them would bid good-by to the sound of a human voice for many cold, dark months to come. Even Wind River Annie herself would do this and break trail ahead of her team every foot of the way to her little trading post on the river of winds.

Charlie sensed the change and struck into something that remotely resembled "Auld Lang Syne." The dancers joined hands and sang what they knew of it in a spirit of sham sprightliness. For the thought uppermost in the minds of the sour doughs was "Who will become a monument in the wilderness this winter?"

The girls went home; the men formed little sober groups in the bar. Charlie wheeled on his stool and stared at the large hanging lamp whose flame paled momentarily.

"Got to get me a partner, I suppose," he muttered.

There was a rustle of silk and "Diamond Nell" stood before him.

"Say the word and I'm it, Charlie," she whispered.

Charlie turned his head and appraised her calmly.

"I'm sor——" began Charlie.

"Take it easy, Charlie; Diamond Nell ain't no beggar!" And she drew herself up and folded her arms. Her diamonds flashed no brighter than her eyes. "I've been a dozen years along the Yukon, Charlie," she went on in a low voice, "but now and again I've taken the time to make a flyin' trip to the coast and pick me up a little hunk of real estate. There's a heap worse and few better than Diamond Nell, Charlie. I'm worth one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Say the word and me and my money are yours!"

A gust of wind blew the outer door open and extinguished the lamp. Charlie rose hurriedly and closed the door; groped his way back to the piano.

"Just forget all about it, Nell," he advised.

"Oh, I knew just how it would be!" she returned in a reckless tone. "All the same, Charlie, and as man to man, as you might say, if you want money to buy a claim, start a trading post or—or to stuff a pillow with"—she began to laugh hysterically, but caught herself up short—"just tip your mitt to me."

Presently Charlie heard the door open and close. He strolled into the bar and requested "Kluane Tom" to gin up the house to his best joy juice.

It was next day that Bud Caulson and Zack Shively approached Charlie with their Kochuk Bench proposition. They had had their eyes on him for some time and in their minds had in a fashion elected him their banker and provider. They had a preference for chechahcos.

"We've got," stated Caulson in conclusion, "one of the best mining propositions in Alaska to-day, and developed to the point where we can start takin' out some real money. Both of us think you'd make a dandy partner and for that reason we're willin' to let you have a third interest for three thousand five hundred dollars. Put in what you can right now for grub and pay the rest out of the clean-up in the spring."

Charlie was interested but cautious.

"It's true," he told them, "I want to built into something that will beat the wage game. To do that with my little capital means I've got to take some risk. What will the pay average?"

"A dollar to the windlass bucket," glibly returned Caulson, "and the three of us ought to get out a hundred and twenty-five buckets a day this winter. You see," he added hastily, "we just landed on the pay in the fall shortly before our grub gave out."

Charlie was silent for a little while.

"I'm going to consider your proposition mighty seriously," he stated at length, "and if nothing nearer civilization crops up within the next two or three days I may make a deal with you. But let me say this here and now: Whatever trade I may make with you—and the same would apply to anybody else—has to be put down in black and white before I put up one cent. Is that understood?"

Caulson looked at Shively; Shively looked at Caulson.

"D'y'e think we're crooks?" flared the former.

"If I thought you were would I consider making a deal with you?" retorted Charlie. "Business is business."

Shively nudged Caulson.

"You can have all the papers you want!" cried Caulson in a conciliatory tone.

"I'd want just one, and that would be an option on a third interest in the Kochuk Bench until, say, the first of June—we'd be cleaned up by that time, wouldn't we?"

"Just about. Well, let us know as soon as you can."

"I will," Charlie promised and left them.

During the next three days Charlie investigated two leases in the local diggings but turned both down on the ground that neither promised better than day's wages; harbored not a hint of a Big Chance. Next day he hunted up Caulson and Shively and announced that he was ready to make a deal with them.

Five minutes later Caulson was dictating the terms of the option to the commissioner, who acted in the capacity of notary public.

Suddenly Charlie stiffened.

"Hold on, there!" he cried. "Why will the option be void if I fail to work steadily on the Kochuk Bench until May 25th of next year?"

"Why, that clause is usual in an option

paper, ain't it?" A dark flush crept into Caulson's face.

"It isn't going to be in this one," declared Charlie. "Why, for any one of a dozen reasons I might be unable to put in the whole winter on the bench! I might fall sick; I might run into an accident——"

"Oh, in a case of that sort——" interpolated Caulson.

"You could shove me out if you felt so inclined. If that clause is to remain as a part of the option, just tear the whole thing up and call it off."

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it; why, just stroke that clause out, Mr. Commissioner," directed Caulson.

The original instrument was at length completed. Freed from legal verbiage it amounted to this: In return for a nine-hundred-dollar outfit of provisions and the payment in gold dust or legal tender of two thousand six hundred dollars before noon of June 1st of the following year, Caulson and Shively bound themselves to transfer to Charles Cogswell an undivided one-third interest in Kochuk Bench.

Original and duplicate were at length signed, sealed, recorded and delivered, whereupon Charlie shook hands with his first partners.

The outfit was purchased that same day and scientifically piled and lashed onto two sleds. To each of these were attached five husky brutes about three-quarter-part wolf, one team having been bred and raised on Kochuk Creek.

The little cavalcade hit the trail up the Porcupine early next morning. For the first three days matters ran fairly smoothly. The experience of camping on the trail in weather considerably below zero was new to Charlie, and appreciated. The river ice was crusted with snow. The spruce on either bank was quilted with the same substance. The atmosphere was soundless.

On the fifth day out Caulson began to test Charlie's metal.

"Here, you," he flung at him, "grab hold of that gee pole of sled number two and let's see what you're made of! I know you can talk; let's see if you can do anything else!"

For a moment Charlie was minded to answer Caulson in kind. Thus far he had been breaking trail ahead of the team on snow-shoes, an easier task he reckoned than steering a heavy sled, so overlooked the other's truculence.

"I'm there!" he cried, slipping out of his snowshoes and handing them over to Caulson.

The latter put them on and went ahead. With a shout and a crack of a whip number one sled, in charge of Shively, moved forward. Charlie seized the gee pole of number two and shouted to the dogs:

"Mush on!"

Five pairs of wolfish eyes were turned on him but not a move was made. A second time he gave the word of command without results. Unknown to Charlie, Caulson was watching him out of the corner of his eye. "Three days from now," he told himself, "Mr. Smarty will be glad to sell me this option, for as much grub as will take him back to Moosehead. I see that team mushing for him!"

At this point came to his ear the whang, whang, whang of a whip, followed almost immediately by howls of fear and pain.

"Mush, damn you!" Charlie was shouting, and again the whip fell.

"Hey!" shouted Caulson angrily, "you want to kill them dogs?"

But in the same moment the leader dug his toes into the packed snow; the others, urged by a crack of the whip, followed suit and number two sled creaked on its way.

For almost two hours thereafter Charlie tracked number one sled fairly true. Steering, he discovered, was hard work, and the tug of the wheel dog bothered him constantly. The fingers of the hand that gripped the pole at length became numb. He released his hold and began to work his fingers to induce circulation. Suddenly he received a smart whack on the leg from the gee pole; the sled left the trail and stuck in a snow bank; keeled dangerously and stuck fast.

Charlie sprang back and, while he encouraged the dogs to mush on, placed his weight against the load with the object of sluing it back into the trail. They couldn't budge it.

Shively stopped his team and hurried back, not so much with the object of helping him as to harry him.

"A hell of a partner you are!" he snarled.

Charlie faced the other suddenly, his eyes blazing.

"What's eating you?" he demanded to know. "Get out of my way. I'll attend to this myself."

Charlie drew the shovel from its lashing

and presently the air was filled with flying snow. Having cleared a path he returned the shovel to its place, picked up the long whip and cracked it; snapped out a command, then placed his shoulder to the load and pushed.

Slowly the sled began to move. The dogs leaped from toe hold to toe hold in short jumps, yelping frantically meanwhile. The sled lunged; balanced dangerously on one runner for the space of a breath, then began to ride smoothly in the trail. As Charlie sprang to the gee pole, Shively, mouthing curses as he went, stumbled up ahead and got his team on the move.

That night they camped just above the cañon. No sooner were the supper dishes washed and the dogs fed than Caulson and Shively seated themselves on a log in the lee of the windbreak and, as Charsie chopped wood for the night fire, began to converse in low tones.

"He's gonna give us a heap of trouble," Shively spewed out of the corner of his mouth. "Damn him an' his option!"

"Our medicine doesn't seem to be working, and that's a fact," agreed Caulson. "But once we get him on to the bench and under a steady cross fire he'll wilt."

"I'd like to get rid of him right this minute."

"No chance for him to pick up two thousand six hundred dollars around Moosehead City this winter, is there?"

Shively spat derisively. "Where would he get it? They's no winter work to speak of."

"Oh, just chechahco luck."

"Forget it. Let's throw the hooks into him to-morrow good and plenty, or"—he lowered his voice—"whack 'im over the head and shove 'im through a hole in the ice."

At this juncture the tinkle-tinkle of bells reached their ears. They sprang to their feet and peered up the river. By the light of the moon they spied a moving object just turning a bend about two hundred yards away.

"I wonder who?" muttered Caulson.

The two men stepped to the edge of the spruce thicket in which they were camped and awaited the approaching team. Here Charlie joined them, his ax on his shoulder. The team, one composed of three lean huskies, stopped at sight of the men, whined and lay down in the snow.

"Hello!" shouted Caulson, his eye on the bundled-up figure lying on the sled.

There was a slight movement under the robe. Charlie dropped his ax, sprang to the sled and folded back the wolf robe. The firelight gleamed on the emaciated face of a man, a face drawn with suffering. As if in response to the warmth the man opened his eyes.

"Sick?" inquired Charlie with ready sympathy.

Caulson shuffled up to the sled. "Where you from?" he asked in a rough voice.

The fevered eyes moved from Caulson to Shively; the lids fluttered, then closed.

"Lend a hand here!" cried Charlie, his own already under the man's armpits.

Grudgingly, ungraciously Caulson helped him move the sick musher from the sled to Charlie's bed of spruce feathers; then:

"He's your find," he growled. "Go to it." Saying which he returned to his seat on the log, where Shively had preceded him.

They fell to conversing in whispers.

Charlie seized the coffee-pot and began to pour some dry coffee into it.

"Hey, Mr. Chechahco," cautioned Caulson, "go easy on that stuff."

"Mr. Coldson," retorted Charlie heatedly, "you go plumb to hell."

Charlie let the coffee boil up twice, dropped a snowball into it and presently was holding a cup of the steaming liquid to the sick man's lips.

"God, partner," breathed the man jerkily, "but that's good." He lay back and closed his eyes. "Look at my right leg, will you?" he mumbled.

"Huh"—Caulson gave a short laugh—"you've let yourself in for a nice trip back to Moosehead City!"

Charlie never let 'on that he heard the words; but they set him thinking. Meanwhile, with the aid of a jackknife he was slitting the leg of the man's Mackinaw trousers. Presently he bared the leg below the knee; hastily covered it up again; stood up and faced his partners.

"His leg is broken in two places," he stated. "And both breaks are in bad shape."

Caulson waved a ham of a hand. "He's all yours," he said. "We've got troubles of our own."

Charlie hurried to his dunnage bag. He found the antiseptic bottle. For a solid hour he bathed the injured limb with warm

water, then rested it gently on a warm blanket:

His next act was to take a case of condensed milk from one of the sleds, empty it and break the box up into splints. Then he ripped a ten-pound blanket into strips four inches wide. These, once he had rolled them up, he placed beside the splints.

He turned to his partners, his hands in the pockets of his Mackinaw coat.

"I'd like," said he distinctly and significantly, "the help of a man for fifteen or twenty minutes. I'm no doctor; but in a little scrap that took place recently over in Europe, a few times it fell to my lot to lend a helping hand in—er—cases of this sort. And this much I'm certain of: If the bones of this man's leg are not set—well, a little better than they are now—I'm likely to arrive in Moosehead City with the makings of a funeral. How about it?"

"So you've decided to go back with him?" Caulson's eyes lit up. "Sure, I'll help you." His tone was decidedly friendly.

At Charlie's direction Caulson got behind the sick man and placed his hands under his armpits. Charlie set to work. The man opened his eyes and stared into those of Bud Caulson, who was bent over him.

Suddenly, with an oath, Caulson sprang to one side.

"What's the matter?" inquired Charlie in a surprised tone.

"Look and see for yourself! Why, in another minute I'd have been wolf meat."

Charlie looked and beheld a gun in his patient's right hand. And although his eyes were closed he was trying to raise it. Charlie rose and took it away from him.

"It's the delirium working," he said. "Maybe he meant to try it on himself."

They set to work again.

"Now, it's like this," began Charlie when the job was finished. "I'm a chechahco and this is my first experience on the raw trail. As you both know, I've still a heap to learn; but I'm willing. For that reason, and the other, namely, that I don't know my way into Kochuk Creek, why don't one of you return with this man to Moosehead City?"

"Zack and me have talked the matter over," gruffly replied Caulson. "We've decided to keep on and get our new shaft started. You see, you can't take the place of one of us on the property any more than you can on the trail. Besides, it's to your

interest more than ours that we get to hoisting pay as soon as——”

“Don’t bring in my interest in a case like this. The interest of this sick man—in my estimation—takes precedence over all others. What I was trying to get at was, couldn’t you make better time to Moosehead City than I could?”

“Neither of us mean to try it.”

“Then how am I to find my way into Kochuk Creek?”

“Why, you keep on up the river and turn into the left fork. At the mouth of the creek where we leave that, which you ought to make some time on the third day, we’ll freeze a wooden cross in the shore ice. Turn up that creek and you’ll find the way blazed to the cabin, which is three days back.”

“Is that trail already blazed?”

“No, it ain’t; but we’ll blaze it as we go along. They’s plenty of timber.”

Charlie looked into the fire for a long minute. There he beheld a man peculiarly like himself wandering aimlessly in the white, trackless wilderness. A tremor passed over him. He raised his eyes.

“All right; I’ll hit the trail for Moosehead City in the morning. Make,” he added, “that cross good and big.”

CHAPTER III.

Six days later, and after a nightmare of a trip, Charlie Cogswell mushed into Moosehead City with a patient who raved, laughed demoniacally and cursed in turn, and there handed him over to the marshal.

Charlie will never forget that trip if he lives to be a hundred. Sleep—slumber of the refreshing order—was out of the question. Times innumerable on the trail when, but for the swinging and whacking of the gee pole, he would have fallen asleep on his feet. At night, close up to the fire Indian fashion, his blankets about his shoulders, he drowsed, expostulated with and soothed his patient in turn. Repeatedly that last day he had been obliged to exert his will power to the utmost to keep from joining his patient in one of his maniacal wails.

Fifteen minutes after his arrival in town Charlie was sound asleep in a room in the Arctic Hotel. Twice the round of the clock he lay in that bed. Then he got up; took a sponge bath and went down to the restaurant to get something to eat. Save for Diamond Nell the place was empty.

“Why, honey,” she cried, “come right over here and tell me where you’ve been. You look as if you had been dead for three weeks.”

Charlie ordered a moose steak with the usual trimmings and seated himself opposite Nell, whose ears, throat and fingers blazed with her favorite jewels. In a few words he told her where he had been, and why.

For some time she eyed Charlie from between narrowed lids. When she spoke it was out of the fullness of her experience.

“What dubs some men are!” she cried. “Here you go mushin’ away to the arctic country, punishin’ yourself with cold and hard graft, when a word would—aw, shucks! Well, anyway”—she leaned over and lowered her voice—“don’t forget what I told you before. And if you want that Kochuk Bench for a toy to play with just say the word.”

She rose, tossed a five-dollar gold piece on the counter, gave Charlie a dazzling smile, and was gone.

Charlie did a lot of thinking over that moose steak but when it was finished he shook his head.

“We live but once,” he muttered.

After leaving the restaurant Charlie made his way to a store where he invested in two weeks’ grub. After incorporating this in his blanket roll at the hotel he invested a dollar in three cigars, picked up an old magazine and once more returned to his room.

“They’s a trick wuth six of that,” quoth “Slocan Dan” as Charlie was slipping into his pack next morning. “Go out to the back and there you’ll find a little hand sled to strap that pack onto it. It’ll be wuth ten miles a day to you. They’s a rope al-ready on it.”

Charlie thanked him and did that. Then he slipped on his snowshoes, took a last look at the sleeping camp and once more started up the Porcupine.

On the fourth day out he ran into a fresh snow belt and from then on the going was slower. Next night he made camp at the point where he had parted with Caulson and Shively, and next morning set foot in a new world. What lay behind he knew; that which was to come he could but guess at. He was alone in the arctic wilderness, a waste of white that challenged his every footprint. Not a hint of a trail; not a track

of a living creature; not a sound to fret the terrific silence. Yet he was conscious of an increase of self-reliance. He was breaking trail for himself; he had become his own guide.

On the eighth day he swung into the left fork, which he discovered to be the main branch of the Porcupine. And although he wasn't due to catch a glimpse of the wooden cross until the third day thereafter, he began to strain his eyes for that signal before he made camp the first night.

It was not until next day, however, and then only by reason of the fact that the river seemed to wander indeterminately through a wide, marshy flat, that he recalled that Caulson had neglected to state whether the creek in question debouched from the right or the left limit bank. And because of the lack of that specific piece of information his course upstream on the third day resembled the tacks, in miniature, of a sailing ship at sea.

But he discovered no cross frozen in the ice; no hint of a human being.

That night Charlie measured his flour, beans, corn meal and coffee. Including the little square of bacon he reckoned he had grub sufficient to last him four days. He decided to extend that limit by the addition of fresh meat; so before turning in that night he set a number of rabbit snares.

It was on this night that a particularly cold wave slipped quietly out of the arctic and drifted across the barrens. Charlie woke in the middle of the night and piled some wood on the dying fire. After getting warmed up a little bit he proceeded to build a second fire against a windfall and spent the remainder of the night between the two.

Charlie did not move from that spot for three days, and then only because he was obliged to. In the first place, it was too cold to mush; and in the second, the atmosphere was so thick that he could scarce see six feet ahead of him even at noon.

On the fourth day, keeping close to the shore, he started up the right bank of the river. In this manner he could not miss and did not fail to carefully inspect the vicinity at the mouth of each creek, but no wooden cross rewarded his search.

He camped early and slept with three fires going.

Next morning he continued his way up the right bank. This day also was barren.

That night he crossed the river and camped on the left limit. Here he ate his last flap-jack, boiled and drank his last spoonful of coffee. Before rolling in he set the now customary and necessary rabbit snares.

He started down the left bank next morning.

Five days later Charlie arrived at the forks, his nose and cheek bones black from frostbite. For a time he considered going over the ground he had lately traversed a second time, but better judgment prevailed.

He headed down the river next morning.

Each day Charlie traveled as fast as he dared—for he had learned to alter his gait to suit the prevailing degree of cold—and for as many hours as he could keep the proper pace. But at the first sign of weakness—an important matter when mushing in very cold weather—he chose a likely spot and made camp.

On the evening of the seventh day out from the forks, a clear moonlight night, he climbed the bank at Moosehead City, paused there and drew back the hood of his parka, then listened. To his ear came the strains of "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," per the medium of a phonograph. Accompanying this was the unmistakable shuffle of moccasined feet.

"Why the dance, I wonder?" he asked himself.

He crossed and entered the White North dance hall. A moment later a bejeweled figure in perfumed silk fluttered into his arms and swung him onto the floor.

"Why the dance, Nell?" he asked.

"Listen to it," laughed she. "I'll say you've been in the woods. Didn't you ever hear of Christmas Eve?"

"Oh."

"I thought you weren't due in town again till the first of June? Did you make a special trip to see me?"

The music stopped. "I'm going into the restaurant to put a crimp in a fifteen-hour fast, Nell," Charlie made answer, ignoring her questions.

Nell placed a hand on his arm and tagged along.

The other girls winked and smiled.

"Nell's hooked," whispered "Sure-thing Daisy" in the ear of "Sweet Marie." "If Charlie had a lick of sense he'd shake her down for every cent she's got."

"Yes, but because he's got three licks of sense, he won't."

"I've got ten thousand dollars in the safe of the N. A. T. Co., Charlie," Nell was saying. "Why not stay here in town until those bilks come down the river next spring, then take up your option? That money ain't doing me any good where it is! Stick around and enjoy yourself for the rest of the winter! You'll live just as long."

Charlie was down to his last fifty dollars.

"I'll be hitting the trail again day after to-morrow," he said evenly.

The corners of Diamond Nell's mouth drooped. "I used to think," she declared, "that I knew men from Adam to Zack. And if anybody had ever told me since I came to the Yukon that I'd lie awake nights over anything that wore pants, I'd have swore he was tryin' to get a free passage out to Steilacoom! Look here, Charlie—oh, what's the use! Take your medicine, darn you," she told herself, "and lick the spoon!"

She rose, gave Charlie a watery smile, and returned to the dance hall.

After putting his past behind him Charlie set out for the hospital to see how his patient was getting along. He found the latter still on his back but clear-headed and on the way to recovery. Minus his beard he looked to Charlie like a different man altogether, and years younger. He had a set, determined face, but his manner, Charlie discovered, was gentle.

They became friends on the spot.

"I've got to thank you for my life, partner," were the first words he spoke after Charlie had introduced himself. "I hope I'll live long enough to—in part, anyway—square the account. My name is Jim Dodge."

They shook hands.

"How did the accident happen?" inquired Charlie.

"I slipped off the icy ladder in my shaft and fell to the bottom—"

"And how did you get out?" exclaimed Charlie.

A shudder passed over the man on the cot. "If I was to be put on oath I couldn't describe that in detail. I recollect sort of hitching myself from one rung of the ladder to the next, my busted leg dangling; then I'd rest a while. I was a hundred years on that ladder! Then I crawled to the cabin, cooked a big pot of beans and next morning hit the trail. Maybe I didn't have a time making camp nights! I'd never have

made Moosehead City alone. Why, I don't recollect anything that transpired on the trail the day I met you. I just seemed to wake up occasionally, then drift off again. I believe I'd have put an end to myself if I could have rustled up the strength."

"And did the bones have to be reset?"

"Doc Raynor told me afterward that he couldn't have done a better job himself than you did. And if you hadn't set the breaks, he declared, I'd have lost my leg anyway."

Charlie flushed with pride and pleasure.

"What brings you to town at this time? I understood the marshal to say you wouldn't be in the burg again till spring."

In a few words Charlie conveyed to him the why and wherefore.

"The crooks! Can you raise that two thousand six hundred dollars elsewhere between now and the first of June?"

Charlie hesitated just a moment and flushed.

"I don't see how I can. I've got to locate Kochuk Bench and insist on my rights. I don't mind losing my ante in a fair game, but I hate to have it stolen!"

"I know how you feel; but I've a suspicion you'd lose more than your ante if you found them and insisted on anything of the sort—which opening gives me the chance to start evening up my account with you. Listen:

"I've been stamping around that country up there on a kind of a man hunt for some time, outfitting from a post on the Chandelier. Of course I prospected as I went along. Early last fall I got a prospect on the rim of a gulch that decided me to sink a hole in the creek bed. A few days before I hit the bottom of that shaft on one leg I struck bed rock and what I call fair pay. I staked that gulch and placed it on record just a few days ago, naming it Slokum. I think I could take two thousand six hundred dollars out of that hole between now and spring. Have you ever done any wood-fire mining?"

"I haven't. I just came into the country last spring."

"That's too bad, because here's a chance for you to connect with enough dough to take up your option. If you care to try it out I guess I could put down on paper the chief dos and don'ts of the wood-fire system, with directions how to reach Slokum."

"I'll take you up on that!" responded Charlie.

"Good! There's a fair outfit of grub in the cabin and almost a whole caribou in the cache. And, of course, there's my dogs and sled."

"On the other hand, it seems to me I've simply got to know where Kochuk Bench is!" exclaimed Charlie.

"Clinch your interest first, because I'm almost certain they've got something. The rest will be easy. They've just reasoned out that you couldn't pick up the two thousand six hundred dollars around Moosehead City this winter—and of course you'll never know what they'll clean up next spring—and that you've just put down your nine hundred dollars to profit and loss and gone about your business."

"They're due for a surprise, then!" vowed Charlie.

"That's the way to talk! Meantime you've got to get a hustle on you. You're in a race with time from this minute. And—let me see—you'll have to leave Slokum gulch on the morning of May 27th at the latest, for it'll take you three days to mush back to the river; say half a day to make a raft, and thirty-six hours to drift down. According to that schedule you ought to arrive in Moosehead the evening of May 31st."

"The option expires at noon of June 1st."

"Well, you go and get all your stuff together. The dogs are down in the marshal's pound. Meantime, I'll write out directions how to get to Slokum and all the wrinkles I can think up about wood fires. I wish to the Lord I could go with you," he ended.

"I wish you could!" added Charlie heartily. "All right, I'll hit the trail in the morning."

CHAPTER IV.

Following the directions given to him by Jim Dodge, Charlie experienced no difficulty in finding his way to Slokum gulch, more by token, perhaps, that he was already acquainted with the trail to a point within three days' mush of his destination. For, oddly enough, as he thought at the time, on the third day out from the forks—the same day on his previous trip he was to have picked up the cross—he turned into the creek designated by Jim Dodge on a rough map, and distinct from other creeks by reason of the seam of coal in the overhanging bluff at its mouth.

Charlie came upon the cabin suddenly and reacted in a manner that was a revelation to himself. A lump rose in his throat. Here was a shelter against storm and cold; a place to dream dreams in, a hearth, a home. Yet Charlie had looked upon not a few palaces.

He had a fire going in no time. And how he did sleep that night!

He lost no time in getting to work. The shaft was bed rocked and two tunnels started. These he extended by building fires against the face, fires heavily banked with green logs and waste dirt, his object being to drive the heat into the frozen bed rock and the pay gravel above it.

Every few days he rocked a bucket of dirt in the cabin. It averaged fifty cents, and was remarkably uniform. After getting his tunnels in about forty feet he widened them out; then, one side at a time, started working back toward the shaft and simultaneously extending his crosscuts. The immediate result of this maneuver was that he was saved handling the waste dirt that fell from the roof of the drift during the night. Which meant much to him, because he had to climb the ladder and hoist and dump the bucket.

He worked every waking minute. After cleaning out his fires there was wood to be sawed, split and lowered down the shaft. Then the fires must be set and banked. After supper there was a sack of shavings to make for the next day's fires; a pipe or two meanwhile; then to bed.

By the tenth of April Charlie figured there must be close to two thousand dollars in his pay dump and reckoned that by the time the snow melted it would contain sufficient to take up his option.

But placer mining and uncertainty go hand in hand.

Next day a chinook wind wandered up from the south, a warm intriguing affair about two weeks ahead of its time. On going down the shaft next morning Charlie noted that the air was rank and smoky, but despite the coughing and choking it engendered he nevertheless went to work. For the same reason an old-timer would have climbed the ladder in a hurry.

The last thing Charlie did in the drift that night was to hoist the evil-smelling water out of the sump hole. While thus engaged his eyes began to smart horribly. When hoisting the last bucket of water the

pain became unbearable. Suddenly he let go the handle of the windlass and screaming with pain and stumbling like a drunken man raced for the cabin.

Charlie was gassed.

In weather below the freezing point, and the colder the better, the air in a drift will always clear itself if the working face is not too far away from the shaft. When it gets above the freezing point circulation of air in the drift practically ceases and the gas created by the action of the wood fires on the rotted vegetable matter sedimented in the gravel finally settles in the water. The best way to avert this danger is to sink two shafts and connect them with a tunnel.

Charlie flung himself on his bunk and gritted his teeth. The pain came in waves that were torture, that caused him to scream like one falling from a precipice to certain death below. At times, mercifully, nature sponged clean the slate of consciousness.

When, toward midnight, the pain became bearable he made the discovery that he was totally blind.

After carefully winding his watch he fell into a troubled sleep.

His first act on waking was to unscrew the face of his watch and feel the hands. It was nine o'clock. Presently he discovered that his eyes were swollen out of all shape. After a light breakfast of cereal and coffee he bathed and bandaged them; flung himself on his bunk again to ponder the situation.

This was not one to be envied. He was blind and—as he phrased it—somewhere within the arctic circle and alone. True, there were the dogs, but to attempt the trail to Moosehead City would be madness. His thoughts went off at a tangent. There was one fifty-pound sack of flour still untouched; say twenty-five pounds of beans, and ditto rice; a half a caribou in the cache, and some odds and ends—enough until the first of June, anyway. And after that?

He rose and began to pace between his bunk and the door, five steps each way. On one occasion in France he had been buried in a dugout for eighteen hours with the slenderest sort of hope of ever seeing daylight again. On that occasion he had his sight, but no freedom. Now he had all the freedom in the world, yet was a prisoner. Suppose he were to get without reach of the cabin and couldn't find it again?

He established a certain routine. A sackful of chips from the melting snow about the chopping block a dozen feet from the cabin door. A bucket of snow from the drifted bank against the cabin gable. Cooking, washing the dishes and bathing and bandaging his eyes. The days he kept track of by placing a bean in his gold sack each morning after breakfast.

Before turning in on the sixth night he made himself a promise not to remove the bandage for twenty-four hours. Hitherto he had been raising it a hundred times a day and the stream of disappointments was wearing away the rock that was his courage.

For this reason the fore part of next day seemed an age long. And while he kept faith with himself it must be recorded that the major portion of his time was spent unscrewing and replacing the face of his watch. Eight o'clock came at last. He removed the bandage and gently massaged his eyes with a handkerchief, then opened them. There was no light in the cabin when this took place, yet it was light in the sense that it was not utter darkness that he saw. He groped his way to the table that stood in front of the four-pane collapsible window and drew his hand across the top of it. His eyes registered the movement and the cloistered semblance of the moonlight without, remained. A cry escaped him. For a few moments he placed his forearm against his eyes, which suddenly had begun to smart, and replaced the bandage.

"That stays on for another twenty-four hours," he resolved, then went to bed.

If the gods take movies of the modern man, either they must laugh until they weep or weep until they laugh. Charlie couldn't get to sleep for thinking about his precious pay dump, his blindness forgotten. Was there, or wasn't there two thousand six hundred dollars in it? One moment the world was a grand and glorious place; in the next it was a dump halfway to Tophet.

Old Man Sleep got him quieted down at last.

CHAPTER V.

Charlie paused in his pacing and listened. The dogs were barking. He raised the bandage from his eyes and somewhat unsteadily stepped to the window. To his bewilderment he could see quite plainly. Com-

ing down the gulch were Caulson and Shively, a dog team bringing up the rear. Both men carried rifles across their shoulders; and Caulson, he noted, had a gun and hunting knife at his belt.

He stepped back from the window, thinking rapidly. He reached for Jim Dodge's rifle, which hung from a nail above the bunk; made sure that it was loaded and placed it against the wall just within the door. In the same moment he heard voices without; drew the bandage down over his eyes and suddenly threw back the door.

"Who's there!" he called sharply.

"Cogswell!—and gassed, by gum!" exclaimed Caulson. "Ain't this rich, Zack?"

"Got him dead to rights, I'll say," growled Shively.

"You dirty crooks"—Charlie's anger was genuine—"why didn't you put up the cross?"

"We did; we put up a double one, didn't we, Zack? Haw, haw!"

Charlie swallowed hard: "Well, what are you after?"

"We were after a moose," returned Caulson jovially, "but we've caught a fox instead. What are *you* doing here?" There were suspicion and menace in the latter words.

"That's none of your business!"

"You just bet it is! Whose layout is this?" Charlie was silent. "Got pay in that dump? Oh, all right, dummy; we'll mighty soon find out. By the way"—a note of fear crept into the speaker's voice—"how long since you got gassed?"

"How long does it last?" Charlie shot back.

"Nothin' doin'. Go put on your trail clothes. You're goin' to take a little mush to yourself."

"You mean you'd turn a blind man loose —here!"

"If you are not ready by the time I've panned a panful of dirt from that dump, here, there or anywhere won't ever matter to you any more. So you can, or you can't; suit yourself."

While Caulson was speaking Charlie was pressing his wits to the limit.

"A beautiful chance for my life you're giving me!" he exclaimed bitterly. Coincident with these words he moved his right foot back; a leisurely motion it was and suggestive of nothing more than the initial step in a retrograde movement. Up went

the bandage with his left hand; to his shoulder came Jim Dodge's rifle with the other.

"Up with them!" he snapped.

Caulson's hand flew to the holster at his hip. The rifle at Charlie's shoulder barked and simultaneously Caulson let out a yell and leaped in the air. All of him came down but his hands and blood trickled from his right one.

Charlie ordered them to turn around. When they had complied he stepped forward and took the gun and knife from Caulson's belt. Shively, he assured himself, carried no pocket weapon. One after the other he carried the two rifles from the sawhorse to the cabin door, calmly removed the ammunition and tapped each lock smartly and effectively with the head of the ax.

His next move was to back into the cabin and slip on his Mackinaw and cap; shove a cold flapjack into a pocket of the former; pick up his rifle and step outside.

"Let 'em down now," he ordered, "and mush; mush straight to Kochuk Bench. One of you go ahead of the team, the other behind!"

Caulson and Shively, without one look at Charlie, were on their way up the gulch, the dog team between them. After closing the cabin door Charlie followed.

On arriving at the ridge at the head of the gulch Caulson turned south in their recent tracks. Charlie consulted his watch and learned that it was almost noon. Shortly after two Caulson turned along a spur. Ten minutes later they passed some piles of cordwood. Then Charlie spied on a bench below a little boiler house, the smokestack sticking through the flat roof. The spur dropped sharply. At the foot of the slope Caulson stopped, the dogs lay down, Shively stopped.

"You're on the Kochuk Bench," Caulson flung over his shoulder.

Charlie had no need to be told. Looking east he counted six small dumps in a row, two or three hundred feet between each. These he would not have noticed but for the fact that the sun had melted the snow on the sides of those that faced the south. He looked west and another, even a longer row of similar dumps, met his eye.

"Who sank all the holes?" he inquired.

"Assessment work," growled Shively.

On the sled were a roll of gunny sacks—which they had taken along to put the meat in—and the trail shovel. Into each sack

he had Caulson and Shively place a panful of dirt, each sample from a different dump. Then the way was resumed across the bench.

Arriving at the rim Caulson led the way down a trail cut in its face to the creek bed below. At the foot of this stood a cabin. Charlie ordered his partners to the opposite side of the creek, a distance, perhaps, of a hundred and fifty yards; unloaded the sacks that contained the dirt from the sled, cast his eye over the cabin which he noted with no little surprise had been exceedingly well put together, then entered.

Nothing is truer perhaps than the fact that walls have eyes and ears; that in some manner they hold within themselves somewhat of the personality of the builder and the occupants who have spent part of their lives within them. The first words—words that rose unconsciously to his lips—were:

"Caulson and Shively didn't build this cabin! Yet they told me they were the original stakers of the bench. I wonder what—"

The low door was the first to intrigue him. Why should Caulson, a man over six feet, place in a cabin he meant to live in a door that measured but a scant five? Charlie asked himself. True, Shively was short, but Charlie could not "see" Caulson let Shively have his way in anything. Caulson was boss.

He turned slowly around and faced the bunks. They stood end to end but the one nearest to the window was short and of excellent workmanship—even carved posts. The long one had simply been thrown together and Caulson was writ all over it.

Charlie placed his hand on a homemade armchair of birch and reckoned it would last for generations. The second article of furniture used for sitting on was a block of wood. Then there was a cupboard made of peeled birch poles two inches in diameter, the paneling of the doors being made of one-inch sticks—and not a nail in it! That either Caulson or Shively could produce such a fine piece of work was, in Charlie's estimation, ridiculous. The cabin revealed two distinct personalities, he at length concluded. One of these was Caulson—the other?

After a look across the creek to see that his partners were still where he had placed them Charlie drew a panning tub from one corner—an article made from poles and

lined with tin from a five-gallon kerosene can—and set to work panning the samples of dirt taken from the dumps.

Half an hour afterward he stood up and inspected the slender crescent of gold dust in the bottom of the pan.

"There's at least ten cents' worth there," he assured himself. "How many million square yards of such pay is there in the bench? Why, with water and this natural tailing ground—"

Placing the pan on the stove Charlie drew the bannock from his pocket, seated himself in the armchair and began to eat and think. But he shaved the object of his thoughts away to nothing. The bench and its wealth were shouldered aside by the questions, "Who built this cabin and discovered Kochuk Bench?" and "How did Caulson and Shively get possession of it?"

Baffled, he at length rose to his feet and was about to call his partners over when the thought struck him that he had better make a pretty thorough search of the cabin for weapons, Shively having had no pocket piece when tapped that morning. He had no mind to be shot up some night.

The bunks yielded nothing nor the shelves and boxes nailed to the wall. He opened the doors of the cupboard. The shelves were covered with odds and ends of groceries. But because it was a matter on which he could not afford to take any chances he let nothing pass without inspection.

He was about to close the doors when he noticed that there was no roof to the top compartment, but that nevertheless the front of the cupboard was built up close to the sloping cabin roof. Up into this dark triangular space he shoved his hand. In the highest corner, reached only by standing a-tiptoe, his groping fingers finally came into contact with a movable object which rested on a little shelf. He brought it forth. It proved to be a small tin pepper box. He opened this and shook out two much-folded papers, shoved the can and lid into his pocket and stepped to the window.

The first paper Charlie opened proved to be a location notice that contained a description of the Kochuk Bench, and so named it. It was claimed for mining purposes by Shiloh Kane, August 15, 1917. The second paper was a blank location notice, on the back of which was scrawled the following:

Thee blackgards Budd Caulson and Zak Shively who I hev fed all winter hev thretened to do me upp often I don't giv eech of them a bill of sale for a third int. in my prop'ty. I told them I woud see them damned fust. They air despit karakters. I meen to start for Chandlar City right away and rite this so in case I don't arrive there whoever reeds this will no what hev happend. SHILOH KANE.

Charlie shuddered, then glanced across the creek at the two men mentioned in the letter.

"I've got to look out they don't get me, too," ran his thoughts. "I can't shoot them down in cold blood, though, or drive them ahead of me to Moosehead City. Got to wait till we get there, that's all. On the other hand, could the government convict them on the evidence of what that paper contains without producing the body of the murdered man? And finding a grave six feet long in a patch of country thousands of square miles in extent just about equals finding a needle in a haystack. The property is in their names at this minute. It was from them I got the option. I believe they murdered this Shiloh Kane, but would an impartial jury believe it on the testimony of this piece of paper? Why, they might turn around and say I wrote it myself! My play is to keep on with my original plan: Get hold of, if possible, two thousand six hundred dollars and be in Moosehead City before noon of June 1st. Let the commissioner and marshal attend to the other matter."

Charlie placed the papers in his belt for safe-keeping, picked up his rifle and stepped to the door. The thought crossed his mind to question them regarding Shiloh Kane and his whereabouts, but better counsel prevailed. He started to climb the trail that led to the top of the bench. When halfway up he turned and looked in their direction. They were looking at him.

"I'll see you the first of June in Moosehead City to take up my option!" he called to them.

"Like hell you will!" floated up to his ears.

"That is to say," Charlie continued to himself, "if there should happen to be two thousand six hundred dollars in the pay dump. Suppose there isn't?" A vision of Diamond Nell flashed into his mind. "I'll be darned if I do!" he told the winds.

He reached the top of the trail and started across the bench.

CHAPTER VI.

Charlie did not trust Caulson and Shively despite the fact that he had drawn their stings. They would stop at nothing, he reasoned, to prevent him reaching Moosehead City with dust sufficient to take up his option. So next day he threw up a shelter for himself under the lee of a bluff some distance below the mouth of the gulch, removed everything of value from the cabin to his camping place and then fixed up a dummy figure on the cabin bunk.

On the sixth day of May the water started to run in the ditch he had dug from the creek in the gulch to his pay dump. Coincidentally he began to put the dirt through the rocker. This task he could have accomplished in a week's time had he had sluice boxes with riffles in them. But he had no lumber and even had he known how to build a "bear" and whipsaw it out by hand it is doubtful if he could have saved any time thereby, that being a job for two men long on good nature.

Charlie cleaned up a scant ten ounces of dust from his first day's rocking which, at a trading value of sixteen dollars and fifty cents per ounce, was equivalent to something over one hundred and sixty dollars. He was disappointed.

He was up with the sun next morning—and within the arctic circle the sun rises early in the month of May—and worked until the hand on the rocker handle cramped. This night, too, he cleaned up the riffles in the rocker but was too tired to blow and clean the dust.

The days passed in work-and-sleep fashion and there was altogether too little of the latter. The gold in his poke grew slowly; slower to him than a glacier.

After cleaning up on the evening of May 24th there was fifteen hundred and twenty dollars' worth of gold in the poke. And although there was still sufficient dirt in the dump to keep him rocking for four days, but two remained at his disposal if he meant to be in Moosehead City by the evening of the thirty-first. And rocking cannot be hurried. The rocks must be washed clean for it is in the sediment that sticks to them that the gold lurks.

"I'm stumped," he muttered as he flung himself on his spruce bed that night. "I don't believe there's another thousand dollars in the dump." He yawned. He was

dead tired, absolutely groggy from over-work and thin to emaciation. "Of course"—he yawned again—"there's Diamond Nell. I guess it's all off. Caulson and Shively win—this round anyway." He fell asleep.

The mere fact of having admitted defeat to himself produced a reaction. Hitherto, before going to sleep he had set the alarm of his mind to get up early on the morning following. So, because he did not seem to think it worth while to do that any more, nature raised an effective barrier between him and his interests.

Once he woke and looked drowsily at his watch. It was almost noon. He decided to get up—and promptly fell asleep again. The day wore away to its close.

It was the barking of one of his dogs that woke him the second time. He sat up, reached for his rifle and peered into the dusk of the woods. The dog approached him, growling.

Charlie sprang from his bed and hurriedly though cautiously set off up the creek in the direction of the gulch. As he swung into the latter his eye was arrested by a pillar of flame and smoke. The cabin was on fire. Keeping to cover he hurried forward. Suddenly he caught sight of a figure on the rim of the fiery light. He swung his rifle to his shoulder and fired. A branch snapped; he swore. Again he tried to pick up the figure but it had vanished.

Charlie hastened forward. When he still was thirty paces from the blazing shack the roof caved in. Circling to the left to avoid the heat he stumbled over an object on the ground and fell headlong. This proved to be a knapsack, which he at once recognized as belonging to Bud Caulson. He dropped it and started up the gulch in pursuit, but did not go far for the reason that everything favored the escape of the fugitives.

He returned to the burning cabin. His eye fell on the knapsack. Resting his rifle against the sawhorse he unstrapped it and turned out its contents on the ground.

The first object that caught his eye was a small gold sack half filled with some substance. He snatched it up, untied it and poured part of its contents into the palm of his hand. It was gold dust. Grinning broadly he poured the sample back into the sack, tied it and hefted it.

"Twenty-five, maybe thirty ounces," he chuckled. "I wonder if this represents all

or just half their clean-up? Anyway, it equals the best money that ever came out of a letter and puts my pile beyond the two-thousand-dollar mark." He turned and squinted an eye at what remained of his pay dump. "I wonder—" he mused. "By the Lord, I'm going to find out!" he suddenly decided.

After a hearty meal Charlie rustled up all his candle ends, lit two of these and set to work then and there. He worked almost continuously until eight o'clock next night, then cleaned up the riffles in the rocker. This netted him two hundred and fifty dollars."

"I ought to hit the trail for the river tomorrow morning," he argued. "But since I'm short three hundred and fifty dollars of the sum necessary to take up my option, what's the use?"

"Why not borrow that amount from Diamond Nell?" suggested his other self.

"Forget it!" he snapped. "I'll get up early and put what dirt remains through the rocker to the last shovelful. That's my play."

Along toward three o'clock in the afternoon of next day and when only a few buckets of dirt remained to be washed a nugget almost as big as his fist showed up in the hopper. For some moments he could not believe that it was real gold but the heft of it assured him. For almost a full minute his mind refused to function; the line, it seemed, was busy.

He set to work and cleaned up the rocker; normalcy returned. Again he hefted the nugget.

"If there isn't a hundred ounces in that chunk," he declared, "I'm a poodle worshiper!"

Two hours later Charlie was headed for the river, the dogs at his heel. Secured to the straps of his light pack were Jim Dodge's rifle, a two-inch auger and an ax. To the broad leather belt about his waist was strapped his pock of dust, nugget and all.

He made the trip to the left fork in forty-eight hours but this was at the expense of no little of his reserve. Six hours he slept, then set to work to build a raft.

At ten o'clock in the forenoon of May 30th he shoved off into the channel. On a pile of ferns up forward lay the dogs. Charlie seated himself on his blanket roll in the stern, a hand on the sweep that served as tiller.

In certain respects he resembled the Wild Man of Borneo. Two garments covered his body, a gray flannel shirt and a pair of overalls. The sleeves of the former were rolled above his elbows, and the shirt was open at the collar. The legs of his overalls—much the worse for wear—were rolled up to his knees and his feet were bare. He wore a beard that might have been the basis for a convincing advertisement for somebody's whisker elixir back in the early 'nineties. His shaggy mane would have sent a union barber into hysterics.

After drifting into the main river below the forks, although the need was not immediate, he began to keep his eye open for the cañon, regarding the shooting of which Jim Dodge had given him some excellent advice.

At nine o'clock that night he pulled ashore and cooked up. He was highly gratified with the progress he had made. And whatever trepidations he might have had before embarking respecting the security of such a mode of travel had hours since been allayed.

It was along toward midnight when rounding a bend Charlie gazed into the slit of twilight that was the cañon. He sprang to his feet, grasped the sweep and pulling with all his strength swung the raft over toward the left limit of the river. The current took hold of it and carried it forward irresistibly. He braced himself for the effort that was to take place just below the cañon, in order to avoid the rapids. Suddenly the raft shot downward. Charlie held grimly to the sweep. In the next moment he was swept from the raft into the racing waters.

Caulson emerged from the willows just above the cañon bluff on one side of the river; Shively from those on the other. Each hurriedly untied the end of a rope that stretched across the channel and about eighteen inches above it.

"That's what I call pretty work!" Caulson shouted across the chasm.

Shively nodded briskly. "Saves us the third of a million, I guess!" he made answer.

"The damned whelp!" growled Caulson, hauling in and coiling the rope.

With this on his shoulder Caulson hurried upstream. A quarter of a mile above the cañon he hauled a two-log raft from a little bayou and poled to the other side, joining Shively.

One behind the other they traveled up

the bank of a back slough a distance of two hundred yards; boarded a big raft and started downstream.

A full half mile below the cañon, the blood trickling from an ugly abrasion on his left temple, Charlie fought for his life in the swift icy waters. Twice, three times he had almost made the eddy close to the left bank; thrice the channel snatched him back again. He felt as if a cake of ice were forming about his heart.

Weak from the blow he had received coming through the rapids he at length decided that his pock of dust would have to go. That thirteen pounds of gold at his waist weighed like a ton and but for it he would already have been ashore. His legs were numb, dead.

Keeping himself afloat with one hand he untied the thong that held the pock to his belt with the other. The relief was instantaneous. A few strokes and he was in the eddy. It took him upstream and into contact with a tree that, with the exception of half its root system, had fallen over into the water. Up this he crawled to the bank. His first efforts at running to induce circulation, if performed by a funny man on a screen, would have brought down the house. He finally was able to stagger along without falling, more by the effort of his will than the suppleness of his joints.

He was staggering across a little clearing when the sound of a voice from the direction of the river reached his ear. He struggled to the verge of the high bank. Distant downstream a hundred yards from where he stood raced a raft. Caulson was at the sweep, Shively at the bow, a long pole in his hands. The deck seemed to him covered with dogs.

Charlie strove to shout but his teeth still chattered so that he found that impossible. Still impotent, but shaking a fist at the raft he took up the running again. Evidently, he reasoned, they had not seen him.

Not until circulation had been completely restored in his body did it dawn on Charlie's mind that a deliberate attempt had been made upon his life.

"A rope, of course," he concluded. "But the darned thing got me so suddenly. I wonder where the raft and dogs are? A hundred and twenty-five miles from Moosehead City, grubless, toolless and practically naked! My dust gone—" He opened an envelope in his belt and took out the

papers he had discovered in the pepper can in the cupboard. To his surprise they were quite dry.

"Well, I guess my option has gone to blazes. Maybe"—he touched the papers—"I'll get the next trick, though I fail to see how that is going to do me any good. Anyway, right's right."

At this point, he noticed, the channel ran against the farther bank, so he dropped to the beach and began to keep his eye open for a likely drift log. Of these there were no scarcity but he found objections to their roots which were not only embedded in the hard sand but whose length and heft placed launching out of the question. Once he held a log on the farther shore which he declared was just made for him but his mind had not yet sufficiently recovered from the recent shock to permit of a second encounter with the mad river.

All that day he walked, the hope never deserting him that just around the next bend he would chance upon *the* log. But the hope that doesn't fructify within a reasonable time is a good hope to get rid of. He never did find the right log.

Late in the evening of the thirty-first, when almost ready to drop from hunger and fatigue, he came across a deserted fishing camp. This consisted of row upon row of drying poles, and a native summer lodge. This latter was of the lean-to variety whose pole and hide roof was supported by a dozen rotting posts. It had no floor, and but two sides, also made of poles.

Charlie examined the roof. The poles, he discovered, were cunningly cross-stitched to the rafters with caribou thongs. It would, he decided, make a passable raft. From the beach he secured a sturdy drift pole; levered, twisted the posts from under the lodge roof, then pitched it over the bank.

A few minutes later, seated on a rock amidships with a pole in his hands, Charlie was drifting toward the Yukon at the rate of eight miles an hour.

CHAPTER VII.

Along toward nine o'clock next morning Bud Caulson and Zack Shively left their cabin back of Moosehead City and strolled over to town. They went directly to the office of the commissioner. From the river bank Jim Dodge, who had seen Caulson and Shively arrive late in the afternoon of the

day before, spotted them; hurriedly he crossed the water front and entered the office.

He stood by while the partners swore in the assessment work for the year on the group of claims known as Kochuk Bench.

"What became of your partner?" he suddenly asked them.

Both men started. Caulson was the first to recover.

"Why, he returned to town with a sick man we picked up on the trail last November," he made answer in a friendly tone. "We haven't seen him since."

"I'm the man he brought in," intimated Jim Dodge. "He hit the trail again right away. He was back again at Christmas and at that time he told me he couldn't find the cross you fellows were to freeze in the ice up the left fork. But he set out again to find you."

"We did put up the cross!" averred both men in one voice.

"Then what happened to it? Posts frozen in the ice can't walk away!"

"How do we know? We put it up. We couldn't stand there all winter and watch it. If he got lost it isn't our fault."

The commissioner had been listening to the conversation.

"Will you take your oath that you put up that cross?" he asked them.

"On a stack of Bibles!" returned Caulson.

They were sworn. The commissioner could do no more in the circumstances. They left the office and started up the street.

Jim Dodge followed presently. He saw Caulson and Shively enter the Arctic Hotel, then returned to his pacing on the river bank opposite the mouth of the Porcupine.

By ones and twos the year-round residents—and not a few from the diggings—began to gather on the water front in their other suits of clothes and in that condition of manner and mind aptly described as "nowhere to go."

Kluane Tom had discarded his comfortable mukluks for tanned shoes. The merchants and managers of the trading posts had dug up striped shirts and white collars. The "girls" paraded the bank in styles of raiment just one year behind Broadway. The natives, a hundred and fifty strong, bowed down to no fashion favorite.

Chief Dogcollar was an example. To start with his feet, which were most in evidence, these were incased in a pair of pointed tan shoes with white eyelets. His legs were covered with a pair of orange-colored stockings; a kilt—the result of having seen and heard "Scotty" Napier on the *Prospector* the summer before—made from a red blanket; a cutaway coat, a green tie, a white collar and a plug hat. The marten and fox catch had been good the past season.

The *Susie*, the first boat of the season from the upper Yukon, was due at eleven o'clock with mail, passengers and unlimited hen fruit and oranges for way camps. The ice had been a few days late in going out.

A dog team hitched to a sled on which was a large trunk struggled across the water front to the wharf. Behind this trailed majestically Diamond Nell and "Rocky River" Eric, a sour dough of the vintage of 'ninety-eight, whom she had married that morning at the mission church. They were about to embark for the Outside by way of St. Michael and Nome, their intention being to enter the fox-raising industry in the Puget Sound country.

Eric dropped the suit cases on top of the trunk. Nell took his arm and, like everybody else, they began to parade up and down the river bank.

"For the Lord's sake, Eric!" whispered née Diamond Neil. "ain't there no place you can put them hands of yours? They hang out of your coat sleeves like a couple of bams!"

"Ay put dem to work by and by," returned Eric placidly.

A furtive-eyed man, whiskered to the ears, his hair hanging below his shoulders, slipped silently through the crowd. He was dressed completely in tanned caribou hide; was trailed by a half dozen lean husky dogs, and spoke to no one. A man upon whom the wilderness had set her seal.

The forenoon wore away. Jim Dodge consulted his watch. It informed him that it was eleven-thirty. He swore under his breath.

"I wonder if they *got* him," he growled. "It would be too—*there he comes!*" He had caught sight of a man on a raft smoothly rounding the last bend in the Por-

cupine. Jim dropped down the bank and started up the shingle on the run.

Every eye was now turned on the voyageur. Guesses were rife as to who it could be. The raft came on without a ripple and still in the Porcupine current crossed the Yukon and grated on the beach. Jim Dodge caught and held it while Charlie sprang ashore.

"Did you make it?" cried Jim, seizing Charlie's hand and wringing it.

"I did and—I didn't." In a few words Charlie told him what had taken place at the cañon.

"That's the dod-rottenest luck I ever heard of!" exclaimed Jim Dodge. "However, you've proved that the pay is all right on Slokum gulch and," he hurried on, "of course half of that proposition is yours. We'll give her hell next winter. These crooks are over in the Arctic. Let's go across and—"

"I've got something on them, though," Charlie interrupted. He took Shiloh Kane's location notice and letter from his belt and handed them to Jim. "Read these," he requested. "Then I guess we'd better go right over to the commissioner."

They climbed the bank. Jim perused the papers in silence, then returned them to Charlie.

"Yes," he agreed, "we'd better go right over and put the matter in the hands of the commissioner."

They started up the bank in silence.

"If it ain't my friend Charlie Cogswell!" cried Diamond Nell, bearing down on him and grasping his hand. "Here, Eric!" she called and as the giant approached she turned to Charlie and indicated her lord and master with a wave of her hand. "This is him, it and the kitty. Big gump, ain't he?—on the square, though; square-shouldered, square-headed—everything! We're gonna raise foxes and everything else down on the Sound."

Charlie shook hands with Eric and wished both luck.

"There she comes!" rose a shout.

All eyes swung up the river. Charlie and Jim like everybody else watched the *Susie* swiftly and gracefully swing downstream. She turned loose her siren. The crowd surged toward the dock.

"Suppose we go over and have that little matter attended to?" Jim suggested.

"Right."

They started across the water front and entered the office of the commissioner. Charlie handed the latter the papers and in a few words explained how they came into his possession.

The commissioner swore Charlie. "Hook" Fisher, the deputy marshal, strolled in. The commissioner requested him to go out and bring in Bud Caulson and Zack Shively. Jim Dodge, dragging Charlie by the arm, beat the deputy marshal to the door and started on the run for the Arctic Hotel.

As they neared the door of that hostelry Caulson and Shively stepped from the entrance and came face to face with a furtive-eyed man clad in caribou hide, at whose heels slunk a band of lean husky dogs. This man stopped suddenly; said a few words in a low tone to Caulson and Shively, then pulled a gun from his pocket and shot both down.

A moment later the deputy marshal had disarmed him.

"What did you do that for?" he demanded to be informed.

"Why? Because they killed my brother Ben in the Koyokuk country four years ago. I've hunted every camp in Alaska for them."

"Well, that's that," quoth Jim Dodge.

Two men who had just stepped off the *Susie* pushed their way through the crowd and glanced at what was left of Bud Caulson and Zack Shively.

"It's the owners of Kochuk Bench, Mr. Dennison," spoke up the agent who had in-

spected that property the summer before. "We're out of luck, it seems."

"What's that about Kochuk Bench?" inquired Jim Dodge.

"We've just arrived from the Outside to negotiate for its purchase," returned the mining engineer. "I sank a dozen holes on the property last summer. What do you know about it?"

"This much." He indicated the two men aspawhl across the sidewalk with a jerk of his thumb. "They never owned Kochuk Bench. They killed the original staker and jumped the ground. That man, Shiloh Kane, was my uncle. On my return from a trip to the Outside three years ago he was to meet me in Chandelier City. He didn't. I've been hunting him ever since. I can prove my words to the commissioner in two jiffies."

Jim Dodge placed a hand on Charlie's shoulder.

"You're standing in the presence of the owners of Kochuk Bench right now. If my partner here says 'sell,' sell it is. If he says 'hold her,' she stays there. What do you say, Charlie?"

"I'll tell you what," Charlie made answer, "if I don't get something under my belt pretty soon I'm likely to lose the habit of saying anything at all in the future."

"Have lunch with me," spoke up Harvey Dennison, including Jim with his eye, "and name the joint."

"Let's go," said Charlie. Heading the way to "A Steak in the Pan."

Another story by Mr. Strang in an early number.



A FAMOUS STEAMBOAT SOLD FOR JUNK

ON Rondout Creek, New York, there is happening something that seems to old-time travelers on the Hudson River next door to tragedy. The steamboat *Mary Powell*, long known as the "Queen of the Hudson," is being broken up and sold as junk.

Built in 1861 for daylight service between New York City and Rondout, the *Mary Powell* was for many years the last word in speed and beauty of the Hudson River type of steamboat, and maintained a speed that is not exceeded even by the fast boats that steam up and down the Hudson to-day. In 1874 she averaged twenty-five miles an hour on a trip from New York to Poughkeepsie, and in 1881 made a trip from New York to Rondout, including eight landings, in 4 hours 12 minutes—a distance of 92 miles. Commanded by Captain A. E. Anderson of Kingston, and later by his son, the boat became famous with travelers, and people living along the river took a personal pride in her appearance and performance. The old boat is said by authorities on steamboating to have been the most widely known and popular steamboat that ever ran in American waters, and her passing marks the breaking of another link with those "steamboat days" that are a colorful chapter in the history of American transportation.



Flower of the Night

BY HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

DOWN a dark street where paper lanterns glow,
Like sullen poppies in the ocean mist;
Where pallid faces, fugitive and slow,
Turn in some dusky archway's amethyst,

The Lily of Formosa, Flower of Night,
Leaned from her window dreaming in the stars—
Below, an island schooner's riding light
Shattered the sea with burnished golden bars.

The blue and silver of the Orient sky
Tented the tall masts of the harbor ships—
Up from the shore he came. A happy cry
Leapt from the cherished music of her lips.

Nearing the doorway, hesitant he stood,
While soft her footfall fluttered down the stair;
The transient glory of her maidenhood
Lighting her eyes and shimmering on her hair.

“Flower of the Night, where fades the early bloom,
 Unheeded in the reek of fevered hours!
Oh, passing fragrance, memoried perfume,
 Awakened in the spring of budding flowers,

Formosa!” Though he spake in alien tongue,
 Her heart, her glowing heart could understand
Such melody, like distant cadence rung,
 On bells of magic by a magic hand.

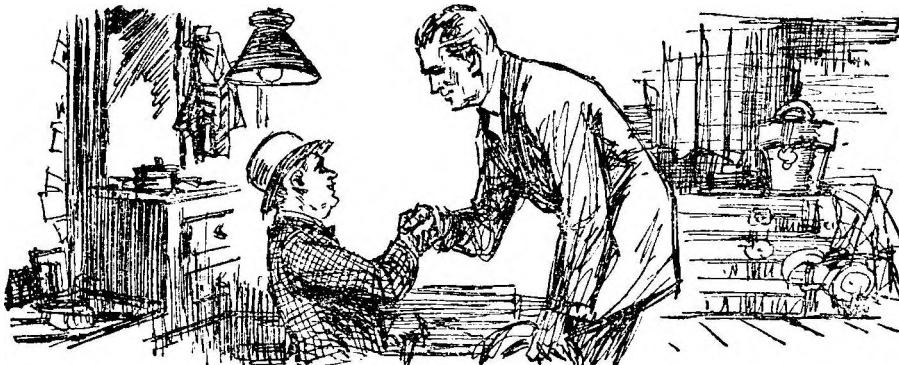
“Flower of the Night! The moonlight shadows fall,
 Light, lingering kisses on your dreaming eyes;
The slow sea drones along the harbor wall:
 A flower upon her breast, the low moon lies.”

Thus sang her sailor, coming from the deep.
 Of love sojourning for a little space,
Among the shadows where lost flowers sleep;
 Above the pensive beauty of her face.

Theirs were the starlit valleys of delight,
 And theirs the heights, the deeps of mystery,
Till fled the shadows of the trembling night,
 And dawn rode high upon the naked sea.

She begged a farewell gift—the knife he wore—
 That noon a silken figure sought her stair,
Gliding beyond the unresisting door,
 To shudder from the crimson lily there.





Black Art

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "The Carlton Theater Mystery," "Mr. Zandt's Professions," Etc.

The diminutive "Major Inch" demonstrates that it doesn't take nine tailors to make one man. A Great Macumber episode.

WE were following Cal Webber's "Kindergartners" on the Gayety bill that week and a half dozen of the youngsters had lingered in the wings as usual thinking to learn, as co-professionals and fellow insiders, how The Great Macumber worked his miracles. In the group, I noticed, was little Bessie Barry herself—the same wide-eyed child in budding womanhood that she had been when she left her dolls for the Webber act at the age of twelve.

The Great One, who had a habit of discouraging the curiosity of adult performers with inspired sarcasm, made sotto voce interpolations in his solemnly nonsensical patter from time to time for the benefit of the back-stage audience.

"It's kiddies who really appreciate the magic," he whispered to me as we wheeled forward the glass-walled cabinet which on close examination may some day reveal to one of those grave committees from the front of the house—or quite possibly may not—the inbuilt secret of the Lady-or-the-Tiger illusion.

Macumber glanced into the wings and smiled wryly. The small star of the Kindergartners wasn't waiting for our big thrill. Turning away, she caught the Great One's

eye on her and blew a kiss over her shoulder to atone for the desertion.

"She's outgrown us, too," he sighed. "We are one with the acrobats and the trained animals; we do not sing or dance."

The "committee of five," its members flustered as always but filled with determination to prevent the Great One from resorting to any other than absolutely supernatural methods in his announced project of converting girl into jungle cat—with one and all invited to come right up and inspect the tiger for dental defects or what not—had been herded onto the stage by then. The tall, piercing-eyed Hindu gentleman who had made the selections salaamed before Macumber and in idiom hard to reconcile with the name of Micky McGuirk remarked that five harder heads were not to be found in all Christendom—nor all Islam. Which, since Yogi McGuirk had a dependable gift for the discovery of cranial concrete, we accepted as true.

A minute or two later, the cabinet duly examined and pronounced of honest and substantial construction, the Great One retired to the far end of the stage and began deliberately to load the bell-mouthed pistol which would signal the evaporation of the lady and the materialization of the tiger.

Cæsar's daughter, in the person of Mrs. Micky, came upon the stage and let a single unconcerned bow speak both greeting and farewell. Her fingers lightly touching mine she ran up the gold-carpeted steps and seated herself in the cabinet, while I drew down curtains where presently would be bars.

In the Lady-or-the-Tiger illusion seconds and fractions of a second, even, are vital—which is as much as I may say. Thus I was thrown into panic when, a full two seconds before poor toothless Rajah could possibly have made the journey which earned his bread and milk and soup bones, the pistol shot sounded.

I caught myself at the point of touching the spring that released the curtains hiding the interior of the cabinet, conquered that instinct born of long and precise habit and looked toward the Great One for a cue.

But it wasn't that blunderbuss of his that had gone off! The familiar smoke drift at Macumber's end of the stage was missing; and through the back drop was floating a confusion of voices and a trampling of feet indicative of some sudden and high excitement.

The shot had been plainly heard out front, too, but Macumber swiftly and suavely accounted for it before the audience had a chance to speculate and become uneasy.

"Ah!" he cried. "You *are* a little nervous about the tiger, aren't you? But don't worry about any one shooting him. Even though some may have hesitated to take my word for the transition, permit me to assure you again he's really a perfect lady!"

It flashed into my mind for the first time then that perhaps Rajah might have forgotten his normally excellent manners and that a blank cartridge had been exploded to remind him of the supremacy of the biped and restore him to his chronic state of apology.

But that hadn't been it, either. Macumber, going calmly on with our routine, fired the ancient pistol on signal from Micky and up snapped the curtains. There, where he belonged, squatting on his bench in the cabinet and licking his whiskers with an air of unquestionable virtue, was our placid tiger.

A moment later, after I had inducted Rajah into a cage rolled alongside the cabi-

net, the curtain fell on our act and the first half of the show.

A chalky-faced call boy was waiting for us in the wings with an explanation of the shot which had so nearly exposed our Lady-or-the-Tiger mystery and caused the scrapping of a brand-new illusion into which the Great One had put months of his time and thousands of his dollars.

"D-down in the dressin' rooms it was," stuttered the boy. "Somebody gunned Cal Webber, and Boss Haggerty's sent for a doctor and the cops. He wants to know would you please come down there right away, professor."

II.

Old Toby Andrews, guardian of the Gayety's stage door through a dozen vaudeville generations, was diplomatically but firmly holding in check a throng of performers gathered in the corridor outside Webber's dressing room. He cleared a way for Macumber and somewhat dubiously permitted me to slip through the half-opened door on the Great One's heels.

Haggerty, the stage manager, was kneeling beside a form sprawled out on the uncarpeted floor.

"I knew you doubled as a detective once in a while, professor," he said, looking up. "Well—how about this?"

Macumber's glance swept the room before he replied. His eyes rested momentarily on the table with its miscellany of grease paints and toilet articles, searched the floor, took in the open window and the dimly illuminated alley beyond.

"He's dead?" asked the Great One.

"Next door to it if I don't miss my guess," said the stage manager. "Looks like he got it pretty close to the heart. He's breathing but I haven't been able to get a word out of him."

Haggerty leaned forward. "Who shot you, Cal?" he asked in the patient and persuasive tone of one who repeats a question often asked. "Do you know?"

Webber's eyelids flickered and his lips trembled so close to speech that I thought I read a "Yes" on them. But no words came and we were left to guess that the convulsive jerk of his head was meant for a nod. That movement of the head, whether or not the fruit of conscious effort, was Webber's last. His face, still partly smeared with make-up seemed suddenly to soften

and at the same time to take on dignity. I had known for years the grotesque Cai Webber of the stage and that other off-stage Cal Webber of the predatory eyes and the conscienceless flirtations. In death I recognized neither.

"He's gone, all right," said Haggerty almost unnecessarily. "My hunch is that it was some wom——"

A sharp rap at the door interrupted him. Police and doctor, simultaneously summoned, had arrived together—the house surgeon from a neighboring hotel, the uniformed policeman from the corner post and a plain-clothes man from headquarters who, it chanced, needed no introduction to Macumber.

"Just happened along in time," the headquarters man apprised the Great One. "What do you know?"

The physician, who had left all questions for the completion of his examination, rose with the announcement that the case was one for the medical examiner and the homicide bureau.

"The man couldn't have lived more than a few minutes at the best," he said. "All I can tell you is that the bullet entered well below the heart and coursed upward. That's most unusual, of course. Make whatever you wish out of it."

"Could he have shot himself that way?" demanded the plain-clothes man.

"Possibly." The concession came slowly from the doctor.

"But hardly likely," added Macumber gently. "You've better eyes than mine, Sergeant Horgan, if you see a gun lying around."

"Then——" The detective's eyes darted to the open window.

"Better get out and take a look through the alley," he briskly advised his uniformed companion. "If anybody took it on the run after the shooting you ought to be able to pick up a good description of him. And the gun's probably out there somewhere now."

The doctor, who had stepped to the window as the bluecoat hurried out, offered confirmation of the Horgan theory.

"Yes; that would be the angle," he said. "The alley is a couple of feet below this floor and a bullet fired from the middle of it would have struck him just about so."

More detectives arriving at that juncture, Macumber and I took our departure. In

the corridor the music of the orchestra came to us faintly. Tragedy in a dressing room had not stopped the show; the audience would not be permitted to know what had happened until the newspapers were out with the story. Above us the "Nine Little Tailors," whose act directly followed the intermission, were working as hard for laughs as if they too were in ignorance of the sinister shadow that had fallen over the back of the house.

The Great One was whistling softly under his breath as we walked into our own dressing room, which was in the same corridor with Cai Webber's but at the opposite end. The whistling sharpened and stopped on the staccato as I switched on the lights. Wheeling at the note I saw what Macumber had seen.

In the middle of the floor lay an object that belonged to neither of us and which surely had not been there when we locked the door behind us—a small but wicked-looking revolver.

Macumber picked up the little snub-nosed weapon and swung out the cylinder.

"It looks," he said after a moment, "as if the murderer's gun has been found—and not in the alley. Six cartridges and one empty shell would seem to tell a story."

"And the open window tells another, doesn't it?" I suggested. "The killer has shown us which way he fled. If the policeman has gone to the other end of the alley he's wasting his time. Hadn't we better let your detective friend know at once?"

The Great One strode toward the door, halted and stood irresolute, the gun all but hidden between the palms of his two big hands.

"Your deduction does not credit your faculty for observation, lad," he said after a moment's thought. "Had you familiarized yourself with your surroundings you'd know we're at the blind end of the alley. That fact makes it almost certain the pistol didn't come through the window at all."

"How else then, maestro?"

"Through the door, naturally, if the person who wanted to get rid of it happened to have a key to fit," smiled Macumber. "But I should say it more likely came over the transom."

"Which would mean——"

"That it was tossed in by some one on the bill with us or by some one otherwise connected with the *Gayety*," nodded the Great

One. "And the temptation is strong to say nothing of the pistol to the police. I'm not so sure from what I've heard of Cal Webber that he got more than his desserts. My own definition of justifiable homicide is considerably broader than the law's, lad."

We had changed into our street clothes before Macumber made his decision. I heard it with relief, for once before his suppression of evidence in a police case had threatened to develop most disagreeable consequences for both of us.

"Come, lad," he said a little testily, as if it were I who must be persuaded into performance of a duty of law-abiding and law-sustaining citizenship. "It's not a matter of choice, can't you see? Were we to keep our knowledge to ourselves we should become accessories to a deplorable crime. The character of the man who was killed must not enter into our calculations. No—not a word!"

And off he marched toward the dressing room of the late Calvin Webber, the pistol from which death had sped sagging the right-hand pocket of his coat.

III.

A policeman in uniform had relieved old Toby on guard duty at the door behind which Webber's body lay.

"Nobody in there," he said when Macumber placed his hand on the knob. "And nobody's goin' in but the medical examiner."

Sergeant Horgan, et al, the policeman told us, were questioning potential witnesses in Haggerty's office; and there we found assembled twenty-odd performers, including most of the dozen girls of the "Kindergartners" company.

Macumber beckoned to Horgan, and the detective, who had apparently transferred his entire attention to an unlighted cigar with the arrival of his superiors from headquarters, sauntered out.

"What's on your mind, professor?"

The Great One told him of the finding of the pistol, and handed it over along with the cartridges and the empty shell.

"It doesn't break," he said. "It's an old-timer and you'll probably have a job ahead of you tracing the ownership."

"Maybe," admitted the sergeant. "But there's one thing sure. It belongs to a woman. Did you ever see a man packing a gun the size of this?"

Horgan rolled the frayed cigar from one

corner of his mouth to the other and back again.

"You may be right about somebody that belongs around the theater doing the shooting, professor," he said, "although that would make the doctor wrong. I've got an idea. Just watch the folks inside there when I flash the pistol on 'em and see if you think any one knows anything about it."

The detective stepped back into the room.

"Listen, people!" he announced. "The gun's been found. Did anybody here ever see it before. Look!"

My eyes traveled from one face to another as Horgan held the tiny revolver aloft—and when they reached the face of Bessie Barry went no farther. She had gone pale and her hands had lifted swiftly to her heart. Neither the sudden pallor nor the movement escaped the sergeant.

"Well, miss," he cried; "you know who the gun belongs to?"

The little star of the "Kindergartners," dressed now for the street and showing trace of recent tears beneath an overplus of powder, continued to stare at the revolver, her round eyes growing rounder with terror. She shook her head.

"Sure?"

The girl wrung her hands. Looking desperately about her in mute appeal for sympathy she seemed to be struggling for words that would not come.

Macumber went to her side and placed a friendly hand on her shoulder.

"Steady, Bessie!" he said gently. "There's no need to be frightened. If you know anything I advise you to tell it."

She gave way then to an abandon of grief, trying to talk between the sobs that choked her. There was neither sequence nor coherence to what she said, but the burden of it was clear. She had feared Webber; he had treated her as a child during her first years with the "Kindergartners" act, not only before but after the death of her mother had left her unprotected, yet lately his attitude had changed. He had been at first importunate, then insistent—in such a way that she knew a crisis was close at hand.

Several times Horgan would have interrupted with a reiteration of his question but the Great One halted him with a shake of the head. It was he who at last reminded her:

"The sergeant was asking you about the revolver, Bessie. Have you ever seen it before?"

She nodded now.

"Whose is it?"

The girl buried her anguished face in Macumber's shoulder.

"It's m-mine," she sobbed. "And I'm g-glad he's dead!"

IV.

So far as police records and police knowledge go discovery of the ownership of the revolver with which Cal Webber was killed marks the one solid achievement of the investigation into his murder—that and the rather safe presumption, based on the medical examiner's official report of the angle at which the bullet entered the comedian's body, that it was fired from the alley leading to the Gayety Theater's stage door.

The homicide-bureau detectives were not long in convincing themselves that it was not Bessie Barry who had shot Webber. Several stable hands and Haggerty himself had seen her descending the spiral staircase leading to the dressing rooms at the moment the revolver spoke.

Nor did the gun itself prove so likely a clew as it might have. Bessie, who lately had been in the habit of carrying it with her to and from evening performances, had left it lying on a table in the dressing room which she shared with three other "Kindergartners" and whose door had stood ajar. There had been a dozen times in the course of the evening when the little gun might have been abstracted—and any one among forty or fifty persons might have taken it and used it.

But such details have been recounted at length by the newspapers and with them Macumber has no concern. Not a soul back stage at the time of the shooting escaped questioning and not a single arrest was made. That perhaps was because performers with contracts in other cities to fulfill could not be held indefinitely in New York. At any rate the investigation came to nothing.

It was something like two months later that a reminder of the Gayety murder came to us in Chicago—a paragraph in a column of dramatic correspondence from New York, published in a Sunday newspaper, telling of the hit scored by Bessie Barry in a new musical comedy.

The Great One pointed it out to me. Then, Cal Webber's death thus recalled, he ruminated:

"A curious crime in more ways than one, that at the Gayety. Offhand you would say it would have been impossible for the murderer to escape. There seemed to have been no effort at all toward concealment, except by the afterthought of disposing of the gun. The murderer could have had absolutely no way of knowing that the report would not bring people from a half dozen dressing rooms before he could make his escape."

"Or *hers*, might you not say?" I queried.

Macumber's stubby black pipe was in full eruption. He blew forth a series of great whirling smoke rings and through the last of them replied:

"I think not, lad. No; I've a theory of the murder which may or may not have occurred to the police but which I believe could be made to fit the facts. And that theory involves no woman—certainly not directly."

In vain I tried to inveigle the Great One into discussion of his theory. The best I could get from him was the usual promise, made to me a score of times when he had abandoned magic to play detective, to let me see the light eventually—if light there should ever be.

"But I have not given up hope of some day testing my notion," he said when I protested that the Gayety murder lay too far in the past for successful resurrection of its mystery. "Bide your time. You may be sure the truth will not be known before the murderer is ready to make a clean breast of it. That may be to-morrow or a year from to-morrow. Or never."

The Great One had less difficulty in dismissing the subject from mind than I. He began to talk of changes which he contemplated making in our act and I confess I listened rather absently for my mind was literally a thousand miles away.

Macumber was thinking, I gathered, of incorporating in our next independent magical production an illusion called "The Black Art"—familiar to the public through its use by many magicians and yet extraordinarily effective.

"The Black Art," he said confidently, "will bear revival. In all the realm of magic there is nothing at once so simple and so as-

tonishing, for here is mankind's one success in achieving complete invisibility above ground."

Although the Great One's instinct in showmanship was unerring his plan brought me no joy. Far rather had I seen him introduce another of those mechanical illusions of his own invention—and often of his own construction—which were no less a source of wonderment to me than to our audiences. The Black Art, to the initiate, is child's play for all the sheer magic it appears from the front of the house. Its vehicle is a stage set within a stage, with back drop and sides of black velvet and footlights craftily arranged to blind the spectator rather than to illumine proceedings behind them. Beyond the footlights labor assistants of the magician clad in coveralls of black which enable them to move about absolutely unseen as they aid in the accomplishment of apparent impossibilities. Sheets and bags of the dead-black stuff cover their paraphernalia—and thus, where nothing was, a grand piano or an elephant may be standing in a trice, come from nowhere.

With the Black Art, truly, the sky is the limit. And that is what I, who have not Macumber's complaisant attitude toward magic, object to in it. It isn't—well, *sporting*.

Macumber grinned cheerfully in evidence that my expostulations left him cold.

"Nevertheless," he said, "all is good that serves a purpose; and our purpose is to mystify. Moreover, I have the entire outfit for the Black Art. It has been in storage in Chicago here ever since the season before you joined me, lad, and the expense will be next to nothing."

The Great One beamed upon me with the air of one who has put forward an unanswerable argument.

"And I might tell you further, while on the subject of business," he went on, "that I intend to give a demonstration of the Black Art to-morrow night for the benefit of a fellow showman of yours and mine who by a lucky accident of booking is in Chicago this week and who—if you insist—shall be the judge of whether the illusion takes the road again after all these years or returns to rest in storage."

"Who's that?"

The Great One smiled.

"You'll see him, lad—if you look sharp!"

V.

Macumber had arranged for the use of one of the big sample rooms in our hotel, ordinarily used by traveling salesmen for the display of their goods, and when his trunks arrived from storage in the morning we set up the paraphernalia of the Black Art at one end of it.

That was the work of no more than an hour, for we had the assistance of the McGuirk's and of the hotel carpenter.

"Go and enjoy yourself until matinée time, lad," the Great One urged me when the bulk of the job was done. "Micky and I can finish up alone—and besides, I'm planning a bit of a surprise for you. It's not the Black Art as you know it that I've been figuring on but an original illusion touching on the telepathic. As part of the prospective audience you've seen enough already."

I left gladly enough, for the day was pleasant and the air of Lincoln Park vastly to be preferred to that of the dusty sample room. After our matinée performance, the time for which came all too soon, I sought to learn from Macumber the identity of the man for whom he was to make the private demonstration. But he chose to be mysterious and replied in his words of the night before. I'd see, when the time came—if I looked sharp. The Great One seemed to treasure that phrase; and after our evening turn I had no longer to guess the reason, for the erudite fellow showman on whose judgment he was depending so heavily presented himself at our dressing room a moment after we had entered it.

"You know Major Inch, of course, lad," averred Macumber, hugely enjoying my astonishment. "Surely you must. Sixteen years with the big show—wasn't it, major? —and now putting stitches in the sides of vaudeville audiences with the 'Nine Little Tailors.'"

I reached down and grasped the hand which the "major," smiling behind a cigar that looked half as big as himself, poked up at me. He was considerably less than three feet in height; a miniature man whose every proportion was in scale save only his hands, which might have been those of a very small and delicately made woman. From his tiny and highly polished boots to the crown of the pearly derby—which a coconut might have served as hatbox—he was gloriously turned out after the vogue of

the race meet; and he rested, thoroughly at ease, on a walking stick no longer than the Great One's wand.

"Sure he ought to know me if he's in the business," piped Major Inch jovially, screwing up a face which had in it the elements both of a small boy's and a grown man's. "Sure! I seen *him*, I think."

The merry little man climbed into a chair whose seat was shoulder high to him and demanded, his thin voice rising to a mirthful squeal:

"Well, how's tricks, professor? Pretty good, eh? How's *tricks*? Get me?"

"The trick business is coming along very beautifully," Macumber assured him. "What have the fortune tellers been finding in your palm lately, major?"

The Lilliputian turned serious.

"Aw," he complained, "palmists is the bunk. I find a lady out on the North Side here yesterday with a crystal that's real goods. She steered me off a sure thing that ain't got to the stretch yet and saved me a week's pay for two bucks. Yeh, I'm off the palmists. Say, what's this thing of yours for tellin' fortunes, professor?"

I caught a flutter of the Great One's left eyelid as he soberly replied: "Well, major, I don't know whether you'd call it a fortune-telling device or not. But it's real magic. I started with it as a trick for my act but there's something about it that even I can't understand. Do you believe in the—well, the supernatural, major?"

"The *what*?"

"I mean, things happening that people here on earth can't understand or explain?"

Major Inch nodded vigorously.

"You bet. Fortune tellers handed me a lot of true stuff before I started tryin' them on the races."

"Then," said Macumber, "you'll certainly be interested in what I've got over at the hotel. No one else has seen it or experimented with it but myself and one of my assistants. I want your opinion on it as a road attraction—but let me tell you *it's more than just show stuff!*"

Through the ten or fifteen minutes which elapsed before Macumber and I were ready to go, the little major sat pondering, his feet kicking against the upper rung of the chair. He was impatient to be gone and hopped nimbly to the floor when the Great One reached for his hat.

The major trotted along between us on

the way to the hotel, totally oblivious of a general attention of which I was acutely conscious before we had traversed a block. But for all the brisk twinkling of the little man's legs he was no great ground coverer and we had to walk very slowly to accommodate ourselves to his pace.

Apparently Macumber felt the time consumed by our trip afoot from the theater had given the McGuirks ample opportunity to complete whatever preparations they had to make for he went at once to his improvised theater on the second floor.

The Great One had stopped at the hotel desk for the sample-room key and with it he let himself in. The lights, switched on, revealed the room as I had last seen it, big and bare except for the pine tables used by the traveling salesmen and the temporary black-draped stage at the far end. The McGuirks were not apparent.

Macumber pulled over one of the tables and lifted Major Inch upon it.

"This will have to answer for your reserved seat, major," he said. "Mind you, you will see things that are tricks, things that I am responsible for and can explain to you, things that I can show to the public at any time. Of those I want your opinion as a showman as old in the business as myself. Will they please audiences? Of anything else—"

Major Inch rapped the table with his tiny walking stick.

"What else is there goin' to be?" he demanded. "I thought it was some kind of machine instead of a big black Punch an' Judy layout. Where's the fortune tellin' come in?"

"It's along the line of fortune telling—real fortune telling," said the Great One patiently. "I told you it was something I couldn't understand. I've sat myself in front of that black back drop when the foot-lights are on, I tell you, and seen my own thoughts floating out there in front of it where my eyes could see them; yes, and other people's eyes, too. I don't know what does it and I don't know what it means. I don't say it will happen to you and I don't know it will happen to me again. I hope it doesn't. There are some things a man doesn't—"

He broke off with a laugh, snapped off the lights in the room and turned another switch.

The powerful lights along the foot of the

Black Art stage flashed forth; and Macumber, returning, seated himself on the table on the other side of our diminutive and obviously impressed guest.

"Ordinarily I would be on the stage, major," he said, "but to-night there is no need for make-believe. All that I have control over I can direct from here. As for the rest —we shall see!"

VI.

For the next half hour things occurred on the black stage at Macumber's behest at which the layman would have marveled and which brought more than one gasp from Major Inch.

At one moment the stage was thronged with what appeared to be human skeletons. Two of them danced to the accompaniment of a weird clatter. Great exotic flowers which grew at the rate of an inch or more a second and seemed to fill the air with some poignant perfume of the tropics sprang up from the stage floor. A magical fountain appeared in the middle of the stage, plashed musically and was gone—and with it went the flowers.

Some of the astounding materializations were called for by Macumber in his peremptory professional voice; others were seemingly spontaneous. The last of them was a fully set dinner table which jumped back and forth from one side of the stage to the other at the Great One's command. When the table eventually disappeared the stage went blank.

"So far it has all been my own magic," said Macumber after a pause during which little Major Inch stirred restively. "For all I know the performance may be over; my part is. Look steadily into the stage, both of you, and think of what you will."

Several minutes passed. The major looked up at me and grinned. "What're you thinkin' about, big boy?"

I shrugged and said nothing. My thoughts were scarcely such as could be reproduced on white canvas or black velvet. I was wondering what Macumber was up to with his preposterous and absurd allusions; what profit or pleasure he possibly could derive from hoaxing the midget.

Our unstable bench creaked as the Great One made a sharp shift of position.

"Do you see anything?" he asked.

To me the stage was still an ebon void;

and Major Inch shrilly proclaimed that he saw nothing.

"I do," asserted Macumber solemnly, staring into the stage. In a moment he added: "It's fading now."

Almost as he spoke I became aware of a transition and I knew from the sudden stirring at my side that the major's vision confirmed mine.

In the very center of the back drop appeared a faintly luminous rectangle. It took shape as a window and on either side of it a dirty whitish wall, vignetting into the black. A couple of cheap-looking straight-backed chairs sprang simultaneously into being, then a table with a mirror behind it and bearing a number of pots and jars of familiar pattern and a tin make-up box.

I felt Major Inch's hand on my arm. It gripped hard.

"Say!" he whispered. "You see it?"

His tiny body was trembling with excitement. He was sitting in a room flooded with light and ghostly unseen hands, not more than a dozen feet away, were assembling item by item the details of another and smaller room—a room of a sort we all knew well. Magic flowers and magic fountain and the rest had been greeted by the major with enthusiastic appreciation. His reaction now was different. He was tense.

"Anybody see anything?" he repeated.

"I'm beginning to make out something," said the Great One. "It's a room, isn't it? A dressing room? *What*—"

A figure had taken shape on the Black Art stage, the figure of a stoutish man whose face was streaked with grease paint and who wore a tousled red wig. It wasn't the major's horrified scream alone that made my heart jump for the face and the figure were Cal Webber's!

Little Major Inch began to laugh hysterically.

"Webber!" he cried. "Let him haunt ahead. He got what was comin' to him—and I'd let him have it again!"

VII.

When we had him in our suite upstairs a few minutes later and he had got outside a man-size drink of Macumber's treasured Scotch, Major Inch swiftly stripped the slaying of Cal Webber of all mystery. He talked eagerly as if he found relief in shar-

ing his secret at last. That he had been tricked into confession he did not realize. He had seen the spirit of Webber and clearly had no doubt of the authenticity of the manifestation.

"The doctor told me I'd check out in a few months," he said when he had fired up one of his Brobdingnagian cigars, "and that was when I began to figure I'd have to kill Cal Webber."

The Great One nodded as if the explanation were thoroughly comprehensible.

"Bessie Barry, wasn't it?" he asked. "You used to be with her a great deal."

"Good girl," said the major. "She had a fine ma. We troup'd together and when Ma Barry died a couple years back it was up to me to look out for Bessie. The job was sorta handed along to me, see?"

"Well, I don't need to say nothin' about Cal Webber. You know what he was with women and he had his eyes on Bessie no sooner'n Ma Barry was out of the way. Bessie didn't have a relation in the world and except for me not a real friend. All she knew was show business and she didn't think she was worth even the little money Cal paid her. He had her buffaloed. That was the lever he was usin' on her."

The little man looked fixedly at the bottle and Macumber poured him another stiff drink. He drained the glass and waved away the soda.

"Well, there we was all at the Gayety that week," he continued. "Cal was forcin' the issue, so to speck, and the doctor had said I wouldn't be around much longer to look after Bessie Barry. I figured I'd better have it out with Webber and went to his dressin' room right after he come off. All he did was laugh at me. Things looked to be lined up for him and when I bawled him for a big mutt he just picked me up and set me outside the door.

"I went to Bessie's dressin' room to tell her she better quit the 'Kindergartners.' No one was there but the gun was lyin' on the table. I got an idea I could use it to throw a real scare into Cal. And if the scare didn't work—I could use it in earnest.

"Cal didn't scare. He came for me grinnin' and I banged him. I got out of the room quick, expectin' the hall would be full of people. There wasn't a soul in sight. I ran up the hall and chuck'd the gun over your transom. It was the only one open. Then I just joined the crowd and kep' my

mouth shut. And this is the first time I've opened it."

The major looked from one of us to the other.

"There's what happened and why," he piped. "What'm I goin' to do about it now?"

Macumber answered with the Scotch.

"Neither of us are in the habit of telling all we know," he said, "and I do not see that any end of justice would be served if you were to tell the story to the police. It's a problem I—"

The major smoothed his ornate vest.

"Maybe," he said, "the plan I got will do. I'm droppin' out from the 'Nine Little Tailors' at the end of next week. Then I'm goin' to take it easy in Texas while my lungs last. Another doctor I seen here in Chicago says I'm pretty near all in and I feel like I was."

He fumbled in his inside pocket and produced a soiled envelope which he passed to us for inspection. It was addressed to the police commissioner in New York.

"The whole thing is in the letter inside," said the major. "I don't want any jails and trials if I can help it. It'll be mailed when I'm where they can't get me. Ain't that fair?"

"Fair enough!" said the Great One and raised his glass to Major Inch.

"I don't require as many explanations as usual," I assured Macumber when we had seen the little major safely into the elevator and his blithe whistling had died in the depths of the shaft. "You don't need to tell me how the bullet went into Cal Webber at that strange angle without coming up from the alley; and that means you don't have to tell me how you reached the conclusion that one of the 'Nine Little Tailors' killed Cal. Neither do I require enlightening as to the manner in which you materialized Webber's dressing room and Webber himself."

We had reached our rooms again as I spoke and Macumber made for the Scotch.

"You are improving, lad," he congratulated, pouring a brace of liberal drinks, "though I wish you had spoken a word of compliment for the dressing-room set I had painted especially for the occasion and for the excellence of the make-up of Micky McGuirk. If there's nothing at all you do not understand—"

"But there *is*, maestro," I interrupted quickly. "Just one thing. Your deduction that it was one of the 'Nine Little Tailors' who killed Webber is perfectly clear. But how did you decide *which* one?"

Macumber smiled loftily.

"When will my uncanny gift of observation cease to bewilder you, my lad?" he lamented. "That indeed was a most extremely clever feat of elimination. Prodig-

ious! Poor boy, hear the wisdom of it. There was not another midget in the troupe who possessed a hand big enough to hold the gun."

The Great One lifted his glass to the level of his eyes.

"Drink, lad," said he, "to one 'Little Tailor' who doesn't need to be multiplied to be a man. May his letter to the commissioner be a long time out of the mails!"

Another great Macumber story in the next POPULAR.



SELF-MADE HEROES TO PAY FOR THEIR GLORY

THE nerviest individual on earth is the man who stayed safe at home while the war was on and then after it was over awarded himself a medal for valor. Several of these brassy gentlemen have been caught wearing war decorations to which nobody but themselves thought them entitled. Distinguished Service Crosses and Medals have been used on more than one occasion by criminals to save themselves from punishment for their misdeeds and investigation of these cases usually has proved that the men who were asking mercy because of their war service had obtained the decorations that they disgraced by the expenditure of nothing more vital than a few dollars. For service in France the Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded to eighty men and the Distinguished Service Cross to 5,575. The Distinguished Service Medal was awarded to 1,466 men for service either in France or in the United States. The Victory Medal was given to every soldier or sailor who would take the trouble to apply for it. Some of these decorations, through the death of those to whom they were awarded, or through hard luck or carelessness, have fallen into the hands of men who have no right to wear them but who for criminal purposes or for the satisfaction of a perverted vanity that is almost as bad do wear them. Up to the present time the government has had no efficient way of punishing these synthetic heroes but now a bill has been introduced in Congress which when it becomes a law—it is almost certain to pass—will impose a fine of \$250, or six months' imprisonment, or both, for the unauthorized wearing of decorations, service medals, badges or ribbons awarded by the war department.



WHAT WE ARE COMING TO

THE doctors say that in another hundred years every one in the United States will wear glasses. Dentists tell us that most of us are going to lose our teeth. Hair doctors say we all will soon be bald. The politicians are trying to deafen us and the reformers are spoiling our dispositions. In the cities modern transportation conveniences wreck our nervous systems; and in the country the strain of trying to get to the city has the same effect. Most restaurant keepers seem determined to ruin our stomachs. Now our friend the Detroit *Free Press* tells us that the use of motor cars and flivvers is depriving people of the use of their legs and that "the human race is moving toward a state in which men will be immobile and senseless." Terrible cutlook, isn't it?—but we've an idea that in 2000 that marvelous machine, man, will still be eating, drinking, sleeping, and now and then hanging up a new athletic record just to show that the sons of Adam are as good men as were those old fellows back in 1923. Also, we've an idea that the wise men will be right on the job predicting terrible things for future generations—which in turn will prove that the wise men weren't nearly so wise as they thought themselves.

A CHAT WITH YOU



ONE would imagine," wrote William Hazlitt a century ago, "that books were like women, the worse for being old; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially, and that after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf."

Hazlitt goes on to argue in favor of the old books and to urge that the oftener they are read the greater the pleasure.

We cannot agree with the essayist. In the first place we are not at all sure that women are always the worse for being old. Certainly not any more than men are. And we think a book is just a little the worse for being old, no matter how good it is. The keenest pleasure in reading is to discover the new treasure for oneself. We have read many books a second and a third time and we have been disappointed in a lot of them. Even when we did find them up to the standard of our memory there was something missing in the enjoyment, the first careless rapture was gone. A man who continues to read old books over and over again has his brain in a squirrel's cage. If every printing press were stopped and we were thrown back on the classics there would be less and less reading as time went on. People would stop reading even the old books. New books are just as necessary as fresh air.

* * * *

IT is the first time we do things that counts.

The first time we went to the theater, the first opera we heard, the first trip we

took across the continent, the first time we tried anything. Books wear out if read too often and if a man is really interested in a book the first reading is enough to fix it in his mind for a long time. After that he may get something out of it by persuading others to read it, but for himself it can never be quite the same again.

* * * *

PERHAPS the trouble with people who can't get the kick out of reading a thing the first time is that they don't do it properly.

We have directions handed to us for doing lots of things. How to shave properly with a new razor. How to lather the beard with a new shaving cream. How to get the most mileage out of a gallon of gasoline. How to play the saxophone. How to get a new job. How to behave at a house party. How to make a radio set. How to play golf. How to make home-brew. How to get buried pleasantly and inexpensively. But we never read any directions as to how to read a new novel so as to get the most out of it. Suppose we try giving a few.

* * * *

TO get the most out of anything calls for preparation. If you are to see a new play you need a mind unharassed and ready for enjoyment and a seat where you will be insured against people trampling on your feet as they pass in front of you. Also you should be there a few moments before the curtain goes up and have a minute or so to look at the program. To enjoy a good dinner it is best to be hungry, but not too hungry, to have leisure and to be happy.

The same principles underlie the directions for reading a new novel.

* * * *

YOU should be at ease and have put away your troubles for the time. The best reading hours for most folks are in the evening or on a rainy Sunday morning. You should be physically comfortable so that you won't have to get up and move around. If you are a smoker you should make your preparations accordingly. You should have a good light.

The most important preparation, however, is the mental one. You should have something of the attitude of the discoverer. You are sailing into an uncharted sea, and who knows what strange islands will rise above the horizon? You are advancing in an untracked continent where there are untrod-den mountains and unspoiled valleys. In order to be properly surprised you must be expecting *something*. Had Balboa been mooning along across the Isthmus of Panama, hoping for nothing, the Pacific would not have given him half the thrill it did. Furthermore, it is best to have a certain sympathy with the author before you turn the first page. Our rule in reading manuscripts is based on one of the principles of the English common law. Every story is to be considered a good story till it is proved otherwise. The author is to be listened to and if his story is not a good one anything he says may be used against him. Authors should remember this.

Now you are ready to turn the page and start.

* * * *

BUT where," some one says, "is the new novel? I have read the one in this issue already. Otherwise I would not be listening to your chatter."

Wait two weeks. At the expiration of that period THE POPULAR will appear once more on the news stands. And the first thing in it will be a new novel by William Winter. It is called "The Valley of Power." Beyond saying that it is full book length, that it is a story of American business, that it has been adjudged already worthy of appearance between cloth covers at two dollars later on, we will tell you nothing about it. Do your own discovering. We knew nothing about it when we opened the manuscript and it was all the better for that. All we are wishing you is the pleasure we got out of it—and that's a lot.

* * * *

BACON quotes Alonso of Aragon as saying:

"Old wood best to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust, and old authors to read."

Alonso, it seems to us, achieved an air of profundity with a generalization which is only half true.

Old wood may be moldy and not good for a fire, while this year's wood may give a glorious blaze. Old wine may be sour and undrinkable. Old friends may get tired at times of seeing us around and new friends may be most trustworthy. Old authors may wear out unless they are still alive and telling new stories. And new authors may bring us a freshness of view and a zest of life that we could ill spare.

Let us set aside cant and honestly say how many books we have reread; how many we have reread more than once, and how many have stood up under the test. The unread book has one great advantage over the old one. It is *new* and fresh—and that is something after all.



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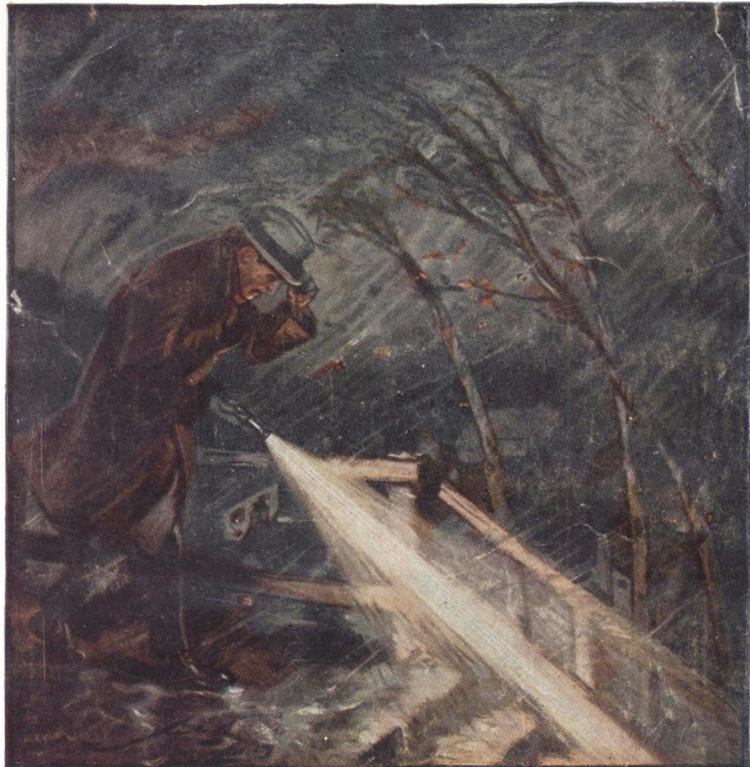
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